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St. Petersburg Court Drops 'LGBT Propaganda' Case Against Popular Bookstore

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@izdaniya

A court in St. Petersburg has dropped an "LGBT propaganda" case against a popular bookstore that was fined earlier this year for selling works by authors like Susan Sontag and Olivia Laing.

In April, law enforcement authorities carried out a search at the 100-year-old bookstore Podpisniye Izdaniya, ordereding store employees to remove dozens of books on LGBTQ+ issues and feminism, as well as those authored by dissident and "foreign agent" writers.

The following month, St. Petersburg's Kuibyshevsky District Court ordered Podpisniye Izdaniya to pay a fine of 800,000 rubles ($10,000) after finding it guilty of distributing literature that promotes so-called "LGBT propaganda."

According to the court's press service, an expert review by Herzen University last month

concluded that 37 books sold at Podpisniye Izdaniya contained "psychological and linguistic signs of propaganda" promoting "non-traditional sexual relationships, gender reassignment or refusal to procreate."

Among the books in question was Laing's "Everybody: A Book About Freedom."

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However, the Kuibyshevsky District Court later ruled that the new violation, identified on April 10, fell outside the statute of limitations and terminated proceedings, the court's press service said Thursday.

It remains unclear whether prosecutors intend to appeal the decision.

Russia's so-called "LGBT propaganda" law was first introduced in 2013 and expanded in late 2022 to ban depictions of same-sex relationships and "non-traditional lifestyles" across all media, including books.

Following the 2022 expansion, major bookstore chains began pulling LGBTQ+ literature from their shelves in a wave of preemptive self-censorship.

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