



Russia

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In December, Russia's federal media regulator blocked access to the US-based online gaming platform Roblox, citing alleged violations of the country's law banning so-called LGBTI "propaganda." The regulator claimed that the platform contains "inappropriate content" that could harm the "spiritual and moral development of children."

ASYLUM

Since the beginning of the year around 700 people have migrated to Russia under the 2024 decree creating a so-called "shared values" visa program, popularly referred to as the "anti-woke" visa, aimed at attracting Western conservatives opposed to liberal gender norms. The scheme offers a three-year residency permit with minimal requirements, convertible into Russian citizenship, and is framed as "providing humanitarian support to individuals who share traditional Russian spiritual and moral values."

In December, Russia blocked access to the website of Rainbow Railroad, a global non-profit organisation that helps at-risk LGBTI people reach safety. Authorities labelled the organisation's work "extremist."

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In December, a mass stabbing occurred at the Assumption School in Odintsovo, Moscow region. A ninth-grade student, armed with a knife, attacked classmates, fatally wounding a fourth-grader, injuring a security guard, and attempting to locate a teacher. The assailant, reportedly influenced by the Columbine school attack and holding extremist ultra-right views, attributed societal problems to Muslims, LGBTI people, Jews, anti-fascists, liberals, and political opposition.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In February, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) delivered its judgment in *Bazhenov and Others v. Russia*. The Court held that Russia had violated Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) in conjunction with Article 8 (right to respect for private life), as the authorities did not effectively investigate the homophobic publication of the applicants' private

information and photographs by extremist groups online. The disclosure exposed the applicants to harassment and threats, creating a climate of fear for their safety. The ECtHR stressed that sexual minorities are a particularly vulnerable group requiring heightened protection, and reiterated its established principle that any differential treatment based on sexual orientation demands "particularly convincing and weighty reasons."

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In early December, authorities in Ulyanovsk placed three individuals under house arrest in connection with the organisation of drag events, according to regional branches of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Rosgvardia. One defendant, a 30-year-old resident of Ulyanovsk, is accused of organizing a branch of the "international LGBT movement" under Part 1 of Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code, while the other two face charges of participation under Part 2 of the same article. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, from January 2024 to December 2025, the defendants organised events at a hookah bar in the Leninsky District, promoting "non-traditional intimate relationships and preferences." Security forces documented items associated with drag performance, including costumes, heels, cosmetics, and a sewing machine.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In April, Russian authorities banned the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF), citing its support for LGBTI rights as grounds for the decision. The foundation has long been involved in HIV prevention and treatment programmes while also advocating for the rights of LGBTI people. Russia's prosecutor general's office declared EJAF an "undesirable organisation," a designation that prohibits it from operating on Russian territory and places staff and partners at risk of criminal prosecution. In its statement, the office accused the foundation of promoting "non-traditional sexual relationships, western family models, and gender reassignment."

In July, the State Duma adopted a package of reforms that expands the scope of Russia's anti-extremism framework. The amendments broaden the definition of "extremist organisation," no longer

requiring a separate, final court ruling for such a designation. Instead, individuals convicted under Article 282.1 of the Criminal Code ("participation in an extremist community") can serve as the basis for declaring an organisation extremist.

In July, the Investigative Committee in Orenburg announced that it had transferred to court the criminal cases against three employees of the Pose gay club, accused of creating and participating in an "extremist" community. According to investigators, the club's owner, art director, and administrator organised public events in 2024 that "spread and promoted non-traditional sexual relations," allegedly with minors among the attendees. Officials framed these activities as knowing participation in the so-called "international LGBT movement," elevating what had previously been considered an administrative offense of "propaganda" into a criminal matter. The case stems from a March 2024 incident when security forces and members of the neo-Nazi group "Russian Community" raided Pose during a closed party. This was the first criminal case in Russia explicitly linked to "LGBT extremism."

