

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST FOUND GUILTY OF LGBTI 'PROPAGANDA'

Elena Klimova, a journalist from the Urals city of Nizhniy Taghil and founder of the online project Children 404 aimed at supporting LGBTI teenagers, was found guilty of "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors" and ordered to pay a fine. Children 404 risks being shut down.

Almost a year after the first unsuccessful attempt by St Petersburg politician and anti-LGBTI activist Vitaliy Milonov to have Elena Klimova prosecuted for "gay propaganda" and her online project Children 404 closed down, the Moscow Department of Roskomnadzor (the official media watchdog) has initiated a new case against her. In November 2014, it filed a case in court claiming it had received 130 letters of complaint about Children 404 and alleging that the information it published could "create an impression among children that to be gay is to be a courageous, strong, confident and self-respecting person..." and that therefore could create "positive attitude to non-traditional sexual relations". In support of its allegations, Roskomnadzor presented a "witness statement" from the leader of Mediagvardia, a project run by the pro-government youth movement Young Guard (Molodiya Gvardia). Members of Mediagvardia browse the internet to identify websites and groups on social networks which they deem unlawful, and report them to Roskomnadzor and the Prosecutor's Office requesting they be blocked.

Roskomnadzor's case against Elena Klimova and Children 404 was heard by a magistrate of Dzerzhinsky District Court in Nizhniy Taghil on 23 January. The magistrate refused to postpone the hearing due to the illness of Elena Klimova's lawyer who could not attend, thereby violating her right to a fair trial. The magistrate also rejected an earlier request by Elena Klimova to conduct an alternative expert assessment of the content of Children 404's web pages, arguing that she had already seen expert opinions "pro" and "contra" this content, and a new assessment would make no difference to her. Elena Klimova was found guilty of "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors", and issued with a fine of RUB 50,000 (approximately USD 740). She plans to appeal the sentence. At the same time, Mediagvardia are seeking the closure of Children 404, which has become a valuable source of support for thousands of LGBTI teenagers, including those at risk of self-harm and suicide.

Please write immediately in Russian or your own language:

- Expressing concern that Elena Klimova has been found guilty of "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" and that her right to a fair trial was violated;
- Urging the Russian authorities to immediately end her prosecution in connection with her Children 404 project, and end the harassment of the project itself;
- Urging them to repeal the "homosexual propaganda law", and ensure full respect for every person's right to freedom of expression, assembly and association in Russia.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 MARCH 2015 TO:

Prosecutor of Sverdlovsk Region
Sergei Alekseevich Ohlopkov
620219 Yekaterinburg GSP-1036
Sverdlovsk Region
ul. Moskovskaia, 21
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 343 377 02 41
Email: sverdloblprokuratura@mail.ru
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Chief of Roskomnadzor
Alexander Aleksandrovich Zharov
109074 Moscow
Kitaigorodskii pr., d.7, str.2
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 987 68 01
Email: rsoc_in@rkn.gov.ru
Twitter: @roscomnadzor
Salutation: Dear Chief of Roskomnadzor

And copies to:
Human Rights Ombudsman for Sverdlovsk Region
Tatiana Georgievna Merzliakova
620031 Ekaterinburg,
Sverdlovsk Region
pl. Oktiabrskaya, 1
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 845 227 90 75
+7 343 217 88 72
Email: ombudsman@midural.ru
pravachel66@yandex.ru

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section 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. Her aim was to support vulnerable young people who face discrimination and other problems, and give them a space in which they can feel part of a community and speak about their problems. She set up two groups, one on Facebook and the other on the popular Russian social network, VKontakte. These groups are used by teenagers to share their personal stories about problems they encounter, harassment and misunderstanding they face, and seek advice and support from both their peers and professional counsellors. The project's name is a reference to the message "404 Page not found" which comes up on the computer screen when one tries to access a web page that does not exist – an allusion to how many members of the LGBTI community feel in present-day Russia.

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 offence and is punishable by fines of between RUB 5,000 (USD 144) for individuals and RUB 1 million (USD 28,800) for organizations. A foreign citizen found to be promoting "non-traditional sexual relations" may be punished by administrative detention of up to 15 days and deportation.

In December 2013, two LGBTI activists were fined under the "propaganda law" for conducting a protest action in Arkhangelsk. In February 2014, Aleksandr Sutorin, newspaper editor from the city of Khabarovsk, in the Russian Far East region, was fined RUB 50,000 after he published an interview with a former teacher who had been sacked from his job for being gay. The court which issued him with the fine ruled that the teacher's statement "My very existence effectively proves that homosexuality is normal" constituted "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations".

Name: Elena Klimova
Gender m/f: f

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