

# **RUSSIA: Russian city sees domestic violence incidents double after Putin decriminalises beatings**

*Between 12,000-14,000 Russian women are killed every year because of domestic abuse.*

By Fiona Keating

International Business Times (11.02.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2lgoaZV> – Reports of domestic violence have increased by 133% in Yekaterinburg – the fourth largest city in Russia – after President Putin approved a law that reduces punishments for spousal or child abuse to a misdemeanour.

Police in Yekaterinburg responded to 350 incidents about domestic assaults every day, compared with 150 before the change in the legislation.

“Before, people were afraid of criminal charges – this acted as some kind of safety barrier,” Yevgeny Roizman, the mayor of Yekaterinburg told Russian media, according to the Times. “People got the impression that before it wasn’t allowed, but now it is.”

Between 12,000-14,000 Russian women are killed every year because of domestic abuse, stated Rossiskaya Gazeta, the

Russian government's official newspaper.

"The reporting is very low. It is a very concealed issue," says Marina Pisklakova, head of ANNA, a Moscow-based charity which has been fighting for improved support for victims of domestic violence. "But things are changing; there is not as much denial as there was."

According to Russian state statistics agency, there were 49,579 crimes in 2015 involving violence in the family, with 35,899 involving violence against a woman.

Under the new law, assaults that are categorised as "minor harm" such as "small abrasions, bruises, superficial wounds, and soft-tissue damage" are now a misdemeanour. They are punishable by 15 days in prison or a \$500 fine, according to the Moscow Times. Previously, punishment for domestic abuse carried a maximum sentence of two years in jail.

In the State Duma, the bill was passed virtually unanimously, with 380 deputies voting for the legislation, with only three voting against. Yelena Mizulina, the ultra-conservative MP who introduced the bill, called the previous punishments for domestic violence "absurd".

Amnesty International responded to the change in the law saying: "Russia is far behind global developments to protect victims of domestic violence, having very scarce measures in place, such as government-funded shelters, effective practices of protection orders or police officers trained in how to

respond to reports about abuse and protect victims.

“Russian authorities must scrap this abusive legislation and put together a comprehensive package of measures to address the vast scale of domestic violence in Russia once and for all.”

The UN’s Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women Committee (CEDAW has previously condemned Russia for its failure to take actions in addressing the issue of domestic violence.

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