

Rainbow Painted on United Russia HQ

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The  **Moscow Times**

A group of gay-rights activists spray-painted a rainbow and the words "We cannot be banned" on the facade of the United Russia party headquarters in Moscow on Sunday evening, to protest a St. Petersburg law that effectively outlaws gay-pride parades and other displays or discussion of gay and lesbian sexual orientations.

The activists also painted a rainbow and the same slogan on a Moscow patriarchate building to protest homophobic remarks made by Russian Orthodox Church spokesman Vsevolod Chaplin, Novaya Gazeta reported.

The activists targeted United Russia for its leading role in advancing the highly controversial St. Petersburg law, which would introduce fines for advocating gay and lesbian relationships in the presence of children and for promoting pedophilia. The draft law was approved by city lawmakers in a second reading earlier this month.

The law has drawn outrage among gay-rights activists and liberal lawmakers in Russia, as well as condemnation by the international community, including by the U.S. State Department.

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The church press service responded by denying that any buildings had been painted at all, Interfax reported.

Novaya Gazeta published on its website photographs of the activists painting what appear to be church buildings. Among the photographs is a close-up of a painted-over metal sign that reads, "Department of External Church Communications."

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