

3.7.1. Legal framework and implementation of legislation

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a) ‘LGBT propaganda’ ban

In December 2022,501 the authorities expanded the scope of the so-called ‘gay propaganda’ law502 by prohibiting propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships and gender transition (Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences) and punishing dissemination of information depicting non-traditional sexual relationships and promoting gender transition among minors (Article 6.21.2 of the same Code).503 The punishments for individuals with Russian citizenship under this legislation is up to 400 000 rubles [4 100 euros].504

The sources noted that the use of this legislation has significantly increased505 with, as reported by independent media outlet Meduza, 146 fines related to ‘LGBT propaganda’ issued by the courts in 2024, compared to 101 such fines in 2023, 16 in 2022, and 6 in 2021.506 Overall, in 2024, 214 cases of administrative charges under ‘LGBT propaganda’ charges (Articles 6.21 and 6.21.2)507 were recorded and 151 individuals were found guilty. People were prosecuted for managing LGBTIQ communities online, creating LGBTIQ-related social media or podcast content, regardless of the number of people who have seen this content. Other punished activities included expressing one’s sexuality or gender identity, advertising same-sex relationships, posting personal pictures online, and searching online for same-sex partners, including through private social media accounts. The prosecution was applied inconsistently, with similar actions carried out by different persons or entities resulting in different charges and penalties.508

As noted by Human Rights Watch, the authorities used laws prohibiting ‘LGBT propaganda’ ‘to suppress and punish LGBT visibility,’ including by imposing fines on television channels and streaming services for airing LGBT-related content.509 A major shift occurred in book publishing industry,510 with publishers forced to recall books containing LGBTIQ-related content in 2024 511 and 2025.512 In May 2025, ‘at least 10 book publishing professionals’ were detained in Moscow for involvement in an extremist organisation for publishing LGBTIQ-related literature. 513 In August 2025, a Moscow court reportedly fined an online comic library 14 million rubles [143 500 euros] for hosting seven manga comics violating ‘LGBT propaganda’ law, while the library’s project manager was additionally fined a total of one million rubles [10 250 euros] for similar offences in June 2025.514

b) Prohibition of gender transition

In July 2023, a law prohibited gender affirming health services, such as surgeries and hormonal therapy[515] and changing gender marker in identity documents.[516] The law also revoked previously registered marriages of transgender people, prohibited adoption and guardianship of children by transgender persons,[517] and allowed 'coercive medical interventions on intersex children.'[518]

As reported by Meduza in April 2025, a lawyer working on transgender people rights in Russia and Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine noted that around 35 persons have succeeded in changing their identity documents after the law came into force, including through court rulings. According to the source, this procedure requires an approval from a state medical commission under the Ministry of Health and to receive such approval one must provide medical records proving that the surgery was performed before the law came into force.[519]

c) Use of anti-extremism legislation

On 30 November 2023, in a court hearing held behind closed doors,[520] the Russian Supreme Court designated the 'international LGBT movement' – and all its structures[521] – as an extremist organisation.[522] The ruling took effect on 10 January 2024.[523] As of October 2025, the 'international LGBT movement' is the last organisation added to the register of extremist organisations by the Ministry of Justice. [524] The inclusion of the 'international LGBT movement' into the list of extremist organisations gave the authorities a new legislative tool to reinforce the 'LGBT propaganda' law,[525] intensifying the application of arbitrary charges against LGBTIQ people and their supporters, including lawyers.[526] As of mid-2025, due to the legislative repressions, at least five LGBT rights groups and 11 informal initiatives reportedly closed their operations.[527]

