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Russian TV Channel Fined Over Alleged LGBT Video Clip

By AFP

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Screenshot from Sergey Lazarev's music video "So Beautiful"

A Russian TV channel was fined $5,500 on Friday for showing a music video by ex-Eurovision contestant Sergey Lazarev that allegedly showed same-sex couples holding hands.

The move comes a day after Russia's top court effectively outlawed LGBTQ activism, cementing a long crackdown on the community as the Kremlin pushes ultra-conservative social values.

St. Petersburg's Vyborg District Court found that AIVA, a Russian music channel, broadcast Lazarev's music video "So Beautiful" — which features clips of couples holding hands.

In one clip, the hands appeared to belong to "two different people of the same sex," the court said, breaking Russia's strict laws outlawing "gay propaganda."

Embed:

"The court imposed a penalty fine of 500,000 rubles," it said, accusing the television channel of "allowing propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations."

Lazarev represented Russia in the 2016 and 2019 Eurovision Song Contests, scoring third on both occasions. Moscow was banned from the contest last year over its assault on Ukraine.

Since launching the offensive last year, President Vladimir Putin has accelerated Moscow's suppression of the LGBTQ community as part of a broader "culture war" with the West.

Rights groups have criticized Russia for failing to define what constitutes "gay propaganda," and have warned that the vague criteria mean TV channels and websites could be fined at whim.

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