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Health Ministry Says Transsexuals Can Still Drive in Russia

By The Moscow Times

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The Health Ministry has denied widespread reports that transvestites and transsexuals could lose their rights to drive in Russia based on a new road safety decree.

Although the decree provides for the disqualification of driving rights for certain individuals with psychological or behavioral disorders, the mere fact that a person has a "sexual disorder" does not mean that person cannot drive, Health Ministry spokesman Oleg Salagai explained Tuesday in comments carried by Interfax.

"The varying severity of mental disorders among patients — as well as their need for psychotropic drugs that significantly alter their reactions — make it impossible for [certain people] to drive," he was cited as saying.

The ban therefore only relates to those who pose a danger to others on the road, Salagai said, adding that sexual orientation was not defined as a psychological disorder and could not be used to ban a person from driving.

A decree signed by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and published on the government website earlier this month listed an array of health conditions that could disqualify someone from getting behind the wheel, including "personality and behavioral disorders" as defined by the World Health Organization's classification of health problems.

The section in question — F60 to F69 — lists transsexualism and transvestism, among other "disorders of sexual preference," such as fetishism and voyeurism. "Disorders associated with sexual development and orientation" are also listed.

Facing international criticism for its listing of transvestite orientation as a "disorder," the World Health Organization said in a statement that it will review its section on "sexual disorders" to account for recent advances in health-related knowledge.

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