

Russia's Gay Pride Organizer Gets 10 Days in Jail

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Police detain Nikolai Alexeyev, a gay rights activist, during an LGBT community rally in central Moscow, May 30.

The main organizer of Saturday's gay pride parade in Moscow was sentenced to 10 days in jail for "disobeying police orders" by a city court Monday.

Nikolai Alexeyev, a prominent LGBT activist and lawyer, was arrested along with several other activists after police broke up Saturday's unsanctioned Moscow Pride rally held on Tverskaya Ploshchad, across the street from the mayor's office.

Alexeyev, who first announced his intention to hold a Moscow Pride event in 2005, chose to defy the city authorities' ban on the parade for the 10th year in a row.

Some of the gay rights demonstrators at Saturday's meeting were attacked by anti-gay activists, a number of whom were also detained by police.

Not a man to maintain a low profile, Alexeyev himself bombed down Tverskaya Ulitsa on a red

quad bike streaming a rippling rainbow flag. He brandished a flare billowing bright orange smoke in his wake.

Alexeyev was later bundled into a police van with a bloody hand for "refusing to obey police orders."

Alexeyev has campaigned for years for gay rights. In 2010, he won his case at the European Court of Human Rights, which denounced the Moscow authorities' bans on gay pride rallies as unlawful.

He has been arrested several times in the past for involvement in unsanctioned public events, including previous Moscow Pride rallies.

He was also the first person in Russia to be punished under the original St. Petersburg law against spreading "homosexual propaganda," having been fined 5,000 rubles (\$170 at the time).

Russia has faced considerable criticism for its treatment of the LGBT community. In 2013 it provoked significant international censure and controversy by passing the so-called gay propaganda law at a federal level, forbidding the "promotion of non-traditional sexual relations" to minors.

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