

# Moscow Plays Host to a Diverse Array of Nationalist, LGBT Rallies

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Two protesters holding a banner that reads "Marriage, Children, Security."

Muscovites wishing to voice their discontent with a range of government policies held a trio of protests on Saturday, though organizers seemed more focused the symbolic victory of not being detained than of generating political momentum.

Speaking before a crowd supporters in central Moscow's Triumfalnaya Ploshchad early Saturday evening, nationalist politician and author Eduard Limonov lauded his party The Other Russia for having "survived" a lengthy period of rejection during which each application to organize a public demonstration was shot down.

Limonov's was essentially the keynote speech in a "Strategy 31" event that the party applied to orchestrate. Strategy 31 is an ongoing series of rallies held at the end of each 31-day month. The date was chosen in honor of Article 31 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to hold peaceful public gatherings.

Saturday marked the first occasion in five years when The Other Russia was granted permission to host a Strategy 31 event.

Speaking to a crowd that Kommersant estimated at 300 people, Limonov denied rumors that city authorities had permitted the rally because he had come out in support of intervention in Ukraine.

Still, Limonov called on his followers and the authorities to offer more assistance to the separatists in eastern Ukraine, and flags of the self-declared Donetsk People's Republic were seen in large numbers among attendees.

While Limonov embraced a resurgence for freedom of assembly, gay rights activists saw a drop in numbers and a slew of detentions at protests that took place earlier on Saturday.

During an unsanctioned Gay Pride Parade held across the street from City Hall, two women were detained by police while holding up a rainbow flag. The number pales in comparison to last year's iteration of the event, when more than 30 activists were detained.

A separate, sanctioned LGBT demonstration was held Saturday afternoon in Gorky Park. The protest was scheduled to coincide with International Children's Day under the auspices of protecting minors from discrimination.

Dozens of participants gathered in a cordoned-off section of the park. At one point, anti-LGBT activists hurled eggs at the protesters.

Rally organizer Igor Yasin told The Moscow Times after the event that holding small-scale actions with broad goals like protecting children regardless of their sexual orientation was a small step for Russia's gay rights movement, but said, "All the same it is an important step because we did it even though there were complaints from the police."

Yasin was detained by police while speaking with The Moscow Times and posted on his Twitter account 2 1/2 hours later that he had been let go.

Four activists were detained in the park, though not all of them were directly participating in the sanctioned activities. Among those detained for activities outside of the cordoned-off area was a woman who had drawn a beard on her face in support of Eurovision Song Contest winner and drag queen Conchita Wurst.

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