The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Music Teacher Fired After Homophobe Crusader Complains About Her Piercings

Maria Shestopalova could be the 65th teacher to lose her job thanks to one man's war on "social deviants" in education.

December 22, 2016



Maria Shestopalova's lip piercing proved she was mentally ill, claimed St Petersburg's infamous "gay-hunter," Timur Bulatov **Maria Shestopalova / Instagram**

A music teacher in the Russian city of Krasnoyarsk says she was forced to resign this week, after an anti-LGBT activist launched a public campaign against her, telling her coworkers, her supervisors, the police, and anyone who would listen about her "deviant ways."

Maria Shestopalova is just 21 years old, but she says she's already been a professional music teacher for several years at the Number IV Center for Supplementary Education. In blog posts published earlier this week on the Russian imageboard Pikabu, Shestopalova revealed that she is the latest victim of Timur Bulatov, St. Petersburg's infamous "gay-teacher hunter."

Bulatov trolls teachers' social media accounts, searching for evidence of homosexual activities and even sympathies. He also logs anything remotely nontraditional.

In Shestopalova's case, some of her photos show her with a lip piercing. In older pictures, she also had small gauges in her earlobes.

Such piercings place Shestopalova firmly in a "subculture," Bulatov told the website Meduza. "But we have no such subject as 'subculture' [in our schools]," he said, explaining that her lip ring alone makes her unfit to teach.

"*Timur Bulatov trolls teachers' social media accounts, searching for evidence of homosexual activities and even sympathies. He also logs anything remotely nontraditional.*"

Shestopalova says Bulatov read all 3,000 of her public posts on Vkontakte, and studied all 800 of her photographs, flagging various items for supposed "gay propaganda," and marking others as examples of "inappropriate" behavior.

You might think she's exaggerating Bulatov's efforts, until you see the dossier he emailed to her school's entire faculty. Thirty-one pages long, it's a thorough catalogue of racy pictures and generally liberal-leaning living. When highlighting Shestopalova's supposedly questionable interests, Bulatov even flagged that fact that she subscribes to updates from Dozhd Television, an independent television station.

Mere hours after Bulatov spammed the school with Shestopalova's photos and Vkontakte posts, the school's director reportedly called her and scheduled a meeting for the next morning. That get-together would be a six-hour ordeal, Shetopalova says, during which the school's administrators allegedly pressured her to resign, even threatening to go after her parents, who are also teachers, if she refused.

Olga Ettsel, the school's director, tells a different story, however. On Wednesday, she told Meduza that the morning meeting after Bulatov's emails was only 90 minutes long. She also denies that Shestopalova was pressured to quit.

Ettsel also implied to Meduza that Shestopalova had been "caught in the act," referring to photos where she was "propagandizing smoking, drinking, nudity, and swearing a lot." The school's director even noted Shestopalova's unusual ear piercings, saying it violated teachers' "moral-ethical code of behavior." When Meduza's correspondent asked how ear piercings can violate ethics, Ettsel hung up the phone.

Bulatov told the website Tayga.info that 65 teachers across Russia have lost their jobs, thanks to his efforts to expose members of the LGBT community working in education. "I've got a map, and it's pricked all over with little thumbtacks," he says.

Bulatov, a devout Muslim, has also accused Shestopalova of practicing Satanism. Besides a few photographs where she's posed wearing a pentagram and a cross in her necklaces, Bulatov apparently bases his claim on the belief that atheists don't actually exist. "She says

she’s an atheist,” he told Tayga.info, “but more likely she’s a Satanist, because a person can’t go through life believing in nothing.”

Bulatov also says he shared his “research” with a psychiatrist, who reportedly told him that Shestopalova is definitely mentally ill — probably suffering from “multiple afflictions, even.”

Meanwhile, Shestopalova says she isn’t burying her teaching career just yet, and she hopes to find a job at a private school, where she’s worked temporarily, in the past. Betrayed by colleagues at her old school, she says she’s even grateful for the chance to move on from a job that netted her only 8,000 rubles a month, or $1,560 a year.

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