

= Russian gay propaganda law =

The Russian federal law " for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values " , also known in English @-@ language media as the gay propaganda law and the anti @-@ gay law , is a bill that was unanimously approved by the State Duma on 11 June 2013 ( with just one MP abstaining ? Ilya Ponomarev ) , and was signed into law by President Vladimir Putin on 30 June 2013 .

The Russian government 's stated purpose for the law is to protect children from being exposed to content recognizing homosexuality as being a norm in society , under the argument that it contradicts traditional family values . The statute amended the country 's child protection law and the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses , to make the distribution of " propaganda of non @-@ traditional sexual relationships " among minors , an offense punishable by fines . This definition includes materials that " raises interest in " such relationships , cause minors to " form non @-@ traditional sexual predispositions " , or " [ present ] distorted ideas about the equal social value of traditional and non @-@ traditional sexual relationships . " Businesses and organizations can also be forced to temporarily cease operations if convicted under the law , and foreigners may be arrested and detained for up to 15 days then deported , or fined up to 5 @,@ 000 rubles and deported .

Supported by a number of far right @-@ wing groups and a majority of Russians surveyed , the passing of the law was met with criticism , primarily from the democratic world , the international community and global media . The statute was criticized for its broad and ambiguous wording ( including the aforementioned " raises interest in " and " among minors " ) , which many critics characterized as being an effective ban on publicly promoting the rights and culture of the LGBT community . The law was also criticized for leading to an increase and justification of homophobic violence , while the implications of the laws in relation to the then @-@ upcoming Winter Olympics being hosted by Sochi were also cause for concern , as the Olympic Charter contains language explicitly barring various forms of discrimination .

However , some felt that critics had overreacted to the law , noting that unlike some countries with stricter anti @-@ LGBT legislation , it did not criminalize same @-@ sex relationships , sexual activity , or being associated with pro @-@ LGBT organizations .

= = Background = =

Despite the fact that the cities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg have been well known for their thriving LGBT communities , there has been growing opposition towards gay rights among politicians since 2006 . The city of Moscow has actively refused to authorize gay pride parades , and former Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov supported the city 's refusal to authorize the first two Moscow Pride events , describing them as " satanic " and blaming western groups for spreading " this kind of enlightenment " in the country . Fair Russia member of parliament Alexander Chuev was also opposed to gay rights and attempted to introduce a similar " propaganda " law in 2007 . In response , prominent LGBT rights activist and Moscow Pride founder Nikolay Alexeyev disclosed on the television talk show ? ??????? ! that Chuev had been publicly involved in same @-@ sex relationships prior to his time in office .

In 2010 , Russia was fined by the European Court of Human Rights under allegations by Alexeyev that cities were discriminating against gays by refusing to approve pride parades . Although claiming a risk of violence , the court interpreted the decisions as being in support of groups which oppose such demonstrations . In March 2012 , a Russian judge blocked the establishment of a Pride House in Sochi for the 2014 Winter Olympics , ruling that it would " undermine the security of Russian society " , and that it contradicted with public morality and policies " in the area of family motherhood and childhood protection . " In August 2012 , Moscow upheld a ruling blocking Nikolay Alexeyev 's requests for 100 years ' worth of permission to hold Moscow Pride annually , citing the possibility of public disorder .

The bill " On Protecting Children from Information Harmful to Their Health and Development "

introduced laws which prohibited the distribution of " harmful " material among minors . This includes content which " may elicit fear , horror , or panic in children " among minors , pornography , along with materials which glorify violence , unlawful activities , substance abuse , or self @-@ harm . An amendment to the law passed in 2012 instituted a mandatory content rating system for material distributed through an " information and telecommunication network " ( covering television and the internet ) , and established a blacklist for censoring websites which contain child pornography or content glorifying drug abuse and suicide .

