

Arrests Under New Anti-Gay Law Continue

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Gay rights demonstrator Sergei Kondrashov in a one-man picket Saturday.

Gay rights demonstrators were detained at a St. Petersburg protest following the first arrests last week under the newly passed city law banning so-called gay propaganda.

Two demonstrators were arrested as seven gathered in solitary pickets near the Oktyabrsky concert hall to mark the Day of Silence Saturday, LGTB organization Vykhod said. The Day of Silence is observed by activists in the West to draw attention to the silencing of discrimination and crimes against sexual minorities.

The demonstrators stood separately with their mouths sealed with bright red tape and holding signs, including one reading "There is no silencing of crimes against gays and lesbians." These so-called one-man pickets do not require City Hall approval, as long as demonstrators do not yell slogans.

Police arrested Sergei Kondrashov and Vykhod activist Igor Kochetkov, stating they were making the arrests for "propaganda of a homosexual nature," Gazeta.ru reported. The pair

was released after being held for four hours and are due in court Monday.

Under the law that took effect last month, anyone found guilty of promoting homosexuality among minors can be fined from 5,000 (\$170) to 50,000 rubles, or up to 500,000 rubles for legal entities. The law has been condemned by domestic and international human rights advocates and gay activists, and by Western governments.

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