

Italian Gay Activist Set to Leave Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A transgender former member of the Italian parliament who was detained in Sochi for shouting "It's OK to be gay," said she was planning to leave Russia on Tuesday.

Vladimir Luxuria, who identifies as a woman, said by phone and text messages that she was detained and then released on Sunday for holding a Russian-language sign that read "Gay is OK." Sochi organizers denied any knowledge of the arrest, The Associated Press reported.

However the following day, Luxuria — dressed in a rainbow-colored outfit and elaborate headdress — was followed by reporters who saw police taking her away, apparently for a second time, as she shouted "It's OK to be gay" in both English and Russian, the report said.

Luxuria had walked around the Olympic Park for about two hours before police picked her up.

The four men who stopped Luxuria drove her away in a police car with Olympic markings, and released her in the countryside about 10 minutes later, she told the AP.

"They don't say anything. They just were people who had to do this, and they did it," Luxuria said.

The activist returned to her hotel and said she would be leaving Russia on Tuesday morning.

"I was very, very afraid this time because the first time they said, 'It's OK for the first time, don't do it again for the second time,'" Luxuria said.

Before she went to the stadium on Monday, she said she didn't want to be arrested, but that it was important for her "to stand up for the rights of lesbian, gay and transgender people all over the world."

No charges against Luxuria have been reported. Foreigners may face extradition if found guilty of violating the "gay propaganda" law, which bans the promotion of nontraditional sexual relations to children.

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