



RUSSIA: Hearing of Anti-Gay Bill Postponed Until After Elections

Today deputies of the Legislative Assembly of St. Petersburg decided to postpone the hearing of the infamous anti-gay bill for the second time. The bill, banning so-called propaganda of "sodomy, lesbianism, bisexualism and transgenderism, and pedophilia to minors", introduced by Putin and Medvedev's United Russia party at the beginning of November, is an attempt to legalize discrimination against LGBT people in Russia.

Recent polls indicate a slump in the popularity of United Russia amongst the electorate and the bill, exploiting the widespread homophobia in society, has been interpreted by many as a populist pre-election stunt in order to gain the conservative vote.

Others see it as something deeper and more dangerous – an attempt at consolidating society on the foundation of hatred toward a minority, drifting towards totalitarianism.

According to comments by lawmakers, authors of the bill thought there would be no opposition and did not expect the public outcry, both from within Russia and abroad. Over 10 000 signatures against the bill have been collected in Russia and abroad a massive 220 000 signatures have been gathered. Additionally, numerous mass street protests have taken place all over Russia, dozens

of Russian and international organizations have demanded explanations from Russian politicians. Delay in the hearing of the bill means it will not be adopted before the December elections, and Russian LGBT activists hope that the parliament newly voted in will think twice before adopting such a scandalous measure.

The situation remains uncertain and the danger for LGBT people in Russia remains extremely high.

"This is our first victory, but the fight is far from over," says Polina Savchenko, LGBT activist. "Until the bill is repealed it hangs over our heads like the sword of Damocles. It can be back on the table in no time and we need to continue campaigning against this blatant attempt to silence the gay community for good."

Polina Savchenko,
LGBT organization Coming Out,
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<http://www.comingoutspb.ru>

<http://www.lgbtnet.ru>