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In February, in Kuzbass, a prisoner had his sentence extended after being accused of "involving other convicts in the LGBT movement," marking the first known conviction under Russia's ban on the "international LGBT movement." The Yaysky District Court of the Kemerovo region found the man, already serving an 18-year sentence for multiple counts of sexual violence against a child under 14, guilty of engaging in "LGBT activities" and recruiting others into an "extremist organisation" while in detention.

In February, the ECtHR issued its judgement in *Klimova and Others v. Russia*, unanimously ruling that Russia had violated Article 10 (freedom of expression) in six joint applications and Article 8 (right to respect for private life) in one. The case concerned the prosecution and censorship of LGBTI-supportive online platforms under Russia's laws banning the "promotion of homosexuality among minors." The ECtHR found that the Russian authorities' measures – including fines, criminal charges, and content

bans – were motivated purely by sexual orientation considerations. The Court concluded that these actions lacked a clear legal basis and failed to satisfy the criteria of being "prescribed by law" or "necessary in a democratic society,"

In April, the Russian Justice Ministry for the first time designated an individual as part of the so-called "international LGBT movement," declared extremist in 2023, by naming journalist Vadim Vaganov as a member. Vaganov, who is already challenging his inclusion on Russia's "foreign agents" register, learned of the designation during a court hearing.

Since the beginning of the year, Russian police carried out raids on bookstores using a list of 48 prohibited titles, ordering staff to remove the books and launching administrative cases that resulted in fines. In May, the situation escalated, with Russian security forces detaining at least ten people in Moscow in connection with a criminal investigation into the publication of LGBTI-themed books, under charges of "involvement in the activities of an extremist organisation," "participation in its activities," and "organizing its work using official position". On May 15, three individuals were formally charged. If convicted, they could face prison terms of up to 12 years.

In July, Russian lawmakers approved a bill that penalises internet users for deliberately seeking out information considered "extremist." The bill introduced fines of up to \$64 (approximately €59) for first-time offenders who "search for and access extremist materials" online. In September, the law officially entered into force in the Russian Federation. Concretely, the law introduces administrative penalties for individuals who use search engines to access or seek out "extremist" material. Since 2024, LGBTI activism and related content have been formally classified as "extremist" under Russian law, placing them squarely within the scope of these provisions. Independent experts and human rights defenders underline that this framework represents a substantive escalation in repression: liability now extends beyond the creation or dissemination of content to the mere act of searching for information.

In June, a Russian court imposed a fine of six million

roubles (approximately €60,000) on US tech company Apple for allegedly violating the country's strict legislation against so-called "LGBT propaganda." As part of the package of reforms adopted in July on Russia's anti-extremism framework (see also under Freedom of Association), changes were also introduced to the Administrative Code, updating the rules on how media must mark content deemed extremist. At the same time, the Duma's Committee on State Building and Legislation advanced a draft law introducing liability for the search and access of extremist materials online. The proposed Article 13.53 of the Administrative Code would penalise the intentional search for content included in the federal list of extremist materials or otherwise restricted under the 2002 law on countering extremism. Even the use of VPNs or other tools to access blocked resources could trigger sanctions, with fines ranging from 3,000 to 5,000 rubles.

In July, a Moscow magistrate's court fined Alexander Dunaevsky, General Director of the online streaming service Kinopoisk, 250,000 rubles (approximately €2,500) for allegedly allowing "LGBT propaganda" through the platform. The case was initiated by the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media (Roskomnadzor), which claimed that the online cinema made available a film presenting same-sex relationships in a positive light. The expert report concluded that such representation amounted to propaganda, arguing that the film risked shifting public attitudes "from negative to positive" toward same-sex relationships.

In August, Moscow's Tagansky District Court fined the online comic library Mangalib a total of 14 million rubles (approximately €140,000) for hosting seven manga titles found to violate Russia's law against so-called "LGBTI propaganda." Judge Alexandra Anokhina imposed separate fines of 2 million rubles (approximately €20,000) for each title. The court upheld a state expert assessment claiming that at least one of the comics constituted a "cultural threat to national security." According to the prosecution, the seven publications contained elements described as "destructive ideology," including same-sex romantic relationships and themes of gender transition.

