

# Russian Adoption Ban Leaves More Orphans in Need

Written By Beth Cleary

The recent Russian ban of US adoptions is a hot topic in the media at the moment, easily found covering human rights, adoption and orphan advocacy blogs, twitter accounts, and other outlets. Though Putin had signed a short-lived six month adoption ban in the past, this one appears more threatening, as its institution is linked with the United States' signing of the Magnitsky Act, a law that seeks to hold Russia accountable for human rights violations, especially in the case of the death of Sergei Magnitsky, an auditor who died while imprisoned after exposing corruption in the finances of the Russian government. Signed into law on New Years Day, this ban puts a halt to an average of over 1,000 Russian children adopted by American families each year. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Americans have adopted approximately 60,000 Russian orphans, extricating them from the orphanage system that condemns so many that remain there.

Not only have prospective adoptive US parents been up in arms over this extreme reaction, but on January 13<sup>th</sup>, thousands of Russians took to the streets of Moscow to protest the law as well. Both groups, as well as the US government, assert that this ban is more detrimental to the Russian children that exist in an overcrowded and underfunded orphanage system than it is to the American lawmakers hoping to force Russia to atone for its human rights violations. However, in a recent statement on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, Putin's child rights advisor as well as the president himself, both stood by the decision and defended it as an adequate and praised response among the Russian people. Constantly referenced in defending this "popularity" are the nineteen deaths of adopted Russian children that have occurred in the US in the last decade. Though these are true tragedies, they compose the forefront of the US-Russian adoption story as opposed to the thousands of other Russian children who find happy homes and loving families. Both Putin and Medvedev have used this ban as an opportunity to focus on developing a better domestic adoption policy, an initiative that the Russian Orthodox Church has endorsed enthusiastically as well.

**I**t is impossible to ignore the numbers of children who lack families in Russia. They are what we at Bright Connections is all about, after all. Now, our mission is even more necessary than before. Though Bright Connections has not made adoption advocacy one of its pillars, the fact that no orphans can make their way towards American homes, leaving thousands more children stuck in the system each year, our work to improve their lives in the orphanages is all the more crucial. We do not know how long this ban will last and so much information is still surfacing on this story. However, it serves as a clear reminder of how much our work can positively impact those in Russia who need it most.

Please join us facebook, twitter (@brighthought) and in our fundraising efforts to brighten the lives of these children! Share your ideas for ways in which we can provide these children with brighter lives today and in the future!