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Gay Couple Forced to Flee Russia Over Police Threats After Marriage Cancelled

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Yevgeny Voytsekhovsky and Pavel Stotsko **Pavel Stotsko / Facebook**

Two gay Russian men whose marriage was accidentally recognized in Russia last week have reportedly been forced to leave the country after police pressure.

A Russian official stamped the passports of Pavel Stotsko and Yevgeny Voytsekhovsky with a new marital status in Moscow after the couple officially married in Copenhagen on Jan. 4. After widespread media attention, Russia's Interior Ministry declared that their passports were invalid and said that the men would be fined for "intentionally damaging" them.

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On Monday, police came to the couple's apartment in the suburb of Lyubertsy and tried to break down the door, the OVD-info police monitoring group reported. The couple then began to receive threats and the electricity in their apartment was shut off.

“The police officers declared openly that they could not protect [the pair] from attacks from homophobically-minded citizens and organizations. This was a hidden threat,” said human rights activist Igor Kochetkov.

“Therefore the decision was made that for now, they must leave Russia,” he added.

Kochetkov, who helped the couple leave the country, has also started to receive threats, the opposition-leaning Dozhd TV news channel reported Monday.

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