

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST CHARGED UNDER 'PROPAGANDA' LAW

Elena Klimova, journalist from the Urals city of Nizhniy Taghil, has been charged with “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations” for her online project “Children 404” aimed to support LGBTI teenagers. If court rules that she violated the law she will have to pay a hefty fine and the project will have to close down.

On 17 January Elena Klimova received a call from the criminal investigations department of the city police inviting her to come over for “a chat”. Even though no official summons followed, Elena Klimova decided to go. At the investigators’ office she was told that there had been seven complaints addressed to various authorities from Vitaliy Milonov, St Petersburg’s Duma (parliament) member. He demanded to close down “Children 404” and associated social network groups and fine Elena Klimova for “propaganda”. Elena was not given Milonov’s complaints to read nor was she allowed to see other case file materials. When she explained that the project was set up to help LGBTI teenagers and to provide psychological support for them, the investigator agreed that he could not see any “propaganda” there and said that he would not open a case against her.

However, on 31 January, she was summoned again to the same investigator. On arrival, Elena Klimova was informed that the investigator would have to charge her with an administrative offense of “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations”. To Elena’s question “what has changed since last time”, the investigator replied along the lines of: “You must understand, I’m only following the orders”.

The case is now in Nizhniy Taghil’s court. The date of the hearing has not been scheduled yet.

Please write immediately in Russian or your own language:

- Expressing deep concern that Elena Klimova was charged with “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations”;
- Urging the Russian authorities to drop the charges against Elena Klimova and abstain from prosecuting any person under Russia’s homophobic legislation;
- Calling to repeal the “propaganda” law which is being used to clamp down on freedoms of expression, assembly and association of LGBTI community and those who support them creates an atmosphere in which they increasingly face discrimination, harassment and violence from vigilante groups.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 MARCH 2014 TO:

Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation

Yuriy Yakovlevich Chaika Prosecutor

General’s Office

ul. B. Dmitrovka, d.15a

125993 Moscow GSP- 3

Russian Federation

Fax: 011 7 495 987 58 41 –OR-

011 7 495 692 17 25

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Prosecutor of Sverdlovsk Region

Sergei Alekseevich Ohlopkov

ul. Moskovskaia, 21

620219 Yekaterinburg GSP-1036

Sverdlovsk Region

Russian Federation

Fax: 011 7 343 377 02 41

Email: sverdloblprokuratura@mail.ru

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation

Sergey Evgenyevich Naryshkin

1 Okhotny Ryad st

103265 Moscow

Russian Federation

Fax: 011 7 495 697 42 58

Salutation: Dear Chairman

Also send copies to:

Ambassador

His Excellency Sergey I. Kislyak, Embassy of the Russian Federation

2641 Tunlaw Road NW Washington DC 20007

Phone: 1 202 298 5700 | Fax: 1 202 298 5735 | Email: russianembassy@mindspring.com

Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action Office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Elena Klimova started her online project "Children 404" in March 2013 after she published a series of articles about LGBTI teenagers in order to support them and give them a space to speak about their problems. She set up two groups on Facebook and another social network popular in Russia, VKontakte, where the teenagers could share their personal stories about problems they encounter, harassment and misunderstanding they face, and seek advice and support both from their peers and from professional psychologists. The project was named as an allusion to the message "404 Page not found" one receives when a web page does not exist.

The law under which Elena Klimova has been charged was adopted in Russia in June 2013. According to the law, "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors" is an administrative offense and is punishable by hefty fines of between RUB 5,000 (USD 144) for individuals to RUB 1 million (USD 28,800) for organizations. A foreign citizen found to be promoting "non-traditional sexual relations" might end up being imprisoned for up to 15 days and deported from the country.

In December 2013, two LGBT activists were fined under "propaganda" law for conducting an action in Arkhangelsk. In February 2014, a newspaper editor from the city of Khabarovsk, in the Russia's Far East, who published an interview with a gay teacher sacked from his job, was given 50,000 roubles fine. The court found that one of the teacher's statements: "My very existence effectively proves that homosexuality is normal" constitutes "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations".

Name: Elena Klimova (f)

Issues: Freedom of expression, LGBTI rights

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