

Activist Seeks Rally to Spread Putin's Pro-Gay Remarks

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Gay rights activists holding up banners and flags at a demonstration earlier this month in St. Petersburg.
Alexander Demianchuk

Gay rights activist Nikolai Alexeyev has submitted an application to City Hall to hold a rally to "disseminate the words of President Vladimir Putin" in defense of gays, apparently challenging authorities to allow a rally showing support for gays.

The application was prompted by Putin's remarks at a meeting with nonparliamentary parties on Wednesday, when he said discrimination against "people of nontraditional sexual orientations" must not be allowed.

The application asks to hold the rally on Dec. 4 from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m., with an expected turnout of up to 20 people. City Hall has three working days to respond to the request.

Alexeyev wrote on Twitter that "if Moscow authorities forbid us from publicly expressing

and disseminating in society the direct quotes of Russia's president, we will all be witnesses to the complete absurdity of the current situation, absolute disrespect of the fundamental rights of freedom of assembly and freedom of speech."

Alexeyev's request may put Moscow authorities in an awkward position, as Wednesday's meeting saw Putin respond to criticism of Russia's human rights record in an apparent bid to defuse international disapproval.

In response to international claims that a law banning "gay propaganda" has spurred a series of attacks against Russia's LGBT community, Putin said "all that we did at the governmental, the legislative level had to do with limiting propaganda among minors," Interfax reported.

"Not on a single score should we create this kind of xenophobia in society against anyone, including against people of nontraditional sexual orientation," he said.

Putin also told political opposition leaders he would "look at" the charges against 70 people whom rights groups consider political prisoners.

The meeting gathered the leaders of the major nonparliamentary political parties, including Vladimir Ryzhkov of RPR-Parnas, billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov of Civil Platform and Sergei Mitrokhin of Yabloko.

Opposition activist Alexei Navalny was not invited to the meeting because his People's Alliance is not a registered party.

Ryzhkov handed Putin a list of 70 convicts and detainees in Russia's prisons and jails whom human rights groups have designated as political prisoners.

The list presented during the meeting was not immediately available, but Russian media reported that it could match the list of 70 "political prisoners" prepared by human rights group Memorial, which included members of the punk rock band Pussy Riot, Greenpeace activists arrested during a protest in the Arctic, and participants of last year's opposition rallies.

"I will certainly take a look at this, and in the most attentive way," Putin told Ryzhkov.

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