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St. Pete Officials Sanction Gay Rights Rally, Activists Say

By The Moscow Times

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LGBT activists said Monday that St. Petersburg authorities have sanctioned a gay rights rally, despite the city's highly publicized law against "homosexual propaganda."

Activists with the Vykhod organization said in a statement that the rally would be held on May 17 on the central Field of Mars park to mark the International Day Against Homophobia.
On May 17, 1990, the World Heath Organization officially excluded homosexuality from its list of psychiatric illnesses.

"We think that it's especially important to remind [people] that homosexuality is a perfectly normal sexual orientation," Vykhod activist Olga Lenkova said in the statement posted on the organization's website.

St. Petersburg officials had not confirmed that the rally had been sanctioned as of early Monday afternoon. In February 2012, the city's legislature passed a bill imposing fines

for promoting homosexual behavior among minors that was subsequently censured by international stars and foreign governments.

A federal bill to the same effect is soon to be heard in a second reading after being overwhelmingly passed in January.

Every year since 2006, Moscow authorities have refused permission for LGBT activists to hold a gay pride parade.

On Monday, activists applied for official permission to hold their parade on May 25, saying they would take to the streets irrespective of whether authorities grant permission.

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