

Russian lawmaker says Moscow may lift adoption ban

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Published 9:24 a.m. ET Jan. 18, 2017 | Updated 10:22 a.m. ET Jan. 18, 2017



(Photo: Mikhail Metzel, AP)

Moscow is willing to open talks with the U.S. about lifting a 4-year-old ban on Americans adopting Russian children, the speaker of Russia's upper house of parliament said Wednesday.

"We are ready for dialogue," Valentina Matvienko said, providing the U.S. could guarantee the welfare of Russian adoptees, the Russian news agency [TASS reported \(http://tass.com/politics/925766\)](http://tass.com/politics/925766).

"Everything can be changed back," she said, adding without elaboration that "at least some steps from the U.S. are needed."

The ban, she said, "is not a goal in itself," and "the fate of children is the most important thing."

Matvienko's comments follow a ruling Tuesday by the European Court of Human Rights that Russia must pay damages and legal costs to Americans barred from adopting Russian children in 2012. Russia has three months to appeal.

The ban was imposed in response to a U.S. law, known as the Magnitsky Act, that sanctioned some Russians identified as human-rights violators. The bipartisan bill passed by Congress was named for a Russian lawyer arrested after exposing a Russian tax fraud case. He died in prison in 2009 amid allegations he was denied proper medical care.

The adoption ban, known as the Dima Yakovlev law, was named after a child from northwest Russia's Pskov region who died of heat stroke in Virginia in 2008, four months after being adopted by a U.S. couple, when his adoptive father left him in a parked car for nine hours. The father was acquitted of manslaughter in the case, [The New York Times reported \(http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/20/world/europe/russia-votes-to-ban-all-adoptions-by-americans.html\)](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/20/world/europe/russia-votes-to-ban-all-adoptions-by-americans.html).

In another case that received widespread attention in the Russian press in 2010, a Tennessee woman put her 7-year-old adopted son on a flight alone back to Russia.

According to Russian authorities, the woman put a note in the child's pocket saying she no longer wished to parent him because he was mentally unstable, violent and "has severe psychopathic issues," [The Tennessean reported \(http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2011-11-22/Tennessee-trial-Russian-adoption/51346674/1\)](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2011-11-22/Tennessee-trial-Russian-adoption/51346674/1).

The ban abruptly ended a thriving relationship between the two countries in which Americans looking to adopt found children in need of a home. At the time the ban was imposed, more than 1,000 prospective adoptions were estimated to be in progress, the Associated Press reported.

The case in the European Court of Human Rights was brought by 45 Americans who had been in the final stages of the adoption process. Many of the children they planned to adopt had serious health issues.

The court said it awarded the equivalent of \$3,000 in damages plus \$600 in legal costs to each pair of prospective parents, according to a news release, the AP reported.

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