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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 arrested on Wednesday. Three have been charged with distributing "LGBT propaganda" and engaging in "extremist" activities, according to lawyer Maxim Olenichev of the legal advocacy group Perviy Otdel.

Authorities accuse 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 include Eksmo's senior managers, as well as staff from its shipping and accounting departments. The rights group OVD-Info and BBC Russia

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

Related article: St. Petersburg Prosecutors Order Independent Bookstore to Remove LGBTQ+ Books

TASS, citing the publisher, later reported 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 sent 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 targeted under Russia's expanded anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

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