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Gay Activists to Rally in St. Pete Despite Revoking of Permission

By The Moscow Times

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Rally co-organizer Yury Gavrikov

Gay rights activists in St. Petersburg plan to hold a parade Saturday for which they received permission only to have it later revoked.

Demonstrators will march along the agreed-upon route, from Aprelskaya Ulitsa to Polyustrovsky Park in the city's northeast, with a rally at the park, organizer Yury Gavrikov told Interfax.

Authorities authorized the parade, but the city's legal committee later reversed that decision, spokesman for the St. Petersburg governor's office Andrei Kibitov wrote Thursday on Twitter.

He said the city had revoked permission in part due to the "enormous" number of requests by residents not to allow the event.

Gavrikov called the reversal illegal and said participants would go ahead with the march

and rally.

"We have in our hands the authorization given to us earlier, all the necessary papers," he said.

Gavrikov predicted that many fewer than the 300 people originally expected would attend the event because the city had rescinded permission.

But he said activists were not concerned about the possibility of being fined for violating St. Petersburg's law passed in March banning so-called "homosexual propaganda" to minors.

That law, which stipulates fines ranging from 5,000 to 500,000 rubles ($153 to $15,300) for violators, has prompted outrage from gay rights and human rights organizations as well as Western governments.

Moscow authorities have also taken a hard line on gay parades, not once granting the requests of activists, who apply at least once a year to hold an event.

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