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## TENS OF THOUSANDS SIGN PETITION TO BAN SURROGACY IN RUSSIA



More than 55,000 signatures collected under a petition to legally ban surrogacy in Russia were handed over to State Duma Deputy Nikolai Zemtsov recently.

In its appeal, the Union of Orthodox Women call upon the Speaker of the Duma and the leadership of the Committee on Family Affairs to consider a complete legislative ban on surrogate motherhood in Russia. The organization call for the state to immediately prohibit its use in the interests of foreigners and single Russians, or for remuneration, as well as advertising surrogacy, reports the Orthodox charity site Miloserdie.

Surrogacy is completely inadmissible according to the teachings of the Russian Orthodox Church.

“We are working hard and we hope a bill will be introduced in this spring session,” Deputy Zemstov said. “This shameful page will be turned, when foreigners were allowed to take tens of thousands of children out of the country. And this legal gap will be closed,” he added.

Preparation for such a bill began after “children’s farms” were discovered in Moscow and St. Petersburg and elsewhere, where surrogate mothers and babies

were kept, with the babies then being sold abroad.

“Surrogacy, which is banned in many countries of the world, is used in Russia primarily not to help infertile couples, but to sell children abroad, including to couples with non-traditional orientation,” the appeal reads. It also draws attention to the cruel exploitation of the surrogate mothers who are women in need, who often end up with permanent damage to their health.

Surrogacy demeans women and promotes the sale of children, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said during the Russian Federation Council’s annual Christmas Parliamentary Meetings in January.

“The moral consciousness cannot reconcile itself to the allowance of surrogate motherhood, which turns a woman and a child into the subject of a commercial transaction and distorts the very concept of motherhood and the mystery and sanctity of these relations,” the Patriarch said before the State Duma in 2015.

The Russian Church’s 2000 document, “The Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church,” also unequivocally condemns surrogate motherhood, regardless of the commercial aspect:

The use of donor material undermines the foundations of family relationships, since it presupposes that a child has, in addition to the “social” parents, the so-called biological ones. “Surrogate motherhood,” that is, the bearing of a fertilized ovule by a woman who after the delivery returns the child to the “customers,” is unnatural and morally inadmissible even in those cases where it is realized on a non-commercial basis. This method involves the violation of the profound emotional and spiritual intimacy that is established between mother and child already during the pregnancy. “Surrogate motherhood” traumatizes both the bearing woman, whose maternal feelings are trampled upon, and the child who may subsequently experience an identity crisis (12.4).

In February, the Russian Church initiated a broad discussion among its clergy and flock to consider updating its stance towards in vitro fertilization reproductive technology, taking into account the development of medical science over the past 20 years.

The Russian Church’s Church-Public Council for Biomedical Ethics recently reiterated its position “on the ethical incorrectness of IVF methods,” noting that it has “argued its position in detail, based on theological, ethical, and medical grounds.”

“Nevertheless, a group of clergy and laity has been organized in our Church, which aims to change the position of the Church ... in relation to IVF and has agreed to compromise with the wishes of women and men to have children based on the achievements of scientific and technological progress,” the Council laments.

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