The Moscow Times
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Russian Authorities Cancel Gay Pride Parade in Teriberka Over Wind Concerns

February 02, 2018

Sergei Yermokhin / TASS

Russian authorities have blocked a gay parade planned north of the Arctic Circle over what they say are health dangers posed by possible hurricane winds and bad weather.

Gay rights activist Nikolai Alexeyev planned to hold the parade on Feb. 9 in Teriberka, a desolate town of just over 1,000 people, as part of his campaign to host LGBT rallies in 185 cities and towns across Russia. A law banning "gay propaganda" has significantly reduced the number of gay pride events in the country since it passed in 2013.

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Teriberka's local authorities cited bad weather conditions in their refusal to allow the rally, including low temperatures and hurricane winds that "could endanger the health of the citizens that participate in your event," according to an official letter dated Jan. 31 that the activist posted on his Vkontakte social media page.

“I’ve never received an answer like this,” Alexeyev said in a telephone interview with The Moscow Times on Friday, adding that “95 percent of the time” the authorities cite the 2013 gay propaganda law when refusing his applications for events.

“What are they, meteorologists now?” he asked.

Other reasons cited by the authorities for their refusal include the presence of dilapidated homes along the route of the rally that could collapse and hurt participants.

Alexeyev said that the march was planned in Teriberka specifically because of its fame: It was the set for the 2014 Golden Globe-winning film “Leviathan.”

“We are appealing in court,” Alexeyev said.

“If needed, we will take it to the European Court of Human Rights.”

Winds in Teriberka are expected to reach maximum speeds of 9 meters per second on Feb. 9, according to the Gismeteo weather service.

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