

URGENT ACTION

MOTHER LOSES CUSTODY OF KIDS FOR SON'S LONG HAIR
Local authorities, in the Bogradskiy District, Russia, have removed seven children from their adoptive mother after she allowed one of her four year-old sons' hair to grow long. The authorities interpreted this as her fostering the "wrong" gender identity in him, an absurd accusation arising in the context of state-sponsored homophobia, transphobia and gender stereotyping in Russia.

On 3 November, the local authorities in the Bogradskiy District in Khakassia (eastern Siberia), removed **seven children** from the custody of their adoptive mother, **Lyubov Litsegevich**, and placed them with three separate foster families. The authorities accused the mother of "harming the personality of the children in her care by failing to ensure their adequate appearance, rules of hygiene and self-care skills, and failing to take measures to ensure their adequate emotional, mental and physical development". The accusations have been made after the children's nursery complained to the local education authorities that Lyubov Litsegevich's four (now five) year-old adopted son had grown long hair. The accusations implied that his long hair was emasculating, and adversely affecting his mental health.

Lyubov Litsegevich is currently appealing the Bogradskiy District Administration's decision to remove her seven underage children from her care. The next hearing will take place on 22 December. Many of Lyubov Litsegevich's neighbours, who have also testified as witnesses in court, speak in her support. During the hearing, the boy's long hair, which in the adoptive mother's casefile is recorded as being seen in a ponytail using a pink hairband, has been repeatedly cited as a key piece of evidence against her.

Please write immediately in Russian or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to act in the children's best interest, and specifically to annul their decision to remove seven adopted underage children from Lyubov Litsegevich, and return them into her care immediately;
- Urging them to protect the family of Lyubov Litsegevich from unfounded accusations;
- Reminding them that, under Article 2(2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Russia is obliged to "take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members".

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 FEBRUARY 2018 TO:

Head of Administration

Sergei Chernyshov
 Administration of Bogradskiy District
 Ulitsa Novaya, 10
 Bograd, 655340
 Republic of Khakassiya
 Fax: + 7 39034 91256 (If a voice answers say 'fax' clearly)
 Email: bograd66@mail.ru,
admbograd@yandex.ru
Salutation: Dear Head of Administration

Prosecutor of Bograd District

Yevgeniy Burankov
 Prosecutor's Office of Bograd District
 Ulitsa Partizanskaya, 125
 Bograd, 655340
 Republic of Khakassiya
 Russian Federation
 Fax: + 7 39034 91471 (If a voice answers say 'fax' clearly)
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Head of Education Directorate

Olga Cherkunova
 Education Directorate
 Ulitsa Tsentralnaya, 2
 Bograd, 655340
 Republic of Khakassiya
 Russian Federation
 Fax: +7 39034 91198 (If a voice answers say 'fax' clearly)
 Email: uo-bograd@khakasnet.ru
Salutation: Dear Head of Education Directorate

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

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Gender stereotyping is common in Russia, as are transphobia and homophobia. The adoption in June 2013 of the law that prohibits the “promotion of non-traditional sexual relations among minors” (also known as the “propaganda law”) has promoted homophobic and transphobic attitudes in Russia. 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 also led to higher levels of violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or intersex (LGBTI) individuals in Russia.

In the case of *Bayev and Others v. Russia*, submitted by three Russian gay rights activists who were each found guilty of the administrative offence of “public activities aimed at the promotion of homosexuality among minors”, the Court (in the final judgement of 13 November 2017, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-174422>) found Russia in violation of Article 10 (right to freedom of expression) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention of Human Rights.

UA: 281/17 Index: EUR 46/7639/2017 Issue Date: 21 December 2017