



August 4, 2013

Hon. Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We write as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) elected officials from New York City in anticipation of your deciding whether to continue or cancel plans for an upcoming diplomatic trip to Russia to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin. While you are considering whether to cancel that trip in light of Russia's decision to give asylum to Edward Snowden, we also urge you to consider the country's horrendous treatment of members of the LGBT community and its clear human rights abuses aimed at our community.

Russia has become a country that persecutes anyone who might be LGBT or supports gay rights. As then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on behalf of your administration, "Gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights. It should never be a crime to be gay."

Given that President Putin and Russia have enacted laws to criminalize gay people and supporters and deny human rights to their LGBT citizens, they should not be the beneficiary of any trip by your office until they fully restore all civil rights to LGBT people in their country.

Recent actions taken by the Russian government have led LGBT citizens to face not only a society that is intolerant of their basic civil rights, but also a country that would imprison them for declaring support for their own fundamental rights as humans. This has promoted an atmosphere of hate where gay people fear for their own lives and safety. Police are allowed to arrest foreigners who are considered gay or pro-gay and detain them for up to 14 days. Under their new law, as a pro-gay supporter even you could be subject to arrest and imprisonment while in Russia.

Mr. President, you will remember that in December 2011 the White House released a presidential memorandum directing executive officers and agencies that deal in foreign affairs to address human rights abuses against LGBT people abroad and to pressure foreign governments to decriminalize homosexuality. Now it is time for you and your administration to directly act on this memorandum. The LGBT community and its allies in Russia are under attack and the victims of clear human rights abuses.

We urge you to stand in solidarity with us. Refuse any diplomatic mission to Russia until President Putin stops these abuses now and agrees to make Russia a country that proudly supports its LGBT community and its allies worldwide. We expect nothing less.

Sincerely,



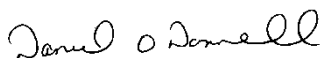
Brad Hoylman  
NYS Senator



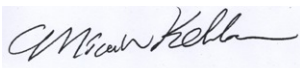
Deborah J. Glick  
NYS Assembly Member



Matthew Titone  
NYS Assembly Member



Daniel J. O'Donnell  
NYS Assembly Member



Micah Kellner  
NYS Assembly Member



Christine C. Quinn  
NYC Council Speaker



Jimmy Van Bramer  
NYC Council Member



Rosie Mendez  
NYC Council Member



Daniel Dromm  
NYC Council Member