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‘We Tracked Your Social Media, You’re Gay’: Russian Student Threatened With Expulsion

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ZEUS / TASS

A Russian university is said to have threatened a student with expulsion after his pink phone case and membership in pro-LGBT social media groups fueled suspicions about his alleged sexual orientation.

The reported threats made by Ural State University of Economics (USUE) administrators in Russia’s fourth-largest city of Yekaterinburg come six years after the Russian government banned “homosexual propaganda” toward minors. Authorities in Russia have used the law to block pride parades and rights activists say homophobic attacks have become more frequent, despite recent polling suggesting that attitudes toward equal rights for LGBT groups have reached their highest level in years.

Related article: What Do Russians Think About Equal Rights for LGBT People?

“We tracked your social media, here are the printouts: You’re gay,” the unnamed USUE student’s coursemates recounted its vice president’s words in comments to the regional eanews.ru news website.

The student told the outlet that the vice president pointed to his pink phone as further evidence of his homosexuality.

“The fact that I have a girlfriend, in his opinion, is not an excuse and doesn’t prove that I’m not gay,” the student was quoted as saying Tuesday.

Roman Krasnov, the school’s vice president for disciplinary work, confirmed that USUE has a group that monitors its students’ social media pages. “We’re a state university so we look at our students’ moral character,” eanews.ru quoted him as saying.

“Why shouldn't our youth policy and social departments be looking at what our students do outside class time?” he added.

Krasnov later told state-run media that he “never planned” to expel the student and called the media reports about his threats “incorrect.”

The university also said that complaints from fellow students had prompted the monitoring group to check his page.

“The USUE student did have a link to the LGBT community on his personal page, which counts as public propaganda,” its press service said.

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