



**CONSUL GENERAL  
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
IN SEATTLE**

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RECEIVED  
13 SEP -6 AM 9:55  
CITY OF SEATTLE  
MAYOR'S OFFICE

Hon. Michael McGinn  
Mayor of Seattle  
600 4<sup>th</sup> Ave #7  
Seattle, WA 98104

September 04, 2013

Dear Mayor Michael McGinn,

I'm writing to you with regard to a demonstration in support of the rights of the LGBT community in Russia that took place September 3, 2013 outside my residence in Seattle.

I fully respect the right for free expression of one's view, so it was a bit disappointing to learn that the very initial message for the manifestation was wrong and thus – misleading the participants of the event. It is easy to notice how the recent media spin around the adoption in Russia of a law that bans propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors is aimed towards portraying my country as being non-tolerant towards the LGBT community. That is simply not true.

Homosexuality has been legal in Russia since 1993, while it needs to be mentioned that according to a list from the St. Paul's Foundation for International Reconciliation 78-plus countries still have criminal laws against sexual activity by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex people, some even with capital punishment (for some reason these countries' legislation doesn't seem to bother American LGBT-activists and politicians). Under the Russian Constitution (which prohibits any kind of discrimination) LGBT-individuals are guaranteed the equality of rights and freedoms like any person and citizen. Several non-governmental organizations that represent LGBT interests are active in Russia. For instance, the Federation of LGBT sport brings under its umbrella more than thirty sport clubs nation-wide. Russian non-traditional orientation athletes were second representation and medals-wise at the Eurogames in Budapest in 2012.

The overall spirit of tolerance towards LGBT-individuals in Russia is also well reflected in an article by Austin Ruse, President of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, a copy of which is attached.

At the same time legitimate interests of minors are also an important social value in Russia. The goal of the public policy toward children is to protect them from factors that can negatively affect their physical, intellectual, mental, spiritual, and moral development. This approach is consistent with Russia's obligations under international law, and follows closely the Convention on the Rights of the Child that encourages "the development of appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being".

Disagreeing with an opinion on these kinds of matters is one thing, but punishing a country for having a different opinion is a form of discrimination in itself. Tolerance cannot be selective. Russia can not be denied the right to set up its non-discriminatory moral and ethical standards within the framework of a legislative due process.

That's why I was unpleasantly surprised by photos on some web-sites with you carrying a poster "Stop Putin" during yesterday demonstration. Personally I'm sure that to portray the President of Russia Mr. Vladimir Putin in such a way is absolutely unjustified.

Taking into account above-mentioned I would appreciate if you could clarify whether such your support of the protesters reflects the official position of the authorities of Seattle?

With regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Andrey Yushmanov', with a stylized, flowing script.

Andrey YUSHMANOV



07-08-2013

## **Putin is not the gay bogeyman**

MOSCOW — One morning this week I stood in front of the Hotel Metropol, a quarter mile from the former KGB headquarters, a stone's throw from the Bolshoi Theater, and watched a post-op transsexual, obviously a man yet in fetching black capri pants and a tight black sweater revealing a fine and bouncy décolletage, stroll along the avenue.

Last evening I walked along a popular restaurant street near the Bolshoi and watched three men in dresses gather and chat. Rather than trying to pass as women, they seemed more to be making a political statement, or maybe they were simply going to a party.

In both cases, I believe I was the only person who even noticed them. Certainly no one threw rocks at them, or harassed them, spoke or even looked at this ho-hum scene. Police were nearby and none of them made a move to arrest them. What's more, their quite public strolls near the Kremlin evinced no nervousness on their part at all. They seemed normal and natural and exuded no fear. These morning and afternoon constitutionals were completely unexceptional.

I had just read a column by Harvey Fierstein published in the *New York Times* and was expecting something quite different. I expected the arrival of Putin's storm troopers to put in boot and fist and hustle them off to the gulag.

Fierstein reported in the *Times* that "Putin has declared war on homosexuals." Fierstein says police are allowed "to arrest tourists and foreign nationals they suspect of being homosexual, lesbian or "pro-gay" and detain them for up to 14 days." This is false. He goes on to say, "The law could mean that any Olympic athlete, trainer, reporter, family member or fan who is gay — or suspected of being gay, or just accused of being gay — can go to jail." This is also false. He says any Russian parent who tells his children that homosexuality is "subject to arrest and fines." This is false. He says it is "rumored" that police may remove any biological children from parents suspected of being homosexual. Also false.

This false, overheated and even panicked rhetoric is very harmful to what could be a meaningful dialogue.

David Meyers, writing in the Daily Caller a few weeks ago got the law right though he, too, was unnecessarily alarmed. The Russian Duma, in an almost unanimous vote, passed a national law protecting school children from what they call "gay propaganda." In a federal way this law mirrors the laws on the books in cities and municipalities around Russia. The law also bans public manifestations of homosexual lifestyle, that is, it bans parades. Homosexual adoption is also not allowed.



Homosexuality is not illegal in Russia. Homosexual acts are not illegal in Russia. Even some kinds of public manifestations are fine in Russia. After all, a number of gay characters are on popular Russian TV programs. Moreover, right now you can google "Gay Moscow" and see a few dozen bars and restaurants and dance clubs that cater openly to a gay clientele. You can enjoy yourself hassle-free at 69 Popugae, Baza, Secret, 12 Volt, TSYFRY, Elf Cafe, and dozens more. All of them have websites, public addresses and telephone numbers and pictures of all the fun things you can do there. Putin is not shutting them down and when Harvey Fierstein visits for the Olympics, he can visit them all without fear.

Homosexuality used to be against the law in Russia under the old Soviet Union but even that regime relented. Homosexuality and homosexual acts are totally legal in Russia. Homosexuality is quite open in Russia. What the Russians do not want, and this opposition is widespread, is for homosexuality to be taught to school children or otherwise exposed to school children.

Russians understand that homosexuality exists in their society and always has, even when it was illegal under the Soviets and that it exists in all human societies. What is new and what they resist is the political movement to regularize and even celebrate it. They view this as harmful to children and society.

They are appalled, as are many Americans, at how these sexual practices and lifestyles are celebrated in the United States. The state of California now mandates the teaching of homosexuality to school children. Those individuals and institutions in the United States that oppose the homosexual advance are ostracized and in some cases criminalized.

And under the Obama administration this ideology has now become a part of US foreign policy. Openly gay ambassadors are now placed in largely religious countries. Gay celebrations are now held in US embassies even in countries, like Pakistan, where such parties are calculated to deeply offend legitimate religious sensibilities and beliefs.

The Russians I have spoken to — from inside and outside of the government — therefore see much of this in the old-fashioned way, as an "American provocation."

America has a bad reputation around the world, particularly among traditional peoples, for many reasons, not the least is the immorality we push through our popular culture and now through our official activities. When many foreigners meet Americans they expect pimps, prostitutes, and pornographers.

While we should and do deplore laws that allow violence against homosexuals, the bottom line for Russia and elsewhere is that there is no human right to teach school children about sexual practices, neither is there a human right to parade your sexual preferences and practices down public streets. All else is legal.

With all the problems in our country and the world, do we really have a national interest in intervening in this Russian matter?

*Austin Ruse is president of C-FAM, a New York and Washington DC- based research institute focusing exclusively on international law and policy. He writes regularly at **CrisisMagazine.or** and **TheCatholicThing.org***

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