

URGENT ACTION

COURT REJECTS ACTIVIST'S APPEAL

On 23 November, the Kirovskii District Court in Samara, Russia, rejected Evdokia Romanova's appeal against the magistrate's ruling on 18 October which found the activist guilty of "spreading propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors". Evdokia Romanova's prosecution is a clear violation of her right to freedom of expression.

On 23 November, the Kirovskii District Court in Samara, Russia rejected activist **Evdokia Romanova's** appeal. On 18 October the activist was found guilty of spreading "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors using the internet" and imposed a fine of 50,000 roubles (around US\$ 870). Evdokia Romanova's only "wrongdoing" was reposting on her personal Facebook and Russian social media network, VKontakte, of links to the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR) website and media publications, including an article in The Guardian on the same-sex marriage referendum in Ireland and a BuzzFeed article on an exhibition in St. Petersburg on Russian LGBTI teenagers. Four of the posts date back to 2015 and another to May 2016.

At the appeal hearing, Evdokia Romanova's lawyer argued that Evdokia Romanova's reposting links to LGBTI-related articles and YCSRR website on social media did not constitute the "spreading of propaganda". At the hearing, the judge rejected the defence's arguments and upheld the magistrate's decision, which is now final.

Evdokia Romanova's prosecution constitutes a clear violation of Evdokia Romanova's right to freedom of expression. In consultation with the lawyer the activist is now looking into pursuing other avenues of redress.

The homophobic 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 this "offence". Amnesty International believes that the law violates the right to freedom of expression and has been campaigning for its abolition. The law has had a negative impact on the work of LGBTI organizations and individual LGBTI activists alike. Since its introduction in 2013, several people, including LGBTI 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.

Amnesty International will continue to monitor Evdokia Romanova's case and where necessary pursue other avenues for campaigning.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.

This is the third update of UA 209/17. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/7318/2017/en/

Name: Evdokia Romanova
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