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Russia's Transgender People in Their Own Words

By Jasper Groen

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Russian lawmakers recently introduced legislation that will have major implications for the country's transgender population. If passed, the draft law — which also seeks to ban LGBT marriage and adoption — will make it impossible for transgender people to change their gender on official documents after they have transitioned. Activists and rights groups say the law will make life for Russia's transgender population even more difficult, barring them from job opportunities, making it more difficult to marry and encouraging transphobic harassment and violence. Dutch photographer Jasper Groen photographed several transgender people in St. Petersburg last October. He says their portraits have taken on a new urgency since the law was introduced. The photo series is titled "They can cut flowers, but they can't stop spring," an adaptation of a quote from Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. "No matter how hard the Russian government tries to oppress transgender people: they exist, they are willing to defend themselves and they make the best out of their often complicated situation," Groen says. His subjects shared their thoughts on life as a trans person in Russia and how they think the new law will affect them:



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