

# URGENT ACTION

## LGBT ACTIVISTS FEAR ARREST AND VIOLENCE

**The authorities in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, have denied lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activists the right to hold a Slavic Pride, planned for 25 June. There are fears that the police will detain peaceful demonstrators, and there have also been threats of violence from anti-gay rights protestors.**

Members of the organization Ravnopravie (Equality) gave notice of their intention to hold a peaceful demonstration for the rights of LGBT people in Russia and beyond to several district administrations in St. Petersburg in June. In line with the law on public meetings, demonstrations and pickets, the authorities can suggest a different location or a different time if there are legitimate objections to the proposed route or location of a public event.

Several districts responded with unsuitable alternative venues for the Pride event, including remote woodlands and industrial sites, or with arbitrary reasons why it could not go ahead in that area. For example, the administration of the Vasileostrovskii district informed Ravnopravie that the proposed route along the banks of the Neva river would distract drivers from the traffic and therefore might cause accidents. Ravnopravie and other activists are still trying to reach to an agreement with the authorities on an acceptable location for the Slavic Pride.

Amnesty International fears that unless the authorities agree to a suitable location for the event, it is likely that peaceful demonstrators for the rights of LGBT people will be detained by the police and risk attacks from counter-demonstrators if they decide to go ahead with the event.

Anti-gay rights protestors have repeatedly called for violence against LGBT activists. On 17 June, a group in St. Petersburg staged a "public exorcism" of the gay rights movement, which included wrapping a coffin in a rainbow LGBT flag and "stabbing" it. The police did not interfere. The protestors also called on the head of the Moskovskii district in St. Petersburg to be sacked, after he had given permission for a demonstration against homophobia to go ahead in May 2011.

### **PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Russian, English or your own language:**

- Urging the authorities to respect the right of everyone to peaceful assembly, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity;
- Calling on the authorities to provide a suitable public location for the Slavic Pride to take place;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that participants in the Slavic Pride are protected against violent acts by counter-demonstrators.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 AUGUST 2011 TO:**

#### Governor of St. Petersburg

Valentina I.  
Matvienko  
Smolny  
St. Petersburg, 191060  
Russian Federation  
Fax: +7 812 576 7827  
Email: gubernator@gov.spb.ru

**Salutation: Dear Governor**

#### **And copies to:**

Ombudsperson for human rights of St.  
Petersburg  
Aleksii Kosyrev  
Shcherbakov per. 1-3  
191002 St. Petersburg  
Russian Federation  
Fax: +7 812 572 7306  
Email: mail@ombudsmanspb.ru

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

LGBT activists in the Russian Federation have for years attempted to hold peaceful prides in Moscow and more recently also in St. Petersburg.

The authorities have continuously denied permission for such events and police and violent counter-protesters have beaten up and injured activists.

In October 2010, the European Court of Human Rights found Russia in violation of Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees the right to freedom of assembly, for denying Nikolai Alekseyev right to hold a Moscow Pride for three consecutive years. By relying on the unlawful calls of anti-LGBT rights groups to violently disrupt any Pride event as grounds for denying organisers permission to organise a public event, the Court concluded that the Russian authorities had “effectively endorsed the intentions of persons and organisations that clearly and deliberately intended to disrupt a peaceful demonstration in breach of the law and public order.”

In October 2010, a court in St. Petersburg found that the ban earlier that year of a pride in the city had been unlawful.

Despite the decision of the Court, in 2011, the authorities in Moscow again refused to agree to a planned Moscow Pride and did not undertake measures to protect the demonstrators from violence. The authorities again justified their refusal by reference to the number of appeals they had received from individuals and groups opposing the event. On 28 May, at least 30 people were briefly detained after they had tried to walk towards the Kremlin Walls in Moscow to unroll banners and posters. At least one demonstrator, a young journalist, needed to undergo hospital treatment after she had been attacked.

International human rights law places a positive obligation on states to ensure that individuals and groups are able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and assembly free from the threat of violence or disruption. Security threats from counter-protesters should be policed effectively, rather than used as a pretext to ban public events.

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