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**Subject:** Russia Hates the Gays Goes Mainstream & I've Debunked AP Claims  
**Date:** November 29, 2014 at 6:01 PM  
**To:** Adam Curry adam@curry.com

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Adam:

Earlier this week I shared a [Moscow Times article](#) about four Russian journalists seeking asylum due to anti-LGBT abuse.

Today, the Associated Press has brought the "Russia Hates the Gays" meme back into the mainstream: [Scores of Russian gays are seeking asylum in US.](#)

**However I have been able to completely debunk this article and connect it to the Kagan's:**

This article is a reboot by the Associated Press of the same article which was [first published by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty on October 15, 2014.](#)

Furthermore, both the AP article and the original Radio Free Europe article state "United States received **969 new asylum applications from Russian** nationals in the **2014 fiscal year ending September 30.**"

This is **NOT TRUE. Let me explain:**

- RFE Cites: "U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) statistics obtained by RFE/RL"
- AP Cites: "Department of Homeland Security's latest figures"

However I have reviewed the latest asylum figures from DHS which is the publication [Refugees and Asylees 2013](#) which was [published in August 2014.](#)

There is no statistic, press release comment regarding statistics of asylum seekers from Russian Federation for the 2014 FY.

I also have a major issue with the claim of 969 new asylum applications from Russian nationals, let me explain:

From [Refugees and Asylees 2013](#) page 6:

Table 6.All Asylees by Country of Nationality.

Data for Russia:

**2013 534**  
2012 718  
2011 661

From [Refugees and Asylees: 2012](#)

Table 6.All Asylees by Country of Nationality.

Data for Russia:

2012 728  
2011 661  
2010 551

From [Refugees and Asylees: 2011](#)

Table 6.All Asylees by Country of Nationality.

Data for Russia:

2011 663  
2010 554  
2009 492

From [Refugees and Asylees: 2010](#)

Table 6.All Asylees by Country of Nationality.

Data for Russia:

2010 548  
2009 493  
2008 570

From [Refugees and Asylees: 2009](#)

Table 6.All Asylees by Country of Nationality.

Data for Russia:

2009 494

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2008 5/1  
2007 495

Notice how the data changes between reports? Interesting...

**Here is the "tell" from the AP article that completely debunks it's validity:**

"overall applications for asylum by Russians totaled 969 in the 2014 fiscal year, up 34 percent from 2012."

\* Notice the author does not cite 2013 data. The 2013 data shows 534 Russians filing applications for asylum in FY2013 (there were 718 in FY2012). The author's article would have been far more powerful by demonstrating an 81 percent increase in applications. However the 969 statistic is not true, someone at RFE made up that number.

So now the Associated Press has published propaganda based on a fabricated statistic from RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty.

Who at Radio Free Europe might do something like this? [James Kirchick](#)  
Besides RFE/RL, who else does James "Jamie" Kirchick work for? **Robert Kagan and William Kristol's** new neoconservative think tank the [Foreign Policy Initiative \(FPI\)](#). [Kirchick's bio on the think tank's website](#).

Combine this with the Kagan/Kristol-backed white paper I shared with you on Thursday and I'd suggest that the US is beginning a campaign for "regime change" in Russia.

All my best,

Brian

[Scores of Russian gays are seeking asylum in US](#)

By DAVID CRARY, AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) -- Had he stayed in Russia, Andrew Mironov would be settling in to a stable job with an oil company, likely with a newly awarded doctoral degree in electrical engineering.

Instead, he faces an uncertain future in New York City as one of scores of Russian gays seeking asylum in the United States because of hostility and harassment in their homeland.

"In Russia, I would have gotten my Ph.D. this fall, had a job and health insurance," said Mironov, 25. "Now, here, I'm nobody."

Yet the sacrifices have been worth it, Mironov says, given the fears that lingered after he was severely beaten by several assailants in the lobby of a gay bar in his home city of Samara.

"Which is more important, happiness or success?" he asked over coffee in midtown Manhattan. "I would say happiness. I feel no fear here."

**There are no firm statistics on the number of gay Russian asylum seekers;** U.S. government agencies that handle applications do not report such details. However, the Department of Homeland Security's latest figures show that **overall applications for asylum by Russians totaled 969 in the 2014 fiscal year, up 34 percent from 2012.**

The increase is due in part to the worsening anti-gay climate in Russia, according to Immigration Equality, a New York-based organization which provides legal services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender immigrants.

The organization says the number of inquiries it received from gay Russians seeking U.S. asylum has risen from 68 in 2012 to 127 in 2013 and 161 through Oct. 30 of this year. During that period, gay-rights gatherings in Russia were frequently targeted by assailants, and the parliament passed a law targeting "gay propaganda" that was widely viewed as a means of deterring gay activism.

