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Russian LGBT Family Featured in Ad Flees Country Over Death Threats

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yumalevel / instagram

A Russian same-sex family who received death threats after their appearance in an organic retailer's since-deleted promotional material said they have fled the country.

The family and Russia's VkusVill grocery chain were last month targeted in what appeared to be a coordinated hate campaign after a nationalist and homophobic group spread the ad on social media.

Yuma, the family's matriarch, posted a photo to Instagram showing the four-member family surrounded by palm trees and waving an LGBT flag on Sunday.

"We're safe, we're resting. We don't have to hide our happiness to be a family," Yuma wrote. "It was a difficult ordeal for all of us; we're all in an uneasy psychological state."

Her daughter Mila geotagged her Monday Instagram post as "Barcelona" and said she was seeking help with employment after leaving Russia on short notice.

“Sadly, we were left without a job and without a home because of this difficult situation with VkusVill,” she wrote.

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The retailer pulled its ad, part of a series spotlighting health-conscious regular customers, less than a week after publishing it. VkusVill also issued an apology for “hurting the feelings of a large number of our customers, employees, partners and suppliers” in a nod to Russia’s socially conservative majority — a move that in turn sparked cries of hypocrisy from liberal Russians.

Aside from the death threats, the “18+”-marked ad risked running afoul of Russia’s law against “gay propaganda toward minors,” which effectively bans displays of LGBT-related content.

The 2013 law, as well as last year’s constitutional amendments that define marriage as a heterosexual institution, have been the subject of criticism from rights activists and Western countries.

Though Russians’ attitudes toward LGBT people have improved somewhat over the past decade and a half, recent polling still shows three-quarters of Russians opposing gay marriage.

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