



Russian authorities launched an anti-gay media campaign

An appeal from Igor Kochetkov, chair of the Russian LGBT Network

On December 19th, 2012, the Russian State Duma will consider in the first reading a draft law on a nation-wide ban of the so-called 'propaganda of homosexuality'.

On November 30th, an observer of 'Rossiyskaya gazeta' ('Newspaper of Russia') published an ideological article on "traditional values"¹. The author proposes that each state has the right to act as a censor in the private domain. 'Rossiyskaya gazeta' is an official publication that was established by the government of the Russian Federation and that voices the position of the Russian authorities.

In the article, it is claimed that Russia has a tough and uncompromised stance in defense of traditional values. Along with that, the text contains a number of antiscientific and ungrounded arguments. In particular, it is stated that people of 'non-traditional sexual orientation' are exploiting the government to impose their unusual lifestyle upon other people. In addition to that, the author claims that 'tolerance' is an artificial concept imposed upon the European society and contradictory to Christian morals and values.

In the view of the fact that the State Duma reanimated the draft law on 'homosexual propaganda'², the meaning and purpose of the text become obvious: the authorities launched a full-scale media campaign aimed at creating a public enemy.

Today's legislators differ from their predecessor by mere two days. 79 years ago, on December 17th, 1933, upon personal order of Joseph Stalin, an article was added to the Criminal Code of the USSR that criminalized homosexuality. This was accompanied by a public political campaign against homosexuals.

It is notable that the draft law was tabled to the State Duma right after the UN Committee Against Torture released its Recommendations to the Russian Federation. At the session, Ms. Gaer, Committee Rapporteur for the report of the Russian Federation, pointed to discrimination on grounds of SOGI as a factor leading to increased violence against LGBT people. Moreover, reanimation of the law was preceded by the decision by UN Human Rights Committee's in Irina Fedotova v. Russian Federation, the case on a similar law in the Ryazan region. This decision provoked an expressly negative reaction of deputies of the Ryazan regional Duma. Their statements were in most cases similar to the following: 'We'll propagate that this damn thing be banned. If the UN said something, it does not mean that we now have to hurry and repeal anything. Even if such a question is raised here, I will vote against. Their job is to talk, ours – to work,' said deputy Vladimir Sidorov³.

The Russian LGBT Network launches an all-Russian campaign against the law.

If you would like to support the campaign and the Russian LGBT community, you will find suggestions on what could be done in the attached document. Attached you will also find a working translation of the text of the draft federal law and of the explanatory note that accompanies it.

Should you have any questions regarding the developments and the campaign, please send an email to these two addresses: maria.k@lgbtnet.ru (Maria Kozlovskaya) and a.smirnova@lgbtnet.ru (Anastasia Smirnova).

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¹ Evgeny Shestakov. Traditional Family Values – Russia's 'gentle force'. URL: <http://www.rg.ru/2012/11/30/mnenie-site.html> (in Russian)

² Page of the draft law on the official website of the State Duma. URL: <http://asozd2.duma.gov.ru/main.nsf/%28Spravka%29?OpenAgent&RN=44554-6&12> (in Russian)

³ Kristina Feofanova. Deputies on the UN and the Ryazan gay law. URL: <http://vidsboku.com/articles/deputaty-pro-on-i-ryazanskiy-gey-zakon> (in Russian)