Said Mironov of that law, "It helped homophobic people feel the government is on their side."

To get an application approved, an asylum seeker must present a convincing case that he or she has a "well-founded fear of persecution" in their home country. Russia's anti-gay policies and its record of anti-gay violence are factors that could strengthen an individual's case.

Aaron Morris, Immigration Equality's legal director, said most of the recent asylum inquiries came from gay men in their 20s and 30s who had been targeted by anti-gay attacks, while only a handful have come from gays or lesbians raising children.

"If you have kids, it can be really hard to leave everything behind," Morris said.

In several U.S. cities, programs have been launched to assist gay asylum seekers from Russia and elsewhere as they await processing of their applications, which can take six months or more. For the first five months, the asylum seekers are barred from

taking paying jobs, so they often struggle to support themselves, even with resumes illustrating professional success in Russia.

In Washington, D.C., housing is among the major challenges, according to Matthew Corso, who has helped the DC Center for the LGBT Community create a program to assist people who are seeking asylum.

"We have no trouble finding them legal representation, but trying to find someone willing to give part of their home or money for food or transportation is not easy," Corso said.

Another group aiding gay Russian asylum-seekers in the Washington area is the Spectrum Human Rights Alliance, founded in 2011 by Russian immigrant Larry Poltavtsev.

Poltavtsev, who studied chemistry at the University of North Carolina in the 1990s, is frustrated by the rules that bar asylum-seekers from working. "It makes no sense because most of our arrivals have advanced degrees and speak good English," he said. "They're capable of being productive, paying taxes, but we are not letting them do those things while they're waiting."

Soon to join the queue of applicants are Andrew Nasonov and Igor Bazilevsky, longtime partners from the Russian city of Voronezh who wearied of threats, harassment and beatings and came to the United States in July. They're now assembling the paperwork for their case and getting Russian documents translated into English.

"Of course we are worried, but we hope for the best," Nasonov said.

Nasonov, 25, was a journalist and human-rights activist in Russia; Bazilevsky, 32, was a graphic designer. They hope to pursue those careers in the U.S. if their asylum applications are approved.

Meanwhile, they've been provided with lodging by a gay couple in a Washington suburb and took a step in October that would have been impossible in Russia - they got married.

"We were finally able to say that we are a real family - there are not enough words to describe how wonderful these feelings are," Nasonov wrote in an email.

"But of course, we are still faced with a lot of difficulties," he added. "It was hard to leave our relatives, friends, and parents behind in Russia. ... We have nothing here, and in many ways are completely dependent on the assistance of the people who surround us."

In New York City, many asylum seekers have received advice and support from Masha Gessen, a Moscow-born journalist and activist whose family moved to the U.S. in 1981 and who holds U.S. and Russian citizenship.

She said her family, as Soviet Jews, had group refugee status, allowing for an immigration process far easier than that faced by today's asylum seekers who must prove their individual case.

"There's no worse way to immigrate to the U.S. than the way these people are doing it," Gessen said. "You have nothing, and you have no right to work or public assistance. We've seen people end up on the streets."

She and her allies have lobbied the State Department to extend refugee status to LGBT people from Russia, but thus far to no avail. So for now, asylum seekers arrive unsure of their long-term prospects.

"After your tourist visa runs out, you're basically undocumented," Gessen said. "It can be hard to rent an apartment or get a cellphone. You have problems navigating everyday life."

The United States is among several countries favored as havens by LGBT Russians who emigrate from there. Canada, Finland and Israel are among the others. Gessen said the U.S. is more receptive than many Western European countries, and Aaron Morris, the Immigration Equality lawyer, said his legal team had been able to win approval for most of the Russian asylum cases that it has handled.

Morris commended the Department of Homeland Security for asking Immigration Equality to train its asylum officers on distinctive aspects of LGBT asylum cases. "They understand our community is a little different," Morris said.

Among the many pending cases is Andrew Mironov's asylum application, buttressed by photographs showing the injuries he sustained in Russia that required a hospital stay. He's not sure when he'll be called for an in-person interview but says his lawyer believes the case is a strong one.

Mironov has been in the U.S. since November 2013, spending his first night in a homeless shelter run by the Metropolitan Community Church of New York. He now lives in Brooklyn but continues to attend the church, which serves the LGBT community.

The past 12 months have been challenging. One obstacle, he said, is a chilly reception from many non-gay Russian immigrants in New York.

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"Americans don't care if you're gay, but the Russians here, they still have a problem with it," he said.

Mironov worked for several months as a bartender at a restaurant in Manhattan but said his manager often mistreated him, calculating that he wouldn't complain because of his uncertain legal status. Now he's trying to establish a photography business, called Strekoza - Russian for "dragonfly."

"It's hard to not be sure about your future," he said. "In Russia, I'd planned my whole life out."

