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Moscow Court Finds Man Accused of Organizing LGBTQ+ Tours Guilty 1 Year After Suicide in Police Custody

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Andrei Kotov in court last year. **SOTAvision**

A Moscow court has posthumously found the owner of a travel agency guilty of organizing extremist activities linked to the banned "LGBT movement" nearly a year after he died in police custody, the independent outlet Mediazona reported on Friday.

State investigators claimed that Andrei Kotov, who ran the Men Travel agency, died by suicide in late December 2024.

Kotov said in court that police had beaten and electrocuted him with a stun gun during his arrest in November 2024. Rights groups said Kotov had been denied medication and warm clothing while in detention.

On Friday, Moscow's Golovinsky District Court found Kotov guilty of participating in and organizing the activities of an "extremist organization" and of using minors to distribute

pornography. Mediazona reported that the pornography charge was included in the indictment at a later date.

The case has been heard behind closed doors since June and was formally closed after the verdict due to Kotov's death, according to Mediazona.

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Russia's Supreme Court declared the so-called "international LGBT movement" an extremist organization in late 2023, effectively criminalizing any public displays of LGBTQ+ lifestyles and advocacy.

Media reports suggested that Kotov had organized trips for LGBTQ+ clients, including a planned New Year's tour to Egypt and a past Volga River cruise.

Kotov had denied the charges, maintaining that the trips he helped organize were ordinary commercial tours.

Several witnesses had failed to appear in court or provided conflicting testimony, according to the independent Telegram news channel Mozhem Obyasnit.

Law enforcement authorities had ordered one prosecution witness to join Kotov's tour to collect material for the case, an anonymous lawyer familiar with the case told the outlet. The witness was said to be unable to present clear evidence in court.

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