

Spreading Separatist Views Now a Criminal Act in Russia

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Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law would make spreading separatist views a criminal offence punishable by up to five years in jail.

Under the law submitted to the Russian State Duma by the Communist Party, people will face a fine of up to 300,000 rubles (\$9,200) for calling for action aimed against Russia's territorial integrity.

Lawmakers said the legislation was an effort to curb increasing public support for the idea of relinquishing mainly Muslim territories in the restive North Caucasus.

Experts, however, criticized the measure for distracting attention from more serious problems in Russian society.

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