

# URGENT ACTION

## ACTIVIST FACES TRIAL FOR 'HOMOSEXUAL PROPAGANDA'

**On 18 October, a court in Samara will hear the case against human rights defender Evdokia Romanova accused of spreading "homosexual propaganda". The judge has ruled that the hearing will be closed to the public. The proceedings against Evdokia Romanova stem solely from the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression and therefore must be dropped.**

The proceedings against human rights defender **Evdokia Romanova**, accused of "homosexual propaganda", were instigated on 26 July. Her case was initially brought before the Kirov District Court in Samara, central Russia. However, at the hearing on 18 September, the judge pronounced that the case should be heard by a magistrate. On 4 October, Evdokia Romanova received a letter from the magistrate to whom her case had been transferred to, notifying her that the case was being sent back to the police department which had initiated it, to address some errors in the casefile. One error related to the statute of limitations on the "offence" which Evdokia Romanova stood accused of, which had expired even before the police filed the case against the human rights defender. The place where Evdokia Romanova had also allegedly committed the "offence" was identified incorrectly. Furthermore, as her actual place of residence is outside the magistrate's jurisdiction the case would have to be transferred yet again. In the late afternoon of 5 October, her lawyer was informed that the hearing would take place on 9 October. Evdokia Romanova and her lawyer only had the weekend to prepare for the hearing.

At the hearing on 9 October, the judge ruled that the trial must be closed to the public in order to prevent the case from generating further "propaganda". After the hearing, the judge told Evdokia Romanova that she was unhappy about the level of attention the case had garnered and the numerous phone calls she was receiving from journalists in Moscow. The judge said she did not want journalists in the courtroom. The next hearing is scheduled for 18 October.

### **Please write immediately in Russian or your own language:**

- Urging the Russian authorities to end the proceedings against Evdokia Romanova as they stem solely from the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to abolish the "homosexual propaganda law" as it contravenes Russia's international obligations to respect the right to freedom of expression;
- Reminding them of their obligation to ensure the right to a public hearing, which includes granting access to the general public and media.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 NOVEMBER 2017 TO:**

Prosecutor of Samara Region  
Konstantin Nikolaevich Bukreev  
ul. Krasnoarmeiskaia, 32  
443030, Samara Region  
Russian Federation  
Fax: +7 (846) 333-54-28, 332-29-44  
E-form (in Russian:  
<http://www.samproc.ru/feedback/feedback.php>

**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor**

Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation  
Yuriy Yakovlevich Chaika  
Prosecutor General's Office  
ul. B. Dmitrovka, d.15a  
125993 Moscow GSP- 3  
Russian Federation  
Fax: +7495 987 58 41/ +7495 692 17 25  
**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General**

**And copies to:**  
Human Rights Ombudsman for Samara Region  
High Commissioner Olga Dmitrievna Galtsova, Ul. Mayakovskogo, 20  
443100 Samara Region  
Russian Federation  
Fax: +7 8463 374983  
Email: Ombudsman.Samara@yandex.ru

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** HIS EXCELLENCY MR ALEXANDER VLADIMIROVICH YAKOVENKO, Embassy of Russia, 6-7 Kensington Palace Gardens, London W8 4QP, 020 7229 6412

**Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.** This is the first update of UA 209/17. Further information:

[www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur49/7085/2017/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur49/7085/2017/en/)

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 26 July, human rights defender Evdokia Romanova, an active member of the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR) from Samara in Central Russia, was called to her local police station to act as a witness for another case the police was investigating. However, on arrival she was questioned and charged under Article 6.21, part 2 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences for “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships among minors using Internet”. Her only “crime” was the reposting on her personal Facebook and Russian social media network, VKontakte, of links to the YCSRR website and media publications, including an article on The Guardian on the same-sex marriage referendum in Ireland and a BuzzFeed article on an exhibition in St. Petersburg on Russian LGBTI teens. Four of the posts date back to 2015 and another to May 2016. If found guilty, she could be fined up to 100,000 roubles (USD 1,750).

The [Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights](#) (YCSRR) was formed at the Hague Youth Forum in February 1999, organized by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Population Foundation (WPF) and the Dutch Council on Youth and Population. A number of young people participating in the forum were particularly concerned with the situation of sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescents and young people. These young people established the YCSRR to support and sustain young people’s efforts towards the realization of their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The law prohibiting “promotion of non-traditional sexual relations among minors” – also known as the “homosexual propaganda law”, was passed in Russia in June 2013. It introduced Article 6.21 into the Russian Code of Administrative Offences, providing hefty fines for those who, according to the authorities, “promoted non-traditional sexual relations”. Amnesty International believes that the law violates the right to freedom of expression and has been campaigning for its abolition. The law has had a particular negative impact on the work of LGBTI organizations and activists alike. Since its introduction in 2013, several people, including LGBTI activists Nikolay Alexeev, Nikolay Baev and Alexey Kiselev, were fined under this law. In January 2014 these three activists submitted a case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) claiming that their rights under the European Convention of Human Rights had been violated. In June 2017, the Court ruled that Russia violated Article 10 (right to freedom of expression) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention and that it must pay compensation to the activists. Russia is appealing the decision.

The right to a public hearing is an essential safeguard of the fairness and independence of the judicial process, and a means of protecting public confidence in the justice system. Except in prescribed and narrowly defined circumstances, such as cases involving children, court hearings and judgments in criminal cases must be public. The right to a public hearing means that not only the parties in the case, but also the general public and the media, have the right to be present.

Further information on UA: 209/17 Index: EUR 46/7264/2017 Issue Date: 16 October 2017