

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

LGBT ACTIVIST CHARGED WITH “HOMOSEXUAL PROPAGANDA”

Evdokia Romanova, an LGBT activist from Samara, Russia was charged with “homosexual propaganda” on 26 July for reposting links to the international Youth Coalition for Sexual Reproductive Rights website and to articles that promoted LGBT equality. She will stand trial on 18 September.



On 26 July, LGBT activist Evdokia Romanova, an active member of the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR) from Samara in Central Russia, was called to her local police station to act as a witness for another case the police were investigating. However, on arrival she was questioned and charged under Article 6.21, part 2 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences for “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships among minors using Internet”. She will stand trial on 18 September. If found guilty, she could be fined up to 100,000 roubles (USD 1,750).

In violation of the law, Evdokia Romanova was denied legal representation when questioned and charged by the police.

The police also unlawfully refused her and her lawyer access to the casefile, denying them a chance to learn the grounds on which she had been charged. Evdokia Romanova and her lawyer were only able to get access to the casefile materials on 5 September, nearly 6 weeks after she was charged, and only after the case had been referred to Kirov District Court in Samara.

Evdokia Romanova’s casefile reveals that the charges most likely relate to her membership of the YCSRR and that her “crime” was the reposting of links to the YCSRR website and media publications, including a Guardian article on the same-sex marriage referendum in Ireland and a BuzzFeed article on an exhibition in St. Petersburg on Russian LGBT teens, on her personal Facebook and Russian social media network, VKontakte. Four of the posts date back to 2015 and another to May 2016. The police deemed links to the YCSRR’s own publication, a campaign calling for youth activists to campaign for LGBT rights, to be the most incriminating and the police Centre for the Prevention of Extremism even ordered two experts – one on linguistics and another on psychology, to conduct an examination of the publication. Both experts concluded that the publication contained “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations”, with the one who conducted the linguistic examination concluding it was aimed at “forming non-traditional sexual orientation”, “creating appealing image of non-traditional sexual orientation” and “was forming an image of equal value of traditional and non-traditional sexual relations for society.”

Please send a message without delay. (Postage is \$2.50.)

* Call on the authorities to drop the charges against Evdokia Romanova as they stem solely from the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression.

* Urge them authorities to abolish the “homosexual propaganda law” as it contravenes Russia’s international obligations to respect the right to freedom of expression.

* Insist that they end their targeting of the LGBT community in Russia through discriminatory laws, policies and practices.

Here is the contact information you need:

Prosecutor of Samara Region

Konstantin Nikolaevich Bukreev

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443030, Samara Region

Russian Federation

Fax: 011 7 846 333 54 28 or 011 7 846 332 2944

Via website: (<http://www.samproc.ru/feedback/feedback.php>) You will need to use TRANSLATE, and scroll down to the form. In WHERE and DISTRICT, choose the first options. In SUBJECT, Unjustified Conviction is the best option.)

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation

Yuriy Yakovlevich Chaika

Prosecutor General’s Office

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Russian Federation

Fax: 011 7 495 987 5841 or 011 7 495 692 1725

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Please send a copy to

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Human Rights Ombudsman for Samara Region

High Commissioner Olga Dmitrievna Galtsova

Ul.Mayakovskogo, 20

443100 Samara Region

Russian Federation

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Email: Ombudsman.Samara@yandex.ru

Additional information

The Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR) was formed at the Hague Youth Forum in February 1999 and organized by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Population Foundation (WPF) and the Dutch Council on Youth and Population. A number of young people participating in the forum were particularly concerned with the sexual and reproductive rights of adolescents and young people. These individuals established the YCSRR to support and sustain young people's efforts towards the realization of their sexual and reproductive rights.

The law prohibiting "promotion of non-traditional sexual relations among minors" - also known as the 'homosexual propaganda law', was passed in Russia in June 2013. It introduced Article 6.21 into the Russian Code of Administrative Offences providing hefty fines for those who, according to the authorities, promoted "non-traditional sexual relations". Amnesty International believes that the law violates freedom of expression and has been campaigning for its abolition. The law has had a negative impact on the work of LGBT organizations and individual LGBT activists alike. Since its introduction in 2013, several people, including LGBT activists Nikolay Alexeev, Nikolay Baev and Alexey Kiselev, were fined under this law. In January 2014 these three activists submitted a case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) claiming that their rights under the European Convention of Human Rights had been violated. In June 2017, the Court ruled that Russia violated Article 10 (right to freedom of expression) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention and that it must pay compensation to the activists. Russia is appealing the decision.