

Russian Athletes' Kiss On Winner's Podium - Politics or Congratulatory Gesture?

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko said that a podium kiss between two Russian sprinters was a simple congratulations and not a protest against Russia's anti-gay propaganda law.

Kseniya Ryzhova and Tatyana Firova kissed on the winner's podium after winning gold and besting the U.S. team in the 4x400 meter relay at the 2013 World Athletics Championships in Moscow.

The gesture sparked debate, as most international media viewed the gesture as political statement against the recent anti-gay propaganda law and others claimed it was just two teammates congratulating each other, Sky News reported Monday.

Mutko said that the debate over Russia's legislation was an "invented problem" created by Western media who did not understand the law.

Sources in the Russian track and field camp claimed the kiss had no political message.

Questions about gay rights were in the spotlight throughout the 2013 World Athletics Championships, which ended on Sunday.

On Thursday legendary pole vaulter and world champion Yelena Isinbayeva sparked condemnation after expressing her support for the recent law. She disagreed with the actions of of Swedish high jumper Emma Green Tregaro and sprinter Moa Hjelmer, who competed with their fingernails painted rainbow as a sign of support for the gay community.

Isinbayeva later said that her comments were misconstrued because she was speaking English, which is not her native language.

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