

Russian Orthodox Priest: Parental Violence Campaigns Are 'Anti-Family'

By [Jennifer Monaghan](#)

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A Russian Orthodox archbishop who heads a patriarchal commission for children's and mothers' rights has criticized advocacy campaigns against domestic violence, arguing that they constitute "anti-family propaganda" and pose a threat to society.

Speaking with Russia's children's rights ombudsman, Pavel Astakhov, Archbishop Dmitry Smirnov said that public criticism of domestic violence raised distrust among family members and discredited traditional methods of discipline such as "parental punishment," according to a statement on the Russian Orthodox Church's website.

"Very often, unfortunately, to solve societal grievances we are offered a cure that is worse than the actual disease. This is exactly the case with campaigns against so-called 'domestic (or family) violence,'" Smirnov said, according to the statement.

Smirnov, who has served as a priest for nearly 35 years, added: "Instead of protecting children and women, we are allowing this anti-family propoganda, as a result of which family relationships are no longer seen as desirable, but as a threat."

He reasoned that campaigns warning against domestic violence lead society to perceive family relations not as sacred but as threatening, adding that just as the law protects society from harmful ideas and ideologies such as racism and Nazism, it should also protect the family unit from being undermined by public campaigns.

This is not the first time Smirnov has voiced his opposition to public discussions of domestic violence.

Last month, he cautioned against the signing of a Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating domestic abuse, saying it could run contrary to Russia's "national interests," according to a statement on the Church's website.

While data on domestic violence is scarce in Russia, statistics presented by the State Duma Committee on Public Health in 2012 showed that some 40 percent of all violent crimes in Russia were committed within families.

In his meeting with Astakhov on Friday, Smirnov said the family "in which a husband and wife are joined in marriage was and is the safest and best place for children to be raised."

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