

# Russia Wants to Cut Staff Benefits for Same-Sex Couples in the UN

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A gay couple embraces as they stand in front of a rainbow flag during a protest outside the town hall in Monterrey March 4, 2015

Russia has asked a United Nations General Assembly committee to vote on Tuesday on its proposal to stop the world body extending staff benefits to all same-sex couples, diplomats said.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in July that the United Nations would recognize all same-sex marriages of its staff, allowing them to receive UN benefits.

Previously, staff members' personal status was determined by the laws of their country of nationality. But the United Nations now recognizes all same-sex couples married in a country where it is legal, regardless of their nationality.

Russia wants the General Assembly Fifth Committee, which deals with the United Nations budget, to overturn Ban's decision and requested a vote on Tuesday. Russia has been threatening to put the measure to a vote since December.

The Fifth Committee website was updated on Friday to show that "action" would be taken on the proposal on Tuesday.

Diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it was unclear how much support there was for the measure. The Russian UN mission declined to comment.

Russia triggered global criticism in 2013 when it banned spreading "gay propaganda" to children. Critics denounced the law as discriminatory and said it is a curb on rights to free speech and assembly.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said there is no gay discrimination in Russia, which decriminalized homosexuality in 1993.

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