

# Russian Orthodox Church Says 'Leviathan' Panders to Western Prejudice

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Valeryi Grishko played an Orthodox priest in "Leviathan"

The spokesman for the Russian Orthodox Church harshly criticized director Andrei Zvyagintsev's award-winning film "Leviathan" on Wednesday, suggesting it was meant "to please the West," though inadvertently admitting to having downloaded it illegally.

The controversial film, which portrays a Russian man's struggle with a corrupt local mayor, has been met with praise in the West, placing sixth in the London Critics' Circle's top 10 films of 2014 shortly after taking a Golden Globe and getting an Oscar nomination for best foreign-language film.

But Russian officials have reacted to the film with scorn, denouncing what they say is an inaccurate and insulting depiction of Russian life. Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin on Wednesday was the latest to sound off on the film, suggesting in comments to the Interfax news agency that the film was made to indulge Western stereotypes of Russia.

"The writers probably wanted to please the West with these notions of Russian vodka, messy licentiousness, a terrible state system, a Church that is also terrible — such myths about Russia are mimicked very well out there," Chaplin was cited as saying. "I'm not surprised that the film is very popular in the West."

Chaplin also admitted that he watched a pirated copy of the film on the Internet, but said he was prepared to compensate the filmmakers for the price of a movie ticket.

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