

Russia: Scrap draft “homosexual propaganda” law which would contravene human rights and target human rights defenders

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A draft law to criminalise “homosexual propaganda”, currently being considered by the Russian parliament, flagrantly violates international human rights laws and standards, says the International Service for Human Rights.

“International law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. It also enshrines the fundamental rights of freedom of association and expression,” said Heather Collister of ISHR.

ISHR is particularly concerned that the law will be used to target, intimidate or harass human rights defenders and those who speak out on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

“States have an obligation not only to respect and protect human rights, but also to respect and protect those who stand up and speak out for human rights. Russia’s draft law is manifestly incompatible with this obligation,” said Ms Collister.

“The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, together with the international Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, make clear that all persons have the right to freedom from discrimination, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to advocate the acceptance of human rights and freedoms.”

According to Ms Collister, the draft law reflects a concerning international trend towards restricting human rights in the name of protecting so-called “traditional values”.

“The notion of ‘traditional values’ is completely illegitimate so far as it is invoked in any way to restrict the enjoyment of rights guaranteed under international human rights law or standards, or to criminalise or impede activities in defense of them,” she said.

ISHR’s statement comes as three United Nations Independent human rights experts have also called on Russian parliament to scrap the draft Bill.

In a [joint statement](#) issued by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on the right to health, the experts said, “The draft legislation could further contribute to the already difficult environment in which these defenders operate, stigmatizing their work and making them the target of acts of intimidation and violence, as has recently happened in Moscow.”

The UN experts further urged Russian parliamentarians to “exercise leadership by scrapping the bill to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia.”

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