The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Ex-Official Outed as Gay Flees Country, Denounces War

October 16, 2024



Denis Leontovich. **Denis Leontovich / VK**

A Russian official who resigned after a federal lawmaker accused him of being in a relationship with a man has fled the country and denounced Moscow's war against Ukraine.

In April, State Duma deputy Alexander Khinshtein outed Denis Leontovich, an ex-employee of the Samara region's youth policy agency, as a member of what he claimed to be a "secret gay lobby" that influences young Russians.

Khinshtein's allegations follow Russia's Supreme Court ruling last November that designated a vaguely defined "international LGBT public movement" as a banned "extremist" organization. Civil rights activists say the "extremist" label enables the Russian authorities to prosecute anyone linked to LGBTQ+ lifestyles or symbols.

"It's been six months since my forced exile [when] I had to decide to leave Russia in one day because I started receiving real threats," Leontovich, 23, wrote on the social media website Vkontakte in early October.

“I’ve been forced to build my life from scratch in other countries and cities,” Leontovich added. “Why? Simply because my own state doesn’t accept me as a human being [or] my sexual orientation. To them, I’m an extremist, a traitor and a criminal just because I was born gay.”

Leontovich accused the Russian government of declaring pro-peace Russians “enemies of the state” instead of “the president who annexes other people’s territories and starts an absolutely horrible war with a neighboring country.”

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/10/16/russian-ex-official-outed-as-gay-flees-country-denounces-war-a86715