

Russian actor quits PR job at cellphone giant after call to jail gays

MOSCOW, RUSSIA: A Russian television star and former priest said on Tuesday he had quit as creative director of a leading cell phone retailer after urging President Vladimir Putin to jail gays.



A survey last year found that 34% of Russians think homosexuality is an illness and 16% reckon gay people should be isolated from society. (Image attribution: [Quistnix](#))

Ivan Okhlobystin, who plays an irascible doctor in a hospital series similar to the US show "Scrubs", has used his high profile to make numerous homophobic statements.

Until Tuesday, he worked as a creative director at Yevroset cell phone retailer, also appearing in their television ad campaigns.

The actor said he had quit the Yevroset position after receiving threats.

"Due to constant threats, provocations and insults from sodomites to my friends, my partners and their families, I insisted on resigning as creative director of Yevroset," he wrote on Twitter.

"Sodom and Gomorrah must be destroyed!" he added.

The eccentric actor previously served as a Russian Orthodox priest and once announced a presidential bid.

Last week, he published an open letter to Putin calling for a referendum on the recriminalisation of homosexuality after this Soviet-era legislation was lifted in 1993.

A right charlie

His idea was backed by a top Russia Orthodox cleric, Vsevolod Chaplin.

Okhlobystin said that the feelings of religious believers "were undoubtedly hurt by the legally sanctioned existence of hotbeds of sodomy in many Russian cities".

Referendum request

"I ask you to initiate the holding of a national referendum on this question," he urged Putin.

"I'm sure its results will finally convince you of the necessity of returning this item in the criminal code."

In December Okhlobystin said in a public speech that he would "put all (gay people) alive in the ovens."

Okhlobystin's outbursts had prompted gay rights campaigners to call for Apple to drop its contract with Yevroset.

The president of Yevroset, Alexander Malis, told the Izvestia daily on Tuesday that Okhlobystin had "done a lot for the company", however.

Yevroset's founder, Yevgeny Chichvarkin, fled to Britain in 2008 while facing a criminal probe into kidnapping and extortion that was later dropped.

A survey last year by Levada independent polling centre found that 34% of Russians thought homosexuality was an illness that needed treatment, while 16% said gay people should be isolated from society.

Russia's stance on gay rights, particularly last year's legislation banning "propaganda of homosexuality" to minors has mired it in controversy and prompted calls for protests at the Sochi Winter Olympics next month.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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