

Russian Court Bans Image Suggesting Putin Is Gay

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A woman holds a poster depicting Russian President Vladimir Putin during a protest in front of the Russian embassy in Madrid, Spain, on Aug. 23, 2013. **AP Photo / Paul White**

Russia has banned an image showing Vladimir Putin in heavy makeup. In the photograph, Putin has red lips and painted eyelashes, and a suggestive caption reads, “They say there are many of them, but there aren’t any among the people I know.”

Last week, the Justice Ministry formally added the image described above to its ever-expanding [index of banned extremist materials](#). Officials have not provided a copy of the image, but it likely resembles the photo at the top of this story.

However it looks, the Putin photo occupies the 4,071th spot on a list that’s now 4,074 entries long.

The Justice Ministry acted in response to a verdict last year by the Central Regional Court of Tver, which on May 11, 2016, banned more than a dozen pictures uploaded to the social

network Vkontakte by a man named A. V. Tsvetkov. According to the [case materials](#), he shared these photos between June 2013 and October 2014.

Court records say the image showing Putin in makeup “hints at the Russian president’s allegedly nonstandard sexual orientation.”

The court also banned another image Tsvetkov uploaded to Vkontakte depicting Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in Nazi uniforms, alongside the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill.

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Other Vkontakte posts banned by the Tver court contained appeals to Russian police, encouraging them to turn on the government and join the country’s protesters. “Think it over, before it’s too late,” Tsvetkov’s text threatened.

He also shared several blatantly racist images, including one photo that seemed to contradict the picture showing Putin and Medvedev as fascists: a poster bearing a swastika, with the caption, “Grandpa, forgive me! But it’s necessary!” Another photo encouraged readers to “beat up the cops first, and then move on to the [Asians] and [Jews].”

Tsvetkov didn’t appear in court, the day Judge Ludmila Perzhukova issued her ruling. According to the case materials, he was locked up in a local pretrial detention center. Over his objections, Judge Perzhukova decided to proceed with the trial in his absence, determining that he had ample time to review the case materials and send a representative to present any valid objections against the district attorney’s evidence.

In the end, the court released Tsvetkov from any criminal liability under Article 282 (Russia’s controversial ban on hate speech, which carries a five-year maximum prison sentence), and instead ordered him to receive compulsory psychiatric care.

After the trial, Tsvetkov got more bad news: [Vkontakte deleted his account](#).

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