

Moscow to Consider Anti-Gay Law

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Gay rights activist Nikolai Alekseyev holds a sign reading "Homosexuality is not a perversion. Perversion is hockey on grass and ballet on ice." (The Russian word "izvrashchenie" can mean both perversion and inversion.)

Moscow may become the next city to outlaw so-called homosexual propaganda, as the Moscow City Duma announced Thursday it will hold a roundtable discussion about creating a law similar to the one passed in St. Petersburg last month.

The decision to discuss the potential law was announced by the head of the legislature's health care committee, Lyudmila Stebenkova, who said discussions will begin Monday. Representatives from the legislatures of the Kostroma and Archangelsk regions, as well as the city of St. Petersburg will also attend the meeting. These localities already have anti-homosexual laws in effect.

Gay rights activists condemned the move.

"The Moscow City Council also decided to disgrace itself like its Petersburg colleagues," chairman of the Russian LGBT Network Igor Kochetkov told Interfax. He said the law is a "shame for the legislature which highlights its incompetence."

Under the law that took effect in St. Petersburg in March, 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.

The first arrests under the law were made in early April as demonstrators in one-man pickets held signs police said contained "propaganda of a homosexual nature."

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