Samara Court Fines LGBTQ+ Activist $5.7K for 'Extremism'

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A court in Russia's southwestern Samara region has fined the head of a small LGBTQ+ activist group 450,000 rubles ($5,700) on charges of "extremism."

Artyom Fokin, who heads the grassroots group Irida, was found guilty of both organizing the activities of an "extremist" organization and evading "foreign agent" duties, local media reported on Friday.

Russia's Supreme Court outlawed the so-called "international LGBT movement" as an "extremist" organization in 2023, adding it to the country's lists of terrorist and banned organizations. The charges are punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

According to the news outlet Samarskaya Gazeta, prosecutors accused Fokin of creating Irida after the Supreme Court ruling. It was claimed that the group had 38 members and that Fokin had "openly invited teens as young as 14 into the organization online."

The Samara region branch of Russia's Justice Ministry had in November 2025 asked a court to label Irida an "extremist" organization. In 2022, a full year before authorities claimed Fokin created the group, the Justice Ministry labeled Irida a "foreign agent" organization.

Fokin was added to Russia's database of "extremists and terrorists" in 2024, when he was arrested following a police complaint by a notorious anti–gay crusader.

Maxim Olenichev, a lawyer for human rights group Perviy Otdel, said Irida was the "first extremism case against the leader of an LGBT initiative."

"It is undoubtedly part of a new campaign by the state to ban and criminalize the activities of those LGBT initiatives that it has previously included in the register of 'foreign agents'," he continued.

LGBTQ+ rights in Russia have steadily eroded since President Vladimir Putin signed a law banning "LGBT propaganda" toward minors in 2013.

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