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Russian Feminist Activist Goes on Trial for 'Body-Positive' Drawings

By AFP

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Yulia Tsvetkova faces up to six years behind bars in a case that has prompted nationwide pickets and online flashmobs in her support. **Moscow Court**

A Russian feminist and LGBT activist accused of distributing pornography for posting what supporters call "body-positive" drawings on social media went on trial Monday.

Yulia Tsvetkova, 27, faces up to six years behind bars in a case that has prompted nationwide pickets and online flashmobs in her support.

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The trial is taking place in the remote Far Eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur behind closed doors — officially because pornographic images will be shown in the hearings.

Tsvetkova's mother Anna Khodyreva on Monday confirmed a court announcement that the

trial had begun and denounced its format, which precludes her from attending.

"Everything is being done to ensure that we have as little information as possible," she told AFP.

She said the next hearing would be held on May 6.

Tsvetkova's mother and supporters say she is being prosecuted in an "absurd case" for having published "body-positive" drawings of naked or nearly naked women with varying body types on the Russian social network VKontakte in 2019.

The drawings in the series titled "A woman is not a doll" come with captions saying that women have "hair on their bodies," "fat," and "wrinkles."

All of the captions end with: "And that's normal!"

The case, which investigators launched in 2019, has already seen Tsvetkova spend several months under house arrest.

Tsevtkova, who as part of her activism also hosted lectures for the LGBT community and held classes on sex education, was previously fined for violating a controversial Russian law against gay propaganda.

She became known for maintaining a social media page called "Vagina Monologues" that featured drawings of vaginas.

She told AFP last year she believes the authorities are using the pornography charge as a pretext for cracking down on LGBT activists because it is easy to pin on people and carries a long sentence.

Amnesty International, which has labeled Tsvetkova a prisoner of conscience, denounced Friday the "ridiculous and unfounded accusations" and called on Russia to stop "targeting feminist, LGBTI and other activists."

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