

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST FACES JAIL FOR FEMALE BODY DRAWINGS

The trial against Yulia Tsvetkova, an artist and activist from Komsomolsk-on-Amur in the Russian Far East, is expected to start soon. She faces up to six years in prison if convicted under absurd charges of “production and dissemination of pornography” for her drawings of the female body. Yulia Tsvetkova, who has been relentlessly targeted since March 2019 for promoting LGBTI and women’s rights through her art, was placed under house arrest between 22 November and 16 March 2020 and remains under a travel ban.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Boris Viktorovich Kononenko
Prosecutor of Komsomolsk-on-Amur
Krasnogvardeiskaya street, 34
Komsomolsk-on-Amur 681013
Russian Federation
Email: kms@phk.hbr.ru

Dear Prosecutor of Komsomolsk-on-Amur,

I am writing to express my dismay over the ongoing prosecution of artist and activist **Yulia Tsvetkova**. She is facing charges of “production and dissemination of pornography” (Point B, Part 3, Article 242 of the Russian Criminal Code) for her drawings of the female body. I am aware that after almost 10 months since the start of the criminal proceedings, her trial will start soon. During this period Yulia Tsvetkova has been subject to searches in her home and workplace, has spent almost four months under house arrest, has been deprived of access to needed medical care and been stigmatised. Her only “crime” has been her artistic drawings and her activism around women’s rights.

Yulia Tsvetkova has been relentlessly targeted since the beginning of 2019 for her activism around women’s and LGBTI rights. She has faced several administrative proceedings under Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences, “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors”. In December 2019 she was found guilty and fined for being the administrator of two LGBTI-themed online communities on the social media platform VKontakte, despite the fact that both online communities were marked “18+”, as required by Russian law. In July she was found guilty under the same article and fined for posting a drawing on social media depicting two same-sex couples with children and reading “Family is where love is. Support LGBT+ families”.

Yulia Tsvetkova’s promotion and defence of human rights through her art is protected by the right to freedom of expression, which is guaranteed in Russia’s Constitution as well as by Russia’s obligations under international human rights law. Yulia Tsvetkova should be praised and not prosecuted, let alone subjected to this ongoing pattern of harassment.

In the light of the above, I urge you to take all necessary steps to end Yulia Tsvetkova’s prosecution, under both criminal and administrative charges, and all forms of harassment which are reprisals for her human rights activism.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Yulia Tsvetkova, an artist and stage director from Komsomolsk-on-Amur (Russian Far East), was arbitrarily detained on 20 November 2019 and put under house arrest two days later after being charged with “production and dissemination of pornographic materials” (Point B, Part 3, Article 242 of the Russian Criminal Code). The basis for these absurd charges were her drawings of the female body, including body-positive pictures of female reproductive organs, which she posted on social media as part of her women’s empowerment campaign. On the day of her detention, searches were carried out in her apartment and in the children’s educational club where she worked previously. The police seized her electronic devices, documents, and brochures on gender issues. Yulia Tsvetkova recalled that during the search the police officers stated that she was a “lesbian, sex trainer and propagandist leader”.

On 11 December 2019, she was found guilty of “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors”, an administrative offence under Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences, and fined 50,000 rubles (US\$ 780) for being the administrator of two LGBTI-themed online communities on the popular Russian social media platform, VKontakte. Both online communities were marked “18+”, as required by Russian law, making the fine imposed on her unfounded even under the homophobic Russian “gay propaganda” legislation (this “offence” only arises if the “propaganda” material is targeted at persons under 18 years of age).

On 17 January 2020, Yulia Tsvetkova informed the media that a new proceeding had been opened against her, under the same article of the Code of Administrative Offences, this time for posting on social media her drawing “Family is where love is. Support LGBT+ families”, depicting two same-sex couples with children. She had published the drawing in support of a same-sex couple who had had to flee Russia with their adopted children because the authorities had threatened to take their children away from them. On 10 July she was found guilty and fined 75 000 rubles (US\$ 1050).

On 7 July a third administrative case was opened against her under Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences.

Yulia Tsvetkova has been the target of an overtly homophobic campaign since March 2019, when she had to leave her work with the amateur youth theatre company Merak, after the police launched an investigation into alleged “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors”, on account of her anti-bullying and anti-discrimination play “Blue and Pink”. Also, the theatrical group she had founded in 2018 was forced to cease its activities.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian, English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 14 October 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Yulia Tsvetkova (she/her)

And copies to:

His Excellency Andrei Kelin

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