

Russian Activists Plan Rally for Orlando Shooting Victims

By [Anastasia Bazenkova](#)

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Muscovites laid flowers and condolences in sympathy for Orlando shooting victims.

Activists have appealed to Moscow City Hall for permission to hold a rally for the victims of the homophobic mass-shooting at an Orlando gay bar.

Event co-organizer Maria Baronova told the Moscow Times Friday that she expected 500 people to attend the rally, which is scheduled for June 27.

The rally comes after the arrest of two men who were detained as they attempted to light candles in support of the Orlando victims outside the US embassy.

The pair, who carried a poster with the words “Love wins,” were accused of holding an unauthorised rally, a violation that carries a fine of up to 30,000 rubles (\$460).

“This rally must be held,” said Baronova, a member of the Open Russia human rights project. “Russians want to express their support for the victims of the Orlando and had no chance to

do it.” She said that the group’s chances of receiving permission to hold the rally stood at “about 50-50.”

A number of Russian officials, including the Russian President Vladimir Putin, have condemned the attack at Orlando's Pulse nightclub, which saw American citizen Omar Mateen open fire on LGBT clubgoers on June 12. Before the attack, Mateen had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, a terrorist organization banned in Russia. Some 49 people died and 53 more were injured as a result of his actions.

“The authorities' response to our request for the rally will show how concerned they really are about this problem,” Baronova said.

The participants at the rally plan to carry rainbow flags and distribute leaflets. The organizers also plan to call for the abolition of Russia's so-called gay propaganda law.

The controversial legislation, which bans “promoting non-traditional sexual relationships to children,” has sparked widespread among human rights activists.

The law has had a dramatic affect on the society's moral since its adoption in 2013, Baronova said.

“People in Russia have begun to make more homophobic statements, the level of violence towards gay people has increased, and such actions are approved by society and authorities,” she said.

While many Russians have condemned the attack, some supported Mateen’s actions. President of the Union of Young Innovators of Tatarstan, Ramil Ibragimov, wrote on social media after the attack his organization, “absolutely supported this decisive action.”

“Fifty-three people are injured,” he wrote on Instagram, “We hope they die too.”

A similar attack on LGBT clubgoers took place in the Russian city of Ekaterinburg on Saturday, when stormed a gay nightclub and began to attack patrons. The hooligans also fired air guns, injuring at least four.

Contact the author at a.bazenkova@imedia.ru. Follow the author on Twitter at [@a_bazenkova](https://twitter.com/a_bazenkova).

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