

Young Russian Tries to Sue Over Violent Lesbian ‘Exorcism’ in Chechnya

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The practice of “exorcising” LGBT people is prevalent both in Chechnya and among the Chechen diaspora, activists say. **Valery Matytsin / TASS**

A young woman from Russia’s conservative republic of Chechnya is seeking criminal charges against her parents, one of their acquaintances and a psychiatric clinic for allegedly torturing her based on her sexual orientation, a Russian LGBT support group [said](#) Tuesday.

The latest incident comes after [widespread reports](#) of anti-gay abuse, including [torture and killings](#), in the majority-Muslim region in recent years. Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has [denied the existence of gay people](#) in Chechnya, a claim that Russia has also [submitted](#) to the UN.

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Aminat Lorsanova, 22, who fled Russia with the LGBT Network support group’s help last year, alleges that she was illegally held at two Chechen clinics for a total of five months in 2018.

While in detention, Lorsanova claims her parents' acquaintance beat her on several occasions with a stick while reading the Quran in a practice he called an Islamic "exorcism."

"My mother and father observed the process but did not do anything even though I asked for help," Lorsanova said in a statement carried by the LGBT Network.

Her father also attempted to convert her to heterosexuality on six occasions in late 2018, restraining her with handcuffs and adhesive tape to inject an antipsychotic drug, Lorsanova said.

"He told me that he was going to treat me like an animal, like a sheep," the young woman said.

Russia's Investigative Committee did not say whether it plans to open a criminal case into Lorsanova's allegations.

LGBT Network's Veronika Lapina said that the practice of "exorcising" LGBT people is prevalent both in Chechnya and among the Chechen diaspora. More than 30 young women the group worked with have "experienced this often sexualized form of inhuman treatment because of their sexual orientation," she added.

Russia banned "propaganda of homosexuality toward minors" in 2013. Same-sex sexual activity is not a crime in Russia, but rights advocates say that law has created fertile ground for homophobic attacks.

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