

Gay Actor McKellen 'Warned Against Russia Visit' by British Government

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Actor Ian McKellen at the 2010 Manchester gay pride parade. **Pete Birkinshaw**

Openly homosexual British actor Ian McKellen has said he was advised by the British government not to travel to Russia because of anti-gay legislation there, the BBC reported Tuesday.

"That's why I can't go ... they couldn't protect me from those laws," said McKellen, 75, who is known for his role as Gandalf in the "Lord of the Rings" movies, according to an interview reported by the BBC.

Russia passed a law earlier this year banning the promotion of non-traditional relationships to minors, which has been widely criticized as homophobic. The Kremlin maintains the law does not restrict the freedom of adults to make their own sexual choices.

"Two and a half hours from London! In the land of Tchaikovsky, Diaghilev, Rudolf Nureyev —

gay artists whose sexuality informed their work," said McKellen, the BBC reported.

The anti-gay legislation has been widely criticized internationally. British Prime Minister David Cameron said in August that he was deeply concerned about "the abuse of gay people in Russia."

British actor and gay rights advocate Stephen Fry has been strongly critical of the law, comparing President Vladimir Putin's Russia to Hitler's Nazi Germany.

Several prominent British cultural figures have pulled out of appearances in Russia in recent months.

British singer Elton John performed in Russia last week, but reportedly described the law as "inhumane" from the stage and dedicated his concert to a Russian man murdered in a homophobic killing in May.

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