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Activist Plans Protest Amid Outrage Over Talk Show Host's Homophobic Meteor Comments

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Arkady Mamontov believes homosexuality is to blame for the meteorite that fell on Chelyabinsk. **Arkady Mamontov**

Leading gay rights activist Nikolai Alexeyev has applied to City Hall to stage a protest in Moscow later this month against homophobic comments made by a Russian talk show host this week.

Alexeyev plans to stage the meeting at the Ostankino television center on Nov. 26 and, if the application is successful, hopes to gather 50,000 protesters, Interfax reported Thursday.

During his "Special Correspondent" show on Rossia 1 television channel, host Arkady Mamontov incensed the LGBT community by suggesting that the meteorite that exploded over Chelyabinsk in February was punishment brought upon Russia for tolerating gays.

Citing the Bible story about the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah, Mamontov said that Russia faces

similarly fiery disasters unless it suppresses gay activism.

"This is a warning to us all that we need to preserve our traditions, the family, the traditional love, or not only the Chelyabinsk meteorite will hit us, but something bigger," Mamontov said.

"I know that sodomites — which is what they should be called, instead of 'homosexuals' — react very painfully to this story," he added.

He also accused the West of seeking to "destroy Russia" by supporting gay rights movements.

The Russian LGBT Network has asked the General Prosecutor's Office to investigate whether Mamontov's remarks constituted hate speech, Russia Today reported Friday.

Human rights lawyer Maria Bast called the airing of the show on a major state-run network a demonstration of increasing suppression of independent thought in Russia and said that the show reflected fascism and intolerance, a statement on the website of the Association of Russian Lawyers for Human Rights said.

Russian LGBT activist groups say that assaults against gays in Russia by homophobic vigilantes have increased sharply since the country adopted a law outlawing the promotion of "gay propaganda" to minors.

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