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Russian MP behind anti-gay law calls for 'morality police'

A Russian MP behind a controversial anti-gay law called Wednesday for the creation of a morality police force to fine people who violate "traditional values".

Vitaly Milonov, a lawmaker in the local parliament of the northwestern city of Saint Petersburg, told AFP: "My concept is to create a morality police that would crack down on misdemeanours that are connected to a threat to morals and traditional values."

The outspoken lawmaker was the author of a regional law banning the dissemination of gay "propaganda" to minors that entered into force in Saint Petersburg in 2012. A similarly worded national law was signed by President Vladimir Putin last year.

Milonov proposed that the morality police be made up of "spiritually whole people belonging to traditional faiths for Russia, without rotten liberal values".

Their role would include protecting children from gays, he said.

"Children must be shielded from debauchery, propaganda of sodomy, asocial lifestyles and sects," he said.

Milonov said he had made the proposal in a letter to Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev, suggesting that the morality police have powers including imposing fines and drawing up crime reports.

"Of course they should not replace the regular police, but they should have the right to issue fines and draw up crime reports according to local laws," he said.

Countries including Iran and Saudi Arabia have morality police who crack down on those whose behaviour is judged inappropriate under Islamic law.

Gay-rights activists and stars including Madonna have spoken out against Russia's anti-gay legislation, which has coincided with a more general crackdown on the right to protest during Putin's third term in the Kremlin.

Milonov has clashed with openly gay British actor Stephen Fry, who interviewed him for a documentary on gay rights. Milonov later described Fry as a "bringer of evil".

Saint Petersburg last week passed a law proposed by Milonov banning children's beauty pageants as psychologically damaging.

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