The 2013 amendment , which added " propaganda of non @-@ traditional sexual relationships " as a class of harmful content under the law was , according to the Government of Russia , intended to protect children from being exposed to content that portrays homosexuality as being a " behavioural norm " . Emphasis was placed upon a goal to protect " traditional " family values ; bill author Yelena Mizulina ( the chair of the Duma 's Committee on Family , Women , and Children , who has been described by some as a " moral crusader " ) , argued that " traditional " relations between a man and a woman required special protection under Russian law . The amendment also expanded upon similar laws enacted by several Russian regions , including Ryazan , Arkhangelsk ( who repealed its law shortly after the passing of the federal version ) , and Saint Petersburg .

= = Contents = =

Article 1 of the bill amended On Protecting Children from Information Harmful to Their Health and Development with a provision classifying " propaganda of non @-@ traditional sexual relationships " as a class of materials that must not be distributed among minors . The term is defined as materials that are " [ aimed ] at causing minors to form non @-@ traditional sexual predispositions , notions of attractiveness of non @-@ traditional sexual relationships , distorted ideas about the equal social value of traditional and non @-@ traditional sexual relationships , or imposing information about non @-@ traditional sexual relationships which raises interest in such relationships insofar as these acts do not amount to a criminal offence . " Article 2 makes similar amendments to " On basic guarantees for the rights of the child in the Russian Federation " , commanding the government to protect children from such material .

Article 3 of the bill amended the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses with Article 6 @. @ 21 , which prescribes penalties for violations of the propaganda ban : Russian citizens found guilty can receive fines of up to 5 @, @ 000 rubles , and public officials can receive fines of up to 50 @, @ 000 rubles . Organizations or businesses can be fined up to 1 million rubles and be forced to cease operations for up to 90 days . Foreigners may be arrested and detained for up to 15 days then deported , or fined up to 5 @, @ 000 rubles and deported . The fines for individuals are much higher if the offense was committed using mass media or internet .

= = Reaction = =

According to a survey conducted in June 2013 by the All @-@ Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion ( also known as VTsIOM ) , at least 90 percent of Russians surveyed were in favour of the law . Over 100 conservative groups worldwide signed a petition in support for the law , with Larry Jacobs , manager of the World Congress of Families , supporting its aim to " prohibit advocacy aimed at involving minors in a lifestyle that would imperil their physical and moral health . " President of Russia Vladimir Putin answered to early objections to the then @-@ proposed bill in April 2013 by stating that " I want everyone to understand that in Russia there are no infringements on sexual minorities ' rights . They 're people , just like everyone else , and they enjoy full rights and freedoms " . He went on to say that he fully intended to sign the bill because the Russian people demanded it . As he put it , " Can you imagine an organization promoting pedophilia in Russia ? I think people in many Russian regions would have started to take up arms .... The same is true for sexual minorities : I can hardly imagine same @-@ sex marriages being allowed in Chechnya . Can you imagine it ? It would have resulted in human casualties . " Putin also mentioned that he was concerned about Russia 's low birth rate , as same @-@ sex relationships do not produce children . In August 2013 ,

Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko also defended the law , equating it to protecting children from content that glorifies alcohol abuse or drug addiction . He also argued that the controversy over the law and its effects was " invented " by the Western media .

= = = Criticism = = =

The passing of the law was met with major international backlash , especially from the Western world , as critics considered it an attempt to effectively ban the promotion of LGBT rights and culture in the country . Article 19 disputed the claimed intent of the law , and felt that many of the terms used within were too ambiguous , such as the aforementioned " non @-@ traditional sexual relationships " , and " raises interest in " . The organization argued that it " feasibly could apply to any information regarding sexual orientation or gender identity that does not fit with what the State considers as in @-@ line with ' tradition ' . " The use of the term " among minors " was also criticized , as it was unclear whether it refers to being in the presence of minors , or any place where minors could be present , arguing that " predicting the presence of children in any space , on @-@ line or off @-@ line , is quite impossible and is a variable that the proponent of any expression will rarely be in absolute control of . "

LGBT rights activists , human rights activists , and other critics stated that the broad and vague wording of the law , which was characterized as a ban on " gay propaganda " by the media , made it a crime to publicly make statements or distribute materials in support of LGBT rights , hold pride parades or similar demonstrations , state that gay relationships are equal to heterosexual relationships , or according to Human Rights Campaign ( HRC ) president Chad Griffin , even display LGBT symbols such as the rainbow flag or kiss a same @-@ sex partner in public . The first arrest made under the law involved a person who publicly protested with a sign containing a pro @-@ LGBT message .

