



## **Russia:**

# **Anti-homosexuality law threatens freedom of expression and association**

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**A draft law that criminalize “promotion of homosexuality among minors” is to be considered by the Russian Parliament on 19 December. The draft violates the right to freedom of expression and association of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.**

According to draft Federal Law no. 44554-6, “promotion of homosexuality among minors” is an administrative offence, with fines of up to 500,000 rubles (US\$ 16,200). The draft does not specify what constitutes “promotion of homosexuality” and could thus be interpreted very loosely. This would discriminate directly against LGBTI people in a country where discrimination on ground of sexual orientation and gender identity is already widespread.

The draft stigmatizes LGBTI people by perpetuating the view that children should be protected from homosexuality. It would have an impact on LGBTI people's right to freedom of expression and assembly, and could stop them getting information that is crucial for their sexual health. The law would also severely curtail the activities of LGBTI human rights defenders, some of whom have already been harassed and assaulted.

The draft legislation violates the rights to freedom of expression and assembly, as well as the right to non-discrimination and equality before the law, guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and other international human rights treaties to which Russia is a state party. In addition, it would also violate the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee therefore calls upon the relevant Russian authorities:

- (1) not to pass Draft Federal Law no. 44554-6, either in its current or amended form;
- (2) to protect the rights of everyone, regardless of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, to freedom of expression and assembly, freedom from discrimination and equality before the law, in accordance with international human rights law.

## **For more information and comments, contact:**

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