

Dutch Foreign Minister Says Political Asylum Statement Not Directed at Russian Gays

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Gays are not being prosecuted in Russia, so they have no grounds to ask the Netherlands for political asylum, Dutch Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans said in an attempt to correct media reports that he had invited Russian homosexuals to apply for asylum in the Netherlands.

The foreign minister was earlier reported as saying that the Russian law banning homosexual propaganda among minors violates the rights of sexual minorities and could push the Netherlands to grant such people asylum.

"First of all, I never said this," Timmermans told RIA Novosti in an interview.

"I answered ... parliamentary questions in a written form. And in my answer I said in general terms, it didn't pertain to Russia specifically, that if homosexuals are prosecuted, they are in a

position to ask for asylum in the Netherlands," he said.

"At this stage homosexuals are not being prosecuted in Russia, so there is no ground for asylum in the Netherlands. It was a generic answer to a generic question; it was not specifically aimed at Russia," Timmermans said.

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to clarify this, because I was very sorry that the impression was created that this was directed at Russia. It was not," he said.

Nonetheless, many interpreted Timmermans' words as a response to a new Russian 'gay propaganda' law, which critics say has been used to legitimize a crackdown on homosexuals.

The misunderstanding follows a series of incidents that have caused relations between Russia and the Netherlands to sour, including the arrest of a Russian diplomat in The Hague and Russia's prosecution of 30 Greenpeace activists who were sailing under the Dutch flag.

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