

LGBT Activist Fined for Breaking 'Gay Propaganda' Law

By [Anna Dolgov](#)

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Yevtushenko being stopped by the police while picketing in Arkhangelsk. [@n_alexeyev](#)

A court in Arkhangelsk has found two LGBT activists guilty of promoting "non-traditional" relationships to minors and fined each of them 4,000 rubles (\$120).

Nikolai Alexeyev, the founder of the Moscow Gay Pride Movement, and his fellow activist Yaroslav Yevtushenko were on trial for picketing in front of a children's library in the northern city on Monday, holding banners that read: "Gay propaganda does not exist. People do not become gay, people are born gay," LGBT rights movement GayRussia said on its website.

Alexeyev said he and Yevtushenko would appeal the verdict, reached after a six-hour hearing on Tuesday.

"These are the first court decisions in Russia's history to prosecute for propaganda of non-

traditional sexual relationships under the new federal law," Alexeyev told GayRussia.

Several Russian cities — including Arkhangelsk, St. Petersburg, Kostroma and Ryazan — adopted local laws imposing fines for gay propaganda ahead of the federal law being passed in June.

Alexeyev had appealed the St. Petersburg city legislation after police detained and fined him for holding street protests against the local ban in April, 2012. Then, Alexeyev took to the streets with a banner quoting the words attributed to a celebrated Soviet actress, renowned for her sarcastic wit, Faina Ranevskaya: "Homosexuality is not a perversion. Perversions are field hockey or ice ballet."

The Constitutional Court upheld the ruling, Dozhd television reported Wednesday. The court ruled that the banner constituted propaganda, not information, and that "heightened attention to sexual relationship issues that can deform a child's perception of the role and value of such relationships in life."

The court also ruled that the St. Petersburg ban didn't discriminate against gays because it would equally prosecute heterosexual people for gay propaganda.

Ahead of the Arkhangelsk children's library protest, gay rights activists had applied to the City Hall for a permit to stage a rally on Dec. 2, but the municipal authorities denied the request, citing the federal gay propaganda ban.

However, the unauthorized rally went ahead despite the presence of police officers, who arrived at the library before the protest was scheduled to begin. After prolonged phone consultations with unspecified superiors, police officers detained Alexeyev and Yevtushenko, Grani.ru reported.

Alexeyev said his sentencing presented an opportunity to fight for the federal law.

"The verdicts open the way for appealing the ban on gay propaganda at Russia's Constitutional Court and later at the European Court of Human Rights, which is what we are going to do," he told GayRussia.

While the Arkhangelsk court decision appears to be the first time the federal law has been enforced, gay rights activists had reported instances of official discrimination under the ban.

Earlier this fall, a school teacher in the far eastern city of Khabarovsk, Alexander Yermoshkin, was fired for holding "rainbow flash mobs" in the city's central square. Yermoshkin said the authorities had never bothered him during his 18-year teaching career until Russia adopted the gay propaganda law.

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