Different from the 2022 'LGBT propaganda' law 'which falls under administrative law', organisation of or participation in an extremist organisation is a criminal offense,[528] for which the maximum punishment is a 12-year prison sentence.[529] Under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code, individuals may face charges for organising, participating in, or financing extremist activities.[530] In addition, after the inclusion of 'LGBT movement' into the list of extremist organisations, displaying symbols that might be associated with LGBTIQ, such as a rainbow, has become an action of 'displaying extremist symbols'.[531] A first-time offence is punishable under the Code of Administrative Offences (Article 20.3) with up to 15 days in prison and/or a fine.[532] If the same offense is repeated within one year after paying an administrative fine or concluding a prison term,[533] a criminal prosecution, punishable by up to four years in prison, would follow for a repeated display of an extremist sign (Article 282.4 of the Criminal Code).[534] As noted by Human Rights Watch, the offence is considered 'repeated even if a different symbol unrelated to LGBT rights is displayed in subsequent cases.'[535]

According to the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, between mid-2024 and mid-2025, Russian courts reviewed 221 cases on 'LGBT propaganda,' including for displaying LGBTIQ symbols, such as the rainbow flag.

536 In June 2025, Human Rights Watch reported on having identified 81 people in 98 court cases who had been found guilty of an administrative offence for displaying LGBTIQ-related symbols, such as a rainbow flag, most commonly on social media, since January 2024.537 As a lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues noted to the EUAA, one of the key concerns in these cases is the significant legal uncertainty, as the same action, such posting LGBTIQ-related content on social media, can lead to either administrative or criminal prosecution.538 According to Human Rights Watch, in 2024, courts handed down 131 convictions under Article 282.4 'for repeated displays of banned symbols.' In 2025, one person was convicted of criminal charges and sentenced to six months of compulsory labour for posting a rainbow flag on a social media page. 539

As of September 2025, there were 16 criminal cases filed under Article 282.2,540 the first of which – against the owner of a gay club in Orenburg541 – was initiated in March 2024.542 Commenting on this case, Marianna Muravyeva noted that the court verdict described the person as 'an owner of the club of non-traditional sexual orientation who had conspired with a group of persons and organised and supported the activities of the LGBT organisation, promoting non-traditional sexual relations among the visitors of the bar,' which is a direct result of the November 2023 decision. She further noted that the sentence is now on appeal and there is a possibility of it being turned into a suspended sentence.543

Most of the criminal cases under Article 282.2 involve organisers of LGBTIQ events, owners and employees of gay clubs, and staff of publishing houses.544 This includes the prosecution of three individuals from two publishing houses, who were charged for publishing and distributing books with LGBTIQ content.545 In Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetia-Alania, two men were prosecuted because of running a gay dating webpage. 546 However, there are also three LGBTIQ activists, prosecuted solely for their involvement in LGBTIQ-related civil society organisations. In addition, four criminal cases were launched against 'ordinary gay men,' including one case in which a man was prosecuted for proposing same-sex relationship to another man. In two cases, criminal prosecution was initiated against gay men who revealed and promoted LGBTIQ identity on social media.547

In December 2024, an owner of an LGBTIQ travel agency548 facing charges for involvement in an extremist organisation died by suicide in pre-trial detention,549 'raising concerns of torture'. 550

Although there were several cases of arrests of people related to publishing business,551 there is no law to punish possession of LGBTIQ-related literature or materials without the intent of their distribution.552 Therefore, individual possession of this type of content is not punished553 or cases of such punishment are not known.554

d) Police raids of LGBTIQ venues in relation to 'anti-extremism' legislation

The November 2023 decision of the Supreme Court legitimised police raids on LGBTIQ venues, 555 which have become a regular practice.556 Sources report police raids on gay bars,557 clubs,558 and private parties,559 with investigations focusing on individuals suspected of being gay.560 According to journalist Andrey Shashkov, while raids on gay clubs had occurred in the past, the police 'stopped pretending they were looking for drugs' claiming now that the raids are

carried out to prevent ‘LGBT extremism.’561 As reported by Meduza, between November 2023 and January 2025, police raided ‘dozens of private parties’ in 18 regions across Russia, with officials and state media portraying them as actions against a network of ‘paramilitary groups’ engaged in ‘open gender war’ against the country or ‘devil worship.’562

