



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **New Yorkers to Protest Violation of LGBT Human Rights in Russia 'Vodka Dump' at Russian Consulate Kicks Off Protests Nationwide**

**New York, NY** — On July 31, 2013 at 12:00 PM (noon) EDT, New Yorkers will gather at the Russian Consulate (9 East 91st Street) to protest new anti-gay laws passed in Russia that subjects LGBT Russians and foreign nationals to fines, arrests and possible jail time, and which have provoked violent attacks on LGBT Russians.

The protest is being organized by RUSA LGBT (Russian-Speaking American LGBTQ Association) and Queer Nation, a New York-based organization committed to direct action to end homophobia and anti-LGBT violence. The protest has the support of a wide range of LGBT activists and organizations in Russia, the United States and around the globe.

Protesters will dump Russian vodka into the gutter and will picket the Russian Consulate. Business owners who are participating in the "Dump Russian Vodka" campaign will be on hand to explain their commitment to the boycott of Russian products.

Protesters are demanding:

- 1) The Russian government repeal the "anti-gay propaganda" law before the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.
- 2) A boycott of all Russian products, including Russian vodka. We are calling for all New Yorkers to stop ordering and purchasing Russian made products and demand that their bars and restaurants stop serving Russian products, including Russian vodka.
- 3) A boycott of the Sochi Winter Olympics, with a suggestion to move the 2014 Games to Vancouver, Canada.
- 4) Corporate sponsors of the Sochi Olympics withdraw their sponsorship of the Games. Olympic sponsors include: Coca-Cola, Omega Watches, VISA, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Procter & Gamble, Samsung, and Panasonic.

On June 11, 2013, Russia's Parliament (The Duma) unanimously passed the federal act banning "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations." The new law imposes steep fines on anyone who equates the value of same-sex relationships between consenting adults with relationships between individuals of the opposite sex. The fines become significantly higher if one promotes the ideas of equality through the mass media or the Internet. Foreign nationals charged with such "propaganda" are subject to arrest, 15 days in jail, fines, and deportation. Russian authorities are already arresting and fining both citizens and visitors.

These laws make it illegal to discuss LGBT topics in public forums and to offer support to gay minors (under the age of 18). Hate crimes are on the rise in Russia since the laws went into effect. Entrapment and brutal beatings of people perceived as gay have been widely reported.

According to LGBT Russian activists, international pressure is essential in the months before the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi as Russian lawmakers continue to propose new laws that persecute Russia's

LGBT community. Currently, the State Duma is gearing up to propose legislation allowing the State to remove children from committed same-sex families and single gay and lesbian parents.

Since these laws are meant to silence the Russian LGBT community, RUSA LGBT and Queer Nation are calling for international support to have these anti-gay laws repealed.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has assured the world that “athletes of all sexual orientations will be welcome at the Olympic Games.” However, the BBC reported yesterday that a Russian legislator who co-sponsored the new anti-gay law said that the Russian government cannot selectively suspend enforcement for Olympic athletes and spectators.

Tomorrow, Wednesday, July 31, 2013 at 12 Noon, New Yorkers will protest in front of the Russian Consulate and demand action against the Russian authorities who continue to violate the rights and freedoms of LGBT Russians by means of censorship and persecution. **RUSA LGBT and Queer Nation intend this protest and others — along with international support and corporate pressure — to force the Russian government to repeal their bigoted and discriminatory laws and to end the persecution of LGBT people.**

**RUSA LGBT** is a Russian-Speaking American LGBTQ association. RUSA LGBT was formed in 2008 to establish a network for those who identify with Russian-speaking and LGBTQ cultures. The network is made up of people of Russian-speaking heritage, their friends, supporters and loved ones. RUSA LGBT has welcomed many LGBT asylum seekers from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus who fled the abuse and mistreatment in their homelands. RUSA LGBT regularly organizes cultural and social events to unite Russian-speaking LGBTQ community in America and to increase acceptance and inclusion of LGBTQ people within the Russian-speaking public. RUSA LGBT fights for social justice, human and civil rights for LGBTQ people in America and in the Former Soviet Union.

Queer Nation is a direct action group that is dedicated to ending discrimination, violence and repression against the LGBT community.

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