

Gay Activist Rejects Idea of Dutch Asylum

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Russia's top gay rights activist has rejected the Dutch offer to grant asylum to harassed Russian gays, saying there is no mass discrimination against them in the country.

"Of course, there are cases when somebody needs to be granted asylum, but these cases are so isolated that it has no relation whatsoever to the overall picture," Nikolai Alexeyev, the head organizer of unauthorized gay pride parades in Moscow since 2006, told Komsomolskaya Pravda radio on Wednesday.

Alexeyev was reacting to the letter Dutch Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans sent to his country's parliament on Tuesday, in which he said that violations of the rights of Russian gays "would lead to the issuing of an asylum permit" for them in the Netherlands.

Alexeyev accused other Russian gays, without referring to anyone in particular, of "creating an appearance" that the federal law that in July introduced fines for propaganda of gay

relations to minors "affects them in some way."

"In reality, this law is not actually applied in practice, except for cases of limiting the freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly," Alexeyev said, adding, "People are simply taking advantage of the existing situation."

Confusingly, in July 2012 Alexeyev complained about a similar ban in St. Petersburg as being discriminatory to the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg, France.

Repeated calls to Alexeyev's cell phone went unanswered Wednesday.

Three senior State Duma deputies also condemned Timmermans' offer Wednesday, denying persecution of gays and saying the asylum offer was aimed at creating a negative image of Russia abroad.

Yelena Afanasyeva of the nationalist LDPR party told Interfax that those who exaggerate the effects of the recently passed law "want to work in Europe and sling mud at our country" but added that she believes most emigrants want to return to their homeland.

A Just Russia's Yelena Misulina, a co-author of the July 2013 ban on gay propaganda, called Timmermans' offer an attempt to belittle Russia by making it "look like an insect" in order to neutralize the discussion of the beating of a Russian diplomat in the Hague last month, RIA Novosti reported.

Leonid Kalashnikov of the Communist party, invited Timmermans to visit Russian gay clubs and find a gay who is harassed.

"Nobody persecutes anyone here," Kalashnikov told Interfax, pointing out that Russian laws don't proscribe prison terms for homosexuality like in the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, Moscow's Tverskoy District Court fined Alexeyev and another gay rights activist 10,000 rubles (\$310) for staging a rally in Moscow in May, Gayrussia.eu reported.

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