

Gay Rights Event to Be Held Despite Authorities Advising Against It

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Gay rights activist Alexander Yermoshkin campaigning against LGBT discrimination last May.

Khabarovsk gay rights activist Alexander Yermoshkin said a sanctioned action for the International Day Against Homophobia on Saturday will go on despite local authorities urging him not to hold the event.

Yermoshkin said last week that city authorities had agreed to his request to allow him and up to 100 people release colored balloons into the sky to demonstrate against all forms of discrimination, including anti-LGBT discrimination.

On Thursday, however, the city administration called the activist in and gave him a letter recommending that he not hold the event in light of the "large societal resonance" about the event and "possible difficulties in implementing security."

City authorities further distanced themselves from Yermoshkin's event in a statement

reported by local media outlet Amur Press, in which authorities said the organizers of the event had "distorted the aims of the action" in their application.

The statement continued by saying that city authorities were only obliged to document that they had received notice of the event, and that organizers had been misleading the public by saying they had been given a permit to hold the balloon release.

Yermoshkin, who was fired from his teaching job in the wake of last year's law banning gay propaganda among minors, confirmed to The Moscow Times on Thursday by phone that he planned to continue with the event. He said authorities had acknowledged the legality of the balloon release and were most likely looking out for their own "legal safety" with recent statements.

The "societal resonance" that prompted authorities to issue the recommendation to Yermoshkin may reference the campaign by Khabarovsk region Public Chamber member Sergei Pleshakov to cancel the event.

A Change.org petition telling Khabarovsk Mayor Alexander Sokolov that the event would violate the anti-gay propaganda law had gathered more than 2,000 online signatures as of Thursday, though it is unclear how many of the signatures are from Khabarovsk residents.

Authorities' concerns about security in their recommendation against the event may stem from a disruption of last year's May meeting by a local fascist-inspired group, Stoltz Khabarovsk, and discussion of this year's event on anti-gay social network pages. Yermoshkin said that he has already had an unofficial conversation with police about security for May 17.

Read more:

[Approved Gay Event in Russia's Far East Set to Test Tolerance](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/05/15/gay-rights-event-to-be-held-despite-authorities-advising-against-it-a35493)

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