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Prosecutors to Look Into Deputy's Homophobic Comment

By The Moscow Times

July 04, 2013

A human rights group from Zabaikalsky region has asked regional prosecutors to look into a homophobic comment made by lawmaker Alexander Mikhailov, a news report said Thursday.

Regional deputy Mikhailov said that members of the Cossack community should be allowed to physically punish gay people by flogging them in public with a leather whip, Interfax reported.

His comments came days before a bill introducing stiff fines for portraying homosexuality in a positive light to children was written into law by President Vladimir Putin.

The so-called "Gay Propaganda" bill is supported by 76 percent of Russians, according to a Levada Center poll conducted among 1,600 people in 45 regions. The poll has a 3.4 percent margin for error.

Eighty percent of the survey's respondents said that they did not have any gay friends, while 50 percent said their attitude toward a friend would change if they discovered that they were gay.

Vitaly Cherkasov, head of the Zabaikalsky human rights center, believes that Mikhailov's words could help incite hatred towards the gay community among locals.

Yet Mikhailov himself remained ambivalent, saying that homosexuals were responsible for many of the country's problems and that they should be put to shame.

The Regional Prosecutor's Office said that they would respond to the group's request.

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