Independent media outlet Current Time reported on 34 police raids on places related to the LGBTIQ community in 2024, followed by 10 raids carried out between January 2025 and May 2025.563 The UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, recorded 40 raids conducted in 2024, adding that ‘ultranationalist vigilantes’ were frequently involved in these raids.564 In January 2025, Meduza reported that police officers tried to identify during the raids people employed by the government and that the authorities pressured organisers of LGBTIQ events to share guest lists with the police and to allow ‘plainclothes officers’ to attend LGBTIQ parties.565

Police raids involved physical violence, humiliation, threats,566 detentions,567 fines,568 and distribution of military draft summonses.569 Nearly half of the 19 raids on LGBTIQ events documented by NGO Coming Out570 in 2024 occurred in December, ‘which is a party period.’ Besides violations described above, in some instances, the police reportedly took photos of the participants, which were then shared online or with their employers or educational institutions. Between January 2025 and September 2025, NGO Coming Out recorded 10 police raids. The source noted that the nature of raids has changed, with the police openly engaging in violence, without attempting to hide evidence or conceal abuse. In one case, during a raid on a Moscow gay club Mono, a person was beaten and thrown out of the club unconscious and bleeding.571 Moreover, raids have been also conducted on places not directly related to LGBTIQ venues (such as private events or board game nights572) with the aim to find LGBTIQ people and press charges.573

As a result of the expansion of anti-extremism legislation on LGBTIQ people, LGBTIQ organisations were banned,574 and venues closed.575 LGBTIQ people protect their personal information and conduct their events under strict security measures, keeping event details and locations confidential. Despite these precautions, the authorities can obtain information about these activities,576 including from anti-LGBT activists577 or denunciations from residents of the same building with an LGBTIQ venue, or collaborators within the community.578

e) Other legislation used against LGBTIQ people

In additional to prosecutions under the ‘LGBT propaganda’ and ‘anti-extremism’ laws, LGBTIQ people can face other criminal charges. These have included prosecution of ‘offending religious feelings’ (Article 148.1 of the Criminal Code), as in the case of a gay club owner who was sentenced to correctional labour for displaying an Orthodox cross in his club and a same-sex couple fined 15 000 [154 euros] for posting a video of themselves kissing in the vicinity of a church. There was also a case where two young men were sentenced to five and six years in a penal colony for committing ‘sexual acts in the presence of minors’ (Article 135.2 of the Criminal Code) after allegedly engaging in sexual activity in their apartment which was visible from a window, based on a complaint of a mother of a boy who reportedly saw it. Additionally, prosecution for pornography charges (Article 242 of the Criminal Code) have been used to criminalise private exchange of private intimate content between gay men.579 Homosexuality

as such is not criminalised in Russia.580

f) Punishment for actions committed outside Russia

In accordance with Article 12 of the Criminal Code ‘Criminal liability for crimes committed outside Russia’581 individuals can face charges for participating in LGBTIQ rallies or activities of LGBTIQ organisations abroad. The source noted that if the authorities become aware of such activities, they may launch an investigation and involve Interpol, which has cooperated with Russian extradition requests in the past, although not in cases ‘that are so openly politically motivated.’ Furthermore, individuals located in countries that have extradition agreement and practice with Russia would also be arrested and extradited.582 Information on cases of extradition of an LGBTIQ person to Russia was not found within the time constraints of the report.

According to a lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, persons returning to Russia after an investigation into their activities abroad has started would be arrested upon arrival. However, even without a formal investigation, border control officers may inspect phones or laptops of arriving passengers. If evidence of interest in LGBTIQ-related topics is found, a more detailed examination will follow, including recovery of deleted files. This examination takes only a couple of hours and if the person’s links to LGBTIQ activities outside Russia is confirmed, they would be arrested and prosecuted as if the offence was committed in Russia.583

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