The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Gays Show Defiance Against Homophobia

By Paul Rimple

May 27, 2012



The very first march against homophobia in the history of Georgia was aggressively thwarted May 17 by the Union of Orthodox Christian Parents, a violent, reactionary group led by several priests who have a strange interpretation of "love your neighbor." They shamelessly stood by as their homophobic devotees cursed and attacked the peaceful group of marchers.

A day later, activists retaliated with more supporters in front of parliament protesting against intolerance.

For the Christian fascists and ordinary Georgians, this crusade against discrimination is not only a frontal attack on what they consider to be the God-given traditions of the Georgian nation. It is also a sinister plot to brainwash children into being gay.

"[Their] eventual goal is the legal and moral legitimization of homosexuality, indecency, depravity and a perverted way of life," the leader of the parliamentary minority Christian--

Democratic Movement, Giorgi Targamadze, announced in the parliamentary chamber on May 23. He called for constitutional amendments to deter the propaganda of homosexuality and indecency.

One of Targamadze's deputies, Nika Laliashvili, insisted that the peaceful marchers were in fact "violently trying to impose their indecent ideology on the rest of the Georgian society." But he wasn't there to see who was trying to impose their own views with fists.

For Targamadze, who claims to be a Christian and a democrat, it is unacceptable that gays hold top government posts and that same-sex marriage is constitutionally guaranteed in some Western countries. He believes that 21st-century Western values are simply bad models for Georgia.

"We hate sin, not these people. I have pity on them," he said.

Such righteous homophobic sentiment is nothing new from Targamadze's party. In 2009, the Christian-Democratic Movement nominated Dmitri Lortkipanidze for ombudsman. He wanted to roll back the 2000 law that decriminalized homosexuality because it is punishable by our [Orthodox Christian] faith.

There are, however, people in the government who realize that Western values like equality and tolerance apply to all people regardless of their sexual orientation. "It's a principle of building a democratic state," said Lasha Tordia, a member of parliament.

The two dozen rainbow-colored activists who courageously walked down Tbilisi's main street weren't protesting against the church. They were protesting against an ignorance that has kept generations of Georgian gays in closets and straight people shaking in the boots.

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Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/05/27/gays-show-defiance-against-homophobia-a15041