

Russian Trans Woman Jailed for ‘Manga Porn’ Faces Life-Threatening Sentence

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Pyotr Kovalyov / TASS

A Russian transgender woman with cancer who has been jailed for three years for sharing manga illustrations online faces a potentially life-threatening sentence, the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper [reported](#).

A court in the city of Bryansk southwest of Moscow reportedly found Michele, 53, guilty of “circulating pornography depicting minors” in the Japanese-style illustrations. An expert panel was said to have found that the drawings depicted naked characters with “male faces who haven’t reached 14 years of age.”

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Michele, a doctor whose real name was withheld for safety reasons, had received hormone therapy but hadn’t had gender reassignment surgery, LGBT lawyer Maria Cheshchilova told Novaya Gazeta. Michele will likely serve her sentence in a male prison because her documents

still identify her as male, the publication wrote Friday.

“She likely doesn’t have a medical report about her sex change, meaning she won’t have hormonal drugs in prison,” said Cheshchilova, a Moscow Community Center lawyer.

She told Novaya that Michele has bladder cancer in remission, which — coupled with the lack of hormones — “will aggravate diseases, primarily cancer, and lead to terrible things.”

Michele had agreed to a plea deal and did not take the charges seriously when the investigation began this summer, Novaya cited her close friend Lada Preobrazhenskaya as saying.

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Preobrazhenskaya [told](#) the Svoboda.org news website that Michele was placed in a male holding cell after a judge issued the verdict.

“If Michele is placed in a prison colony without accounting for her transgender status, she will die there,” Preobrazhenskaya added.

The charges of distributing pornography depicting minors carry a maximum prison sentence of eight years. Bryansk’s court database [withholds](#) the convicted person’s name.

“This is perhaps the cruelest punishment for pictures on the internet,” [wrote](#) the independent Dozhd television channel.

There are no official statistics on the number of transgender people in Russia, but experts have placed it at around 15,000, or about 0.1% of the population.

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