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Russia Arrests Gay Club Managers in First LGBTQ+ 'Extremism' Criminal Case

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Russian authorities have arrested employees of a gay club as part of the country's first criminal "extremism" case against members of the LGBTQ+ community, a court in the city of Orenburg said Wednesday.

Kremlin-aligned conservative activist Yekaterina Mizulina earlier this week announced criminal charges in connection with the LGBTQ+ club Pose's activities.

Nationalist, pro-war activists said earlier in March that they helped law enforcement agencies raid Pose on suspicion of spreading "LGBT propaganda."

Orenburg's Central District Court ruled Wednesday to place the club's art director and bar manager in pre-trial detention until May 18.

The two individuals face up to 10 years in prison if found guilty of "organizing extremist activities."

A statement on the court's website describes them both as "persons with non-traditional sexual orientations" who "support the views and activities of the international LGBT public association banned in our country."

The art director was accused of selecting drag artists for performances, and the bar manager of filming these performances.

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The independent news website Mediazona identified the manager as Diana Kamilyanova and the art director as Alexander Klimov.

Several Russians have faced misdemeanor charges of "extremism" in the months since Russia's Supreme Court banned the "international LGBT movement" in November 2023.

Amnesty International on Tuesday slammed the criminal investigation into Pose's staff.

"What LGBTI persons and human rights activists have feared since the end of last year has finally come to pass," Amnesty International's Russia Director Natalia Zviagina said in a statement.

Zviagina said it was "particularly reprehensible that members of a Russian nationalist group were allowed to assist the police in their raid of the drag show at Pose club."

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