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St. Petersburg Schoolchildren Screened for LGBT 'Propaganda'

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Teachers were instructed to submit detailed reports on students who post "LGBT symbols" to the police.
Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency

Teachers in Russia's second-largest city of St. Petersburg have been instructed to monitor their students' social media profiles for the presence of "LGBT symbols," the LGBT Network rights group said.

Any such symbols would be considered violations of Russia's 2013 law that bans the display of "gay propaganda" toward minors.

Related article: 'We Tracked Your Social Media, You're Gay': Russian Student Threatened With Expulsion

This spring, teachers of grades 5-11 in St. Petersburg's Nevsky District were instructed to comb through their students' social media pages and submit detailed reports on students who post "LGBT symbols" to the police, the LGBT Network said this week, citing screenshots of

messages it obtained.

District administrators confirmed the LGBT Network's report, noting that the monitoring was part of an effort to protect children's interests within the framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

LGBT Network spokeswoman Svetlana Zakharova called it "unacceptable" to equate "a repost of a rainbow flag" to an offense punishable by law.

The social-media screenings are at least the second instance of Russian teachers monitoring their students' online presences for violations of the "gay propaganda" law. In September 2019, the Ural State University of Economics (USUE) in Russia's fourth-largest city of Yekaterinburg confirmed that it monitors its students' social media pages for potential violations of the law and to evaluate their "moral character."

The news comes as Cossack units patrol the streets of Yekaterinburg in an attempt to detain participants of the city's ongoing Ural Pride Week.

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