

Putin Hands Responsibility for Ethnic Relations to Governors

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Putin speaking to religious leaders in Ufa on Tuesday before taking part in the celebrations to mark the 225th anniversary of the founding of the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia.

UFA — President Vladimir Putin has signed a law giving local authorities more responsibility for handling relations between ethnic communities in a sign that the government is growing nervous about nationalist-tinged discontent rising in Russia.

Speaking Tuesday at the Interethnic Relations Council in the Urals town of Ufa, Putin lashed out at local governments for what he said was their lackluster record in implementing the government's long-term strategy to minimize tensions among the numerous ethnic groups living in Russia.

Under the terms of the law signed Tuesday by Putin, municipal leaders will face dismissal for failing to stifle ethnic tensions.

The legislation empowers regional authorities to take measures to integrate migrants.

The law was adopted to ensure the implementation of Russia's National Ethnic Policy Strategy through to 2025, the Kremlin said Tuesday. Putin complained that little progress has been made on the strategy so far and that only nine out of Russia's 83 federal regions have forged specific plans.

"All we're talking about are plans, about the initial required measures. If we look at the specific work done, the picture is far more depressing," Putin told the Interethnic Relations Council.

Putin appeared to recognize that events in the Moscow district of Biryulyovo — where riots broke out after a Russia was stabbed to death, with an Azeri being named as a suspect — were the outcome of failure by local authorities to address local concerns, about rampant migration among other things.

"Local authorities often prefer armchair leadership, which is of little or no use," he said.

In the wake of Biryulyovo, vocal opposition candidate Alexei Navalny posted a petition on his website proposing a visa regime be introduced for migrant laborers coming to Russia from former Soviet republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Putin dismissed such suggestions, saying they would do little to solve migration issues. He instead urged better bureaucratic management over migration.

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