

“Equality” & “St Petersburg Pride Organizing Committee”



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St Petersburg, June 7th 2010

To the attention of His Excellency, the Ambassador

Your Excellency,

On June 26, we are organizing for the first time the “St Petersburg Gay Pride” which we want as a peaceful human rights march for the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people in Russia.

Our organization will apply for this public event two weeks ahead in accordance with the law on public demonstrations, however, it is not certain that the Governor will grant us permission.

In Moscow, the Mayor banned a similar event for five consecutive years. In Ryazan, a Regional law which is being challenged in the European Court of Human Rights prevents to hold such action on the public place. In Tambov, similar actions were banned.

Freedom of Assembly is guaranteed in Russia by article 31 of the Constitution as well as article 11 and 14 of the European Convention for Human Rights and article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which Russia ratified.

Russian Courts keep upholding the bans of LGBT public actions by Russian officials.

However, it is a question of weeks before the European Court gives a decision against Russia in the bans of Moscow Pride in 2006, 2007 and 2008 based on the Warsaw Pride precedent.

Why are such actions as Gay Prides necessary in Russia?

Simply because before a group of Muscovites launched the Moscow Gay Pride initiative in July 2005, the LGBT thematic was ignored by the media. Since then, Russian media are regularly broadcasting programs with LGBT activists discussing prime time on TV and radio, same sex marriage, family rights of LGBT people and freedom of assembly for LGBT people.

The experts of the UN Human Rights Committee condemned in their review of the Russian Federation last October the “systematic discrimination” of LGBT people in the country.

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What do we expect from your Embassy?

We need your material or political support which could for example take the form of a statement of support.

Why we believe that you can bring support to our event?

In December 2008, your country was part of the 66 countries which signed at the United Nations, the statement on gender identity and sexual orientation.

On May 6, the European Council President issued a statement saying that “much still needs to be done, both in Europe and other parts of the world, to [combat homophobia]”

But most of all, your country has been supportive of similar Gay Pride Marches in other Eastern European Cities. This support took the form of direct support to the organizers, joint statements with other EU Embassies and participation of your Ambassadors in the action.

Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Assembly and Freedom of Speech, are three essential components of a democratic society.

The campaign for LGBT rights in Russia is very symptomatic of the fights for human rights values in Russia.

We hope that we can count on your support and we remain at your disposal to schedule a meeting and give you further explanations.

With respect,

Maria Efremenkova

Yuri Gavrikov