

Lawmakers Seek Probe Into Gay Activist's Twitter Remarks

July 29, 2013



Yelena Mizulina in the State Duma in January 2012. **D. Abramov**

Two lawmakers have asked prosecutors to launch a criminal case against a prominent gay rights activist over his Twitter remarks, a news report said Monday.

Yelena Mizulina, head of the State Duma's Committee on Family, Women and Children, and her first deputy Yelena Batalina, informed the Prosecutor General's Office that gay rights campaigner Nikolai Alexeyev posted rude and offensive remarks about them on Twitter while commenting on the "gay propaganda law."

An online petition to the White House describes Mizulina as a person who is "responsible for the federal law banning gay 'propaganda' to minors and for the law banning foreign adoptions of Russian orphans by gays and lesbians."

The petition requests that U.S. authorities to put her on the visa blacklist.

Mizulina told Izvestia that they asked prosecutors to launch a criminal case on charges

of "insulting a representative of authority." The charges entail a fine of up to 40,000 rubles (over \$1,000) or community service.

"If a criminal case is launched, we will ask to penalize [Alexeyev] with community service in places where he will be unable to carry out his gay propaganda, for example, in a coroner's van," Mizulina said.

Her deputy Batalina said she did not feel offended, but was seeking to protect all lawmakers from further insults.

"Every person is free to agree or disagree with this or that law. But expressing an opinion should not prevent other people from doing their professional duties. That's why we decided to file this request, in order to protect the interests of all lawmakers," Batalina said.

Alexeyev told Izvestia that he sees nothing criminal in his actions.

"They offend millions of people with their initiatives and laws, such as the gay propaganda law. I'm just expressing my public stance," he said.

On June 30, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed into law a bill banning the promotion of homosexuality toward minors.

The law seeks to levy fines for such offenses from 800,000 to 1 million rubles (\$30,500) for legal entities, and from 4,000 to 5,000 rubles for individuals. The activities of legal entities may also be suspended for 90 days for disseminating gay propaganda among children.

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