

Only Italy Can Currently Adopt Russian Orphans, Astakhov Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia will not allow adoptions to families in countries that do not have bilateral agreements on the issue with Moscow, children's rights ombudsman Pavel Astakhov said, noting that only Italy has such an agreement currently.

Astakhov recommended on Friday that Russia's foreign partners "work harder" to make adoptions agreements with the Russian government, which he said has been focused lately on domestic adoptions, Interfax reported. He said only Italy had an active bilateral adoptions deal with Russia giving its citizens the right to adopt Russian children, while France has not ratified a similar agreement with Russia yet.

Foreign adoptions became a hot-button issue in Russia late last year when the government acted to ban adoptions by American couples with the so-called Dima Yakovlev Law, named after a boy from Russia who died in a U.S. family in 2008. The ban was part of a response to the U.S. Magnitsky Act, which imposes a visa ban and asset freezes on Russians implicated in

human rights violations.

Astakhov noted that Russia had not banned adoptions to any countries besides the U.S..

“Nowhere do we have adopted Russian children die except in America. Nowhere do we have such cases of pedophilia, violence, abuse as in America,” Astakhov said in an interview with Interfax.

Critics of the ban say it unfairly singles out Americans and point out that cases of abuse of adopted children occur in Russian families as well.

Astakhov also said Russia was not obliged to inform the European Court on Human Rights and the U.S. State Department about the fate of Russian orphans who were not adopted by U.S. families because of the Dima Yakovlev Law.

Earlier this week, the human rights court submitted to Russia a collective request from 23 U.S. families who were denied permission to adopt Russian children after the ban on adoptions by U.S. citizens came into effect on Jan. 1, 2013. The families asked the Russian authorities whether the children they had intended to adopt had been placed in new families or whether they were still living in orphanages.

Astakhov said Russia would provide the children with the right to have a family but would not be held accountable before the European Court of Human Rights for the upholding of that right.

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