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Anti-LGBT Hate Crimes Up in Russia, Watchdog Says

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Activists tie the violence against the LGBT community to Russia's 2013 law banning "gay propaganda among minors" and anti-LGBT rhetoric on state television. **Ruslan Shamukov / TASS**

The number of hate crimes against members of Russia's LGBT community increased in 2019, according to an annual report by the prominent SOVA Center nonprofit, which tracks xenophobia and racism in the country.

At the same time, the SOVA Center noted Tuesday that the number of crimes against ethnic and religious minorities, as well as ideologically motivated attacks, went down last year. The watchdog said convictions for hate crimes have gone down as well.

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One LGBT activist was killed and seven were injured in Russia last year, SOVA said. In comparison, one LGBT activist was killed and five were injured in 2018.

The organization classified activist Yelena Grigoriyeva's death in July as an anti-LGBT hate crime. Grigoryeva's personal details were leaked in an anti-LGBT group's "death list" shortly before she was found with multiple stab wounds in St. Petersburg.

"She contacted the police more than once because of the threats but there was no reaction whatsoever," SOVA said.

Other victims included picketers or those who attended LGBT-related events, SOVA said.

"[T]here were also street attacks on individuals who were mistaken for the LGBT due to their appearance," it noted.

The SOVA Center warned that the true level of homophobic violence could be higher than reported because there is no official data on homophobic attacks.

Activists tie the violence to Russia's 2013 law banning "gay propaganda among minors" and anti-LGBT rhetoric on state television.

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