The legislation was also alleged to lead to an increase in homophobic violence in Russia by groups opposed to the LGBT rights movement ; Russian LGBT Network chairman Igor Kochetkov argued that the law " [ has ] essentially legalised violence against LGBT people , because these groups of hooligans justify their actions with these laws , " supported by their belief that gays and lesbians are " not valued as a social group " by the federal government . Reports surfaced of activity by groups such as ' Occupy Paedophilia ' and ' Parents of Russia ' , who lured alleged " paedophiles " into " dates " where they were tortured and humiliated . In August 2013 , it was reported that a gay teenager was kidnapped , tortured , and killed by a group of Russian Neo @-@ Nazis . Violence also increased during pro @-@ gay demonstrations ; on 29 July 2013 , a gay pride demonstration at Saint Petersburg 's Field of Mars resulted in a violent clash between activists , protesters , and police .

In January 2014 , a letter , co @-@ written by chemist Sir Harry Kroto and actor Sir Ian McKellen and co @-@ signed by 27 Nobel laureates from the fields of science and the arts , was sent to Vladimir Putin urging him to repeal the propaganda law as it " inhibits the freedom of local and foreign LGBT communities . " In February 2014 , the activist group Queer Nation announced a planned protest in New York City outside the Russian consulate on 6 February 2014 , timed to coincide with the opening ceremonies of the 2014 Winter Olympics . The same day , gay rights group All Out similarly coordinated worldwide protests in London , New York City , Paris , and Rio de Janeiro . On 8 February 2014 , a flash mob was held in Cambridge , England featuring same @-@ sex couples embracing and hugging , as part of a video project known as " From Russia With Love " .

Writing for The Guardian , Marc Bennetts argued that criticism of the law by foreign outlets had ties to anti @-@ Russian sentiment ; describing their response as being " both hysterical and hypocritical " , he acknowledged that countries had been inconsistent on their treatment of other countries for their stances on LGBT rights . He noted that Russia 's laws did not ban LGBT relationships as a whole , and did not go as far as those in other countries , such as India ? which had recently reinstated a ban on same @-@ sex sexual activity , and Nigeria , which criminalized same @-@ sex marriage with sentences of up to 14 years ' imprisonment , and membership in pro

@-@ gay groups with up to 10 years ' imprisonment . In conclusion , he stated that " in reality , there is little the west can do to influence Russia , on gay rights or anything else . But to stand even a chance , criticism needs to be measured , accurate and , above all , consistent . There are enough reasons to disapprove of Putin 's authoritarian regime without resorting to hyperbole and falsehoods . "

= = = Protests = = =

A number of protests were held against the law , both locally and internationally . Activists demonstrated outside New York City 's Lincoln Center at the opening night of the Metropolitan Opera on 23 September 2013 , which was set to feature Tchaikovsky 's opera Eugene Onegin . The protests targeted Tchaikovsky 's own homosexuality , and the involvement of two Russians in the production ; soprano Anna Netrebko and conductor Valery Gergiev , as they were identified as vocal supporters of Putin 's government .

On 12 October 2013 , the day following National Coming Out Day , a protest organized by at least 15 activists was held in Saint Petersburg . The protest site was occupied by a large number of demonstrators , some of whom were dressed as Russian Orthodox priests and Cossacks . In total , 67 protestors were arrested for creating a public disturbance .

Activists also called for a boycott of Stolichnaya vodka , who had prominently branded itself as a Russian vodka ( going as far as to dub itself " [ the ] Mother of All Vodkas from The Motherland of Vodka " in an ad campaign ) . However , its Luxembourg @-@ based parent company , Soiuzplodoimport , responded to the boycott effort , noting that the company was not technically Russian , did not support the government 's opinion on homosexuality , and described itself as a " fervent supporter and friend " of LGBT people .

