The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Duma Bans Same-Sex Adoptions

By The Moscow Times

June 23, 2013



Deputy and former boxer Nikolai Valuev attending Friday's Duma session. **Sergei Karpukhin**

State Duma deputies passed a bill on Friday barring same-sex foreign couples from adopting Russian children, heeding strong signals of support from President Vladimir Putin and broadening a rift with Western nations over gay rights.

The Duma approved the bill by a 444-0 vote in its third and final reading, sending it to the Federation Council, which is also expected to approve it.

Putin has championed socially conservative values and held up the Russian Orthodox Church as a moral compass since he weathered a wave of protests by mostly urban liberals and started a third term as president last year.

He has rejected U.S. and European criticism of a ban on spreading gay "propaganda" among minors that the Duma passed earlier this month. Gay rights activists fear the legislation has fueled attacks on homosexuals.

EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said in a statement Thursday that the "propaganda" ban could stigmatize gays and cause discrimination, and the U.S. has said it severely restricts freedom of expression and assembly.

Putin says Russia does not discriminate against gays, but he has criticized them for not adding to Russia's population, which has declined since the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991.

The same-sex adoption ban was rushed through parliament after Putin said in late April that a new French law allowing same-sex marriage went against traditional Russian values.

It also bars adoptions by unmarried foreigners from countries where same-sex marriage is legal.

The ban fits into a Kremlin campaign to restrict foreign adoptions, a sensitive issue after Americans and Europeans flooded into Russia in the post-Soviet era to adopt children.

Same-sex marriage is legal in 15 countries, including seven in Western Europe, and in some jurisdictions in the United States and Mexico. Same-sex couples are not recognized under Russian law and cannot adopt.

A March poll by the independent Levada Center found that 85 percent of Russians opposed same-sex marriage. But there is no big grassroots movement against gay rights in Russia and critics say the measures are being imposed from the top down.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/06/23/duma-bans-same-sex-adoptions-a25176