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European Court Rules Russia Violated Free Speech of LGBTQ+ Website Managers

By AFP

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Alexander Grey / pexels

The European Court of Human Rights on Tuesday ruled that Russia violated the free speech rights of six nationals who operated websites supporting and advising LGBTQ people.

The case was brought by six Russians who had been found guilty of administrative offenses under the country's law against "promoting homosexuality among minors." Russian authorities blocked access to their websites, webpages and online groups, arguing that their content was "harmful for children."

The Strasbourg-based court said Russia's restrictions on content presenting same-sex relationships as equal to heterosexual ones violated the plaintiffs' freedom of expression, which is protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The court also ruled that Russian security services violated privacy rights by collecting user data from one of the plaintiffs on the Russian social media website VKontakte.

In a separate ruling also issued Tuesday, the court found Russia failed to take action after the personal details of three gay people, including their sexual orientation, were published on social media in incidents it called "homophobia-driven." It ruled that Russia had not done enough to protect their privacy or prevent discrimination.

The European Court of Human Rights is part of the Council of Europe, which expelled Russia following its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Russia withdrew from the human rights convention later that year, but the court still has jurisdiction over cases brought against Russia before September 2022.

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