

Dutch Say Russian Gay Rights Violations May Warrant Asylum

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Dutch foreign minister on Tuesday denounced Russia's law banning homosexual "propaganda" among minors and said the violation of gay rights could be grounds for asylum in the Netherlands.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries are already under pressure over a series of incidents, and the sharply worded letter from Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans to parliament could strain these further.

"The anti-homosexuality propaganda law has a stigmatising and discriminatory affect and contributes to a climate of homophobia," Timmermans wrote.

Inhumane treatment or violation of the fundamental rights of Russian lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, or LGBT people, could be grounds for asylum, he wrote.

"The circumstances of the LGBTs, including the possible consequences of the new law, will of course be considered in evaluating asylum requests," he said. Rights violations "would lead to the issuing of an asylum permit".

Among the issues that have clouded ties were Russia's detention of Greenpeace activists, two of whom are Dutch, and the impounding of their Netherlands-registered vessel.

The Netherlands filed a claim at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, demanding the ship and crew be released, with the first hearing scheduled for Wednesday.

Last month the Netherlands and Russia clashed after senior diplomats from each country were beaten in their respective homes in Moscow and The Hague. The Netherlands apologised after Dutch police illegally detained a Russia diplomat.

In Russia, unidentified people wrote LGBT in lipstick on the mirror of a Dutch diplomat after assaulting him in his Moscow apartment. Russia said it was investigating the matter.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte has played down the tensions, saying last week that relations with President Vladimir Putin and Russia are strong and have not been damaged.

But Timmermans wrote his letter at an awkward time, just days before Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima are expected to meet Putin during an official state visit Nov. 9 to mark 400 years of diplomatic ties.

Timmermans wrote that the Netherlands would continue to push for international attention and dialogue about "the position of the LGBT community in Russia".

Russia has been criticised for its record on gay rights before it hosts the 2014 winter Olympics in Sochi. Putin faced activists during a visit to Amsterdam in May who held a banner saying: "Putin, Go Homo."

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