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Moscow Mayor Calls Gay Pride 'Satanic'

Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov said Jan. 29 that Gay Pride parades are "satanic."

"Last year, Moscow came under unprecedented pressure to sanction the gay parade, which can be described in no other way than as satanic," Luzhkov said. "We did not let the parade take place then, and we are not going to allow it in the future."

He continued: "Some European nations bless single-sex marriages and introduce sexual guides in schools. Such things are a deadly moral poison for children."

Last year's Pride ban, supported by the courts, led organizers to replace the planned parade with attempts to lay flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and stage a rally across from City Hall. Participants in both small events were violently attacked by neofascists, skinheads, Christians and riot police.

Organizers again have vowed to march this year, on May 27.

Luzhkov's new comments came on the day Pride organizers filed suit in the European Court of Human Rights over last year's ban. They seek the right to march and \$26,000 in compensation.

"Not a single European legal expert we have spoken with doubts in the success of our application to the court," said organizer Nikolai Alekseev. "After that, not a single official, including the Moscow mayor, will be able to deprive us of our legal right to freedom of public expression."

Portuguese Gays Gain Rights

Same-sex couples in Portugal acquired some additional rights at the end of 2006.

Public employees who live with a partner for at least two years now can extend their health coverage and certain other benefits to their partners. And the nation's "de facto union" law now covers immigration.

According to correspondent João Paulo from the Web portal PortugalGay.pt, a Portuguese citizen who lives with a foreign same-sex partner for at least three years, whether in Portugal or abroad, can sponsor the partner for Portuguese citizenship. A declaration from a judge is required to confirm the legitimacy of the relationship.

French MP Fined for Anti-Gay Remark

French Member of Parliament Christian Vanneste was fined about \$3,900 Jan. 25 for having



French Member of Parliament Christian Vanneste was fined for bashing homosexuality.



Moscow Pride organizer Nikolai Alekseev will not let the mayor's opposition hinder freedom of expression.

called homosexuality "inferior" and "dangerous for humanity if it was pushed to the limit."

A court in Douai imposed the fine under a two-year-old law that bans anti-gay language. Vanneste, a member of the ruling Union for a Popular Movement party, also must pay about \$13,500 in costs and damages to the plaintiffs, three gay organizations.

Vanneste previously vowed to appeal any guilty verdict to the European Court of Human Rights.

Polish Pride Case Accepted

The European Court of Human Rights has accepted a lawsuit filed against Poland by Warsaw gay activists after the mayor banned the 2005 gay Equality Parade.

Former Mayor Lech Kaczynski, who is now Poland's president, cited traffic issues in prohibiting the march. He also said he opposed "propagating gay orientation" and objected to the parade taking place on the same day the city unveiled a monument to anti-Nazi hero Gen. Stefan Rowecki.

Some 2,500 gay people marched anyway. They were confronted by around 300 anti-gay protesters shouting slurs and hurling eggs. Ten people were arrested and three were injured, including a policeman.

Catholic Leader Threatens to Close Adoption Agencies

The Roman Catholic Church is threatening to close its seven adoption agencies in England and Wales if the government doesn't exempt it from upcoming laws banning anti-gay discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services.

English church head Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor has written to Cabinet ministers threatening to shut the agencies down rather than be forced to place children with gay couples.

"It would be unreasonable, unnecessary and unjust discrimination against Catholics for the government to insist that if they wish to continue to work with local authorities, Catholic adoption agencies must act against the teaching of the church and their own consciences," he said.

The government responded Jan. 25 that the best the church can hope for is a delay in applying the laws to religious institutions, to allow them to make necessary adjustments.

The Church of England has expressed concern over the laws. Anglican Communion spiritual leader Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Canterbury, and John Sentamu, the archbishop of York, said Jan. 23: "In legislating to protect and promote the rights of particular groups, the government is faced with the delicate but