

Russian TV drops *The Simpsons* 'Pokemon Go' episode criticised by clerics

MOSCOW, Russia - A Russian cartoon channel said on Thursday that it would not air a *The Simpsons* episode about playing a game similar to Pokemon Go in a church that has been criticised by Orthodox clerics.

"We don't show content that can compromise the channel or provoke an ambiguous reaction in society, that to put it simply breaks the country's legislation," the public relations director of Russia's 2x2 channel, Anastasia Shablovskaya, told AFP.

In an episode of the popular Fox series aired in the US on 30 April, Homer, the father in the Simpsons family, plays a fictional game called Peekemon Get in church.

The episode appears to be based on an ongoing criminal case in Russia against video blogger Ruslan Sokolovsky, who faces up to three-and-a-half years in jail after filming himself playing Pokemon Go in a church.



Valmir Abreu Braz Junior © – 123RF.com

The verdict is expected next week.

In Russia, offending religious believers was made a crime after the Pussy Riot performance group sang a song critical of President Vladimir Putin in a Moscow church in February 2012, for which the members received two-year prison sentences.

The Simpsons episode prompted criticism from some Russian Orthodox clerics.

The episode "could shake (children's) moral foundations," a senior priest from the Ivanovo-Voznesensk diocese, Hieromonk Makary, told the Tass state news agency.

He suggested that parents should "shield children from viewing" the show.

Another senior cleric, Archpriest Andrei Novikov, told TASS the *Simpsons* episode was "clear evidence" of "powerful propaganda" through "media products".

But Shablovskaya denied that the channel's ban on the episode was related to the church's criticism.

"The church has nothing to do with this," she said, adding that "the Russian Orthodox Church did not contact the channel directly".

The 2x2 channel, which caters to an adult audience, has previously run into trouble for showing *The Simpsons* and the cartoon *South Park*, and was accused by prosecutors in 2008 of promoting extremism.

Source: AFP

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