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European Court Condemns Russia's 'Homophobic' Gay Propaganda Law

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A gay rights activist stands with a rainbow flag during a protest in St.Petersburg, Russia. **Dmitry Lovetsky / AP**

Russia has been ordered to pay compensation to LGBT activists prosecuted under the country's controversial "gay propaganda law" under a new ruling from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR.)

ECHR judges said on Tuesday that the legislation violated Russians' right to freedom of expression. The ruling also condemned the Russian law for "reinforcing stigma and prejudice and encouraging homophobia," and said that there was "no scientific basis" for the Kremlin's belief that children could be "enticed" into becoming gay.

Three LGBT activists, Nikolai Baev, Alexei Kiselev and GayRussia.ru founder Nikolay Alekseev, were awarded almost 50,000 euros ($55,772) in damages.

The men have faced prosecution for "promoting non-traditional relationships to children" between 2009 to 2012.

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Six of the seven judges on the panel voted in favor of the plaintiffs, with only Russian Judge Dmitry Dedov voting against. As part of the ruling, he wrote that he supported Moscow's position.

"A positive image of homosexuality adversely affects the development of children and puts them at risk of sexual violence," he said.

Russia introduced nationwide legislation banning "the promotion of non-traditional relationships to children" in 2013, building on older legislation on individual Russian regions.

The law, which has been widely condemned by human rights groups, can see activists fined up to 100,000 rubles ($1,700).

Fourteen people in Russia were fined under the law between 2014 to 2016.

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