

Alexeyev Announces He's Quitting Gay Rights Activism

By [Allison Quinn](#)

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The  **Moscow Times**

Russia's most prominent gay rights activist, Nikolai Alexeyev, on Wednesday evening announced that he would be quitting his work in Russia after a "slanderous" op-ed piece was written about him in a U.S. publication.

"My dear friends, it's not the Russian homophobic government which stopped me but American insults and slanders," Alexeyev wrote on his Facebook page, saying he was in "emergency proceedings" to give up the post as chief organizer of Moscow Pride.

The article that prompted his decision, published on Out.com and written by gay porn star Michael Lucas, accuses Alexeyev of being influenced or "bought off" by the Kremlin to discredit the gay rights movement in Russia — a claim that many in Russia will find hard to believe after reports of a police raid on Alexeyev's apartment earlier this week.

As evidence for the accusation, Lucas cites several comments made recently by Alexeyev that

many in the West's LGBT community considered to be suspicious or unusual, namely that the gay rights issue was being "twisted to the point of absurdity" in the West.

In an interview with state-run RT, the outspoken gay rights activist said certain facts being cited in Western media regarding the gay rights situation in Russia had been distorted, highlighting a divide between the two LGBT communities.

"In the West, they're saying that kids are being taken away from their parents if the parents are gay or lesbian. Nobody is taking away anybody's kids. Why ratchet this up to the point of absurdity? And what's happening now with the Olympics — it's absurd. In essence, the persecution that Western media is talking about right now is not happening," Alexeyev said in the Aug. 23 interview.

Alexeyev seemed to be referring to a statement made by openly gay Russian journalist Masha Gessen on U.S. television that she had decided to leave Russia for fear that her kids would be taken away.

There have been no reports of same-sex couples having their children removed from their care, but State Duma Deputy Yelena Mizulina — who, incidentally, has prompted the opening of a criminal case against Alexeyev on slander charges — has spoken of such legislation being under consideration by lawmakers.

The controversial anti-gay propaganda law signed by President Vladimir Putin in June has triggered a wave of protests in the West, with many activists calling for a boycott of the upcoming Winter Olympics in Sochi. The issue has thrust Russia's gay rights record into the spotlight and made the subject a trending topic in Western media, with numerous celebrities chiming in on the matter.

Lady Gaga, playwright and activist Harvey Fierstein and Stephen Fry are among those who have openly condemned the anti-gay legislation.

Lucas, who is Russian-born but left the country in 1994, says that Alexeyev has "betrayed his former cause" and "can no longer be trusted," implying that he is now working for the Kremlin, which "is up to its old tricks again."

But, perhaps highlighting the divide between LGBT realities in Russia and those in the West — the very rift that Alexeyev has called attention to recently — Lucas refers to RT as the Russian Times. There is no such publication.

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