In early September, a court in Tatarstan fined twin brothers 100,000 rubles (approximately €1,000) each for posts on their joint lifestyle blog. The brothers were found guilty under Part 3 of Article 6.21 of the Administrative Code for "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" online. The case concerned Instagram posts, which authorities claimed promoted LGBTI content, though the specific content cited by the court was not detailed. The blog covers travel, daily life in Russia, training, and recipes. Authorities from the Center for Counteracting Extremism in Tatarstan had flagged the blog in August and issued the initial administrative protocol. During the trial, the brothers partially admitted wrongdoing but stated they did not intend to promote non-traditional sexual relations. The court rejected this argument, concluding it was an attempt to avoid punishment.

In September, a historical reenactment centre in Kaliningrad known as Kaup, which presents itself as a "Viking village," was fined 800,000 rubles (approximately €8,000) under Russia's law banning so-called "LGBTI propaganda." According to Mediazona, the case was linked to an event titled From Dusk Till Dawn, organised by a local businessman who had rented the venue. During the event, a humorous photo booth featuring the letters "BDSM" was installed, which authorities cited as one of the grounds for the fine. Police also opened a case over a photograph allegedly depicting two women kissing on the premises and for the alleged presence of sex toys at the venue, for which the centre was fined 1 million rubles (approximately €10,000).

In December, the Cherkess City Court (KCR) sentenced a local resident for participating in activities associated with what the authorities described as an "extremist" LGBTI group. The charges related to comments he posted in a Telegram chat created for male dating. According to the KCR courts' joint press service, he was considered "an adherent of the international public movement 'LGBTI'."

The court statement indicated that the man's posts "have psychological signs of propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations – propaganda of ideas that do not correspond to the spiritual and moral values of Russian society; ideas of permissiveness

and immorality promoted by the LGBT community." Despite the administrative nature of "propaganda" offences, the criminal case resulted in a non-conditional sentence.

In December, the Basmanny District Court of Moscow registered an [administrative protocol](#) for alleged "LGBT propaganda" under Article 6.21 of the Russian Administrative Code against the feminist publishing house No Kidding Press. The grounds for the protocol have not been disclosed.

In December, St. Petersburg courts confirmed the [conviction](#) of activist and human rights defender Igor Kochetkov under Article 6.21 of the Administrative Code for "LGBT propaganda." The ruling imposed a fine of 100,000 rubles (approximately €1,000).

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In September, Mariana Katzarova, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, presented her [report](#) to the 60th session of the Human Rights Council. The report underscores the expansion of legal restrictions on access to materials listed in the Ministry of Justice's Federal List of Extremist Materials. Katzarova's findings highlight a growing pattern in which these extremism laws are applied disproportionately against minority groups, with a documented increase in prosecutions targeting LGBTI people and operators of LGBTI-friendly spaces.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In January, reports surfaced that Russia's Interior Ministry is preparing to establish an [electronic database](#) of LGBTI people, in the wake of the Supreme Court's 2023 ruling designating the so-called "international LGBT movement" as an extremist organisation. The system would draw on administrative violations, such as fines issued under Russia's propaganda laws, to populate the registry. Human rights monitors note that immediately after LGBTI people were officially labelled as "extremists," security services began actively seeking access to the medical records of trans people.

At the end of 2024, Russian authorities carried out [raids](#) on multiple venues associated with LGBTI people. In St. Petersburg, police stormed the independent

art space *Appellance*. Officials described the event held as linked to the so-called "International LGBT Movement" and reported the presence of "dozens of participants, including transsexuals, transgenders, and feminists." The crackdown extended to Moscow the same weekend, with security forces raiding clubs. Authorities claimed to have found prohibited substances, stage costumes, and BDSM equipment, framing it as evidence of "non-traditional" gatherings.