= = Prosecutions and other effects = =

The first arrest made under the propaganda law occurred just hours after it was passed : 24 @-@ year @-@ old activist Dmitry Isakov was arrested in Kazan for publicly holding a sign reading " Freedom to the Gays and Lesbians of Russia . Down With Fascists and Homophobes " , and ultimately fined 4 @,@ 000 rubles ( US \$ 115 ) . Isakov had performed a similar protest in the same location the previous day as a " test " run , but was later caught in an altercation with police officers who targeted his pro @-@ gay activism , and arrested him for swearing . He would be released without charge , but pledged to return there the next day to show that he would " not be cowed by such pressure . " Isakov also claimed that he had been fired from his job at a bank as a result of the conviction .

In December 2013 , Nikolay Alexeyev and Yaroslav Yevtushenko were fined 4 @,@ 000 rubles ( US \$ 115 ) for picketing outside a children 's library in Arkhangelsk with banners reading , " Gays aren 't made , they 're born ! " Their appeal was denied . Alexeyev later criticized Western media outlets for its " biased " coverage of his conviction .

In January 2014 , Alexander Sutin , editor @-@ in @-@ chief of the Khabarovsk newspaper Molodoi Dalnevostok , was fined 50 @,@ 000 rubles ( US \$ 1 @,@ 400 ) for publishing a news story discussing the teacher Alexander Yermoshkin , who had been fired for self @-@ admittedly holding " rainbow flash mobs " in Khabarovsk with his students , and was subsequently attacked by right @-@ wing extremist groups because of his sexuality . The fine centred around a quote in the article by the teacher , who stated that his very existence was " effective proof that homosexuality is normal . "

Elena Klimova has been charged under the law multiple times for operating Children @-@ 404 ? an online support group for LGBT youth on the social networking services VKontakte and Facebook . The first of these charges was overturned in February 2014 , after a court ruled in consultation with a mental health professional that the group " helps teenagers exploring their sexuality to deal with difficult emotional issues and other problems that they may encounter " , and that these activities did not constitute " propaganda of non @-@ traditional sexual relationships " as defined under the law .

In January 2015 , Klimova was sent to court for the same charges . They were overturned on appeal , only for the same court to convict Klimova and issue a fine of 50 000 rubles in July 2015 , pending an appeal .

In May 2014 , it was revealed that in accordance with the propaganda law , the computer game The Sims 4 ? a new instalment in a life simulation game franchise that has historically allowed characters to participate in same sex relationships , had been given a " 18 + " rating , allowing its sale to adults only . In contrast , the pan European ratings board PEGI has historically given The Sims games a " 12 " rating , while the German rating board USK had given The Sims 3 an even lower " 6 + " rating .

In November 2014 , one day after current Apple Inc . CEO Tim Cook publicly announced that he was proud of being gay , it was reported that an iPhone shaped memorial honoring Apple founder Steve Jobs had been removed from a Saint Petersburg university campus by its installer , the West European Financial Union [ ZEFS ] , which issued a press release citing the law and noting that the memorial was in an area frequented by minors . However , the reports were later found to be a hoax , and the monument had actually been removed for maintenance . In September 2015 , Apple became the subject of an investigation by officials in Kirov for implementing emoji on its operating systems which depict same sex relationships , over whether they may constitute a promotion of non traditional sexual relationships to minors . Roskomnadzor later ruled that by themselves , emoji depicting same sex couples did not constitute a violation of the propaganda law , as whether they have a positive or negative connotation depends on their actual context and usage .

== Effects on sports ==

The 2013 World Championships in Athletics , held at Moscow 's Luzhniki Stadium in August 2013 , were overshadowed by comments and protests over the law by athletes . After winning a silver medal at the event , U.S. runner Nick Symmonds stated that " whether you 're gay , straight , black , white , we all deserve the same rights . If there 's anything I can do to champion the cause and further it , I will , shy of getting arrested . " Swedish athletes Emma Green Tregaro and Moa Hjelmer painted her fingernails in rainbow colors as a symbolic protest . However , Tregaro was forced to re paint them after they were deemed a political gesture that violated the rules of the IAAF . In response , she re painted them red as a symbol of love . Russian pole vaulter Yelena Isinbaeva criticized Tregaro 's gesture as being disrespectful to the host country , stating in a press conference that " we have our law which everyone has to respect . When we go to different countries , we try to follow their rules . We are not trying to set our rules over there . We are just trying to be respectful . " After Isinbaeva 's remarks were characterized as being homophobic , she argued that her choice of words had been misinterpreted by the media , and that she was against the discrimination of gays .

