

Putin Tells Gays to 'Leave Children in Peace' in Sochi

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Putin speaking to volunteers at Krasnaya Polyana on Friday

KRASNAYA POLYANA — Gay people should feel comfortable at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi but "leave children in peace," President Vladimir Putin said Friday.

Gay sex is not a crime in Russia, so gay people can "[feel calm, at ease, but leave children in peace, please](#)," Putin said at a meeting with Olympic volunteers in the mountain village of Krasnaya Polyana, the base outside Sochi for Olympic snow sports, RIA Novosti reported.

In June, Putin signed into law a bill forbidding the promotion of homosexuality to minors, sparking months of controversy ahead of the Games.

The law's proponents argue that it is aimed at protecting children from harmful influences, but critics allege the move restricts freedom of speech and is part of a broader crackdown on Russia's gay community.

Putin's latest remarks come a day after he repeated his vow that there would be "no discrimination" at the Games. He has previously said that Russia will "do everything" to ensure a warm welcome for visitors to Sochi "regardless ... of sexual orientation."

The Interior Ministry has vowed to enforce the controversial anti-gay law at the Olympics. There will also be tight restrictions on protests, which are confined to a park in a small town that lies more than 12 kilometers from any Olympic venues.

U.S. President Barack Obama will not attend the Games, and his nomination of two gay former athletes to his country's delegation has been widely interpreted as a comment on the Russian law.

The Games will run from Feb. 7-23 and the Paralympics will be held in March.

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