

## Police Arrest Publishing House Staff Over Alleged LGBTQ+ Books

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## TASS

Law enforcement authorities searched the offices of Russia's largest book publisher and arrested several employees over alleged LGBTQ+ "propaganda" and "extremism," Russian media and rights groups reported Thursday.

According to the state-run TASS news agency, 11 employees of Eksmo Publishing House were <u>arrested</u> on Wednesday. Three have been <u>charged</u> with distributing "LGBT propaganda" and engaging in "extremist" activities, according to lawyer Maxim Olenichev of the legal advocacy group Perviy Otdel.

Authorities <u>accuse</u> the employees of publishing literature with LGBTQ+ themes, Perviy Otdel said. Russia's Supreme Court outlawed the so-called "international LGBT public movement" as an extremist organization in 2023, even though no such entity formally exists.

Those arrested on Wednesday reportedly <u>include</u> Eksmo's senior managers, as well as staff from its shipping and accounting departments. The rights group OVD-Info and BBC Russia

<u>noted</u> that at least two of those arrested were no longer employed by Eksmo at the time of their arrests.

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TASS, citing the publisher, later <u>reported</u> that its head of distribution was released after being questioned by the police. Eksmo said it was cooperating with the investigation.

Following the police searches and arrests, Eksmo reportedly <u>sent</u> its business partners a list of 50 books flagged by authorities as violating Russia's laws against "LGBT propaganda," according to Novaya Gazeta Europe.

Among those books is the 2021 coming-of-age bestseller "Summer in a Pioneer Tie," originally published by Popcorn Books, in which Eksmo acquired a majority stake in 2023.

Popcorn Books was the first publisher <u>targeted</u> under Russia's expanded anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

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