

Federation Council Passes Extremism Bill

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The upper house of Russian parliament approved two bills Wednesday to stiffen penalties for extremism-related crimes and increase security inspections on public transportation.

The move comes as the country braces to host the Winter Olympics in Sochi, where concerns over security were heightened following two suicide bombings that killed 34 people in the city of Volgograd last month.

The transportation bill allows for baggage-inspection procedures on all modes of transport. Passengers refusing inspection will not be allowed to board.

With the introduction of the new rules, special forces will be involved in securing public transit and the powers of transportation police widened. Law enforcement officials working in securing safety on transportation will be authorized to use scanning devices and firearms.

Changes to the laws on extremism would double the minimum prison term for inciting hatred to four years and triple the minimum fine to \$8,700. The proposed law would likewise increase penalties for membership in banned extremist groups.

The legislation, submitted to parliament last summer, has been roundly criticized by human rights activists who argue that the vagueness of the law opens the door for abuse against members of the political opposition.

The government insists that the law is intended to combat religious extremist groups that threaten public safety.

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