

Nationalists Hijack 3-Person LGBT Rally in Southern Russia

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LGBT demonstrators in St. Petersburg protest against the war in Ukraine.

Dozens of nationalists gathered in the southern city of Lipetsk over the weekend to oppose a rally of three gay rights activists, a news report said.

Two young women and a man met Sunday in Lipetsk and walked to the city's central Sobornaya Ploshchad, where their demonstration for LGBT rights had been expected to take place, local news site LRNews reported.

The rally was greeted by about 100 nationalists and conservative activists, as well as police officers deployed to prevent violence, the report said.

One of the rally participants, who gave her name as Reida Linn, said she and her friends wanted to draw public attention to “fighting homophobia, discrimination and violations of the Constitution and of the rights of LGBT people,” LRNews reported.

Local authorities declined to issue authorization for the rally, Linn was quoted as saying. Participants in unauthorized rallies are subject to prosecution under Russian law.

A middle-aged man threw a green tomato at the demonstrators and shouted: “You have no place on Russian soil,” before he was detained by police, the report said.

As opponents continued their verbal assaults, police detained the demonstrators, placing them in a police van. The Komsomolskaya Pravda daily described police actions as an attempt to protect the protestors.

A group of young men then tried to overturn the vehicle before additional police troops rushed to the scene, dispersing the crowd that surrounded the van and detaining four people, news reports said.

Demonstrations of anti-gay sentiment in Russia have reportedly flared up after the country last year passed a law banning the promotion of gay “propaganda” to minors.

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