

# Finnish Women Ask Astakhov to Protect Families

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A group of Finnish women are asking Russia to press Finland to change its family policy, saying that parents are treated like criminals in their own country.

The group complained that children can be taken out of schools and kindergartens and placed in state care at the request of social workers.

"We are absolutely powerless in this matter and are worried about non-compliance with the rights of children," they said in a letter to children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov, according to Interfax.

The women said that they approached Russia for help because their own country's authorities constantly hushed-up the issue.

They also said they didn't speak any Russian but hoped Russian authorities would help them and make the matter public knowledge.

It is not clear why they decided to address to Russia in particular. Russia attracted international criticism earlier this year for banning the U.S. adoption of Russian children, with Astakhov being one of the main supporters of this move.

An online petition asking for Astakhov's resignation gathered more than 11,000 signatures earlier this year.

But Astrakhov has criticized Finland's social policy in the past. Last year, Russia complained after Finnish social workers removed four children born to a Russian-Finnish couple after one of them told her school teachers that her father had spanked her. Corporal punishment is illegal in Finland.

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