The implications of the law on Russia 's hosting of two major international sporting events ; the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi ( where seven LGBT athletes , all female , were expected to compete ) and the 2018 FIFA World Cup , were called into question . In the case of the World Cup , FIFA had recently established an anti discrimination task force , and was also facing criticism for awarding the 2022 World Cup to the country of Qatar , where homosexuality is illegal ; in August 2013 , FIFA requested information from the Russian government on the law and its potential effects on the association football tournament . In the case of the Winter Olympics , critics considered the law to be inconsistent with the Olympic Charter , which states that " [ discrimination ] on grounds of race , religion , politics , gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement . " In August 2013 , the International Olympic Committee " received assurances from the highest level of government in Russia that the legislation will not affect those attending or taking part in the Games " , and also received word that the government would abide by the Olympic Charter . The IOC also confirmed that it would enforce Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter , which forbids political protest , against athletes who make displays of support for the LGBT community at the Games . Vladimir Putin also made similar assurances prior to the Games , but warned LGBT attendees that

they would still be subject to the law .

Athletes and supporters used the Olympics as leverage for further campaigns against the propaganda law . A number of athletes came out as lesbian , gay , or bisexual to spread awareness of the situation in Russia , including Australian snowboarder Belle Brockhoff , Canadian speed skater Anastasia Bucsis , gold medal figure skater Brian Boitano , and Finnish swimmer Ari Pekka Liukkonen . There were also calls to boycott the Games , drawing comparisons to the Summer Olympics of 1980 in Moscow , the last time the Olympics were held on what is now Russian soil . A campaign known as Principle 6 was established in collaboration between a group of Olympic athletes , the organizations All Out and Athlete Ally , and clothing maker American Apparel , selling merchandise ( such as clothing ) with a quotation from the Olympic Charter to support pro LGBT organizations . Toronto advertising copywriter Brahm Finkelstein also began to market a rainbow coloured matryoshka doll set known as " Pride Dolls " , designed by Italian artist Danilo Santino , to benefit the Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association , organizers of the World OutGames .

Action was leveraged directly against Olympic sponsors and partners as well ; in late August 2013 , the Human Rights Campaign sent letters to the ten Worldwide Olympic Partner companies , urging them to show opposition towards anti LGBT laws , denounce homophobic violence , ask the IOC to obtain written commitments for the safety of LGBT athletes and attendees , and oppose future Olympic bids from countries that outlaw support for LGBT equality . In February 2014 , prior to the games , a group of 40 human rights organizations ( including Athlete Ally , Freedom House , Human Rights Campaign , Human Rights Watch and Russian LGBT network among others ) also sent a joint letter to the Worldwide Olympic Partners , urging them to use their prominence to support the rights of LGBT athletes under the Olympic Charter , and pressure the IOC to show greater scrutiny towards the human rights abuses of future host countries . On 3 February 2014 , USOC sponsor AT & T issued a statement in support of LGBT rights at the Games , becoming the first major Olympic advertiser to condemn the laws . Several major non sponsors also made pro LGBT statements to coincide with the opening of the Games ; Google placed a quotation from the Olympic Charter and an Olympic themed logo in the colours of the rainbow flag on its home page worldwide , while Channel 4 ( who serves as the official British broadcaster of the Paralympics ) adopted a rainbow coloured logo and broadcast a " celebratory " , pro LGBT advert entitled " Gay Mountain " on 7 February 2014 , alongside an interview with former rugby union player and anti homophobia activist Ben Cohen . As part of its Dispatches series , Channel 4 had also broadcast a documentary during the week of the Opening Ceremony entitled Hunted , which documented the violence and abuse against LGBT people in Russia in the wake of the law .