

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST TO STAND TRIAL FOR HER DRAWINGS

The trial against Yulia Tsvetkova, an artist and human rights activist from Komsomolsk-on-Amur, in the Russian Far East, is expected to start at the beginning of February. If convicted, she is facing up to six years in prison, under the absurd charges of “production and dissemination of pornography” for her drawings of women’s bodies as part of her activism promoting women’s rights.

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

Igor Victorovich Krasnov
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Dear Prosecutor General,

I am writing to you concerning artist and activist **Yulia Tsvetkova** from Komsomolsk-on-Amur. She is facing charges of “production and dissemination of pornography” (Article 242(3b) of the Russian Criminal Code) for her drawings of the female body. Her trial is expected to start soon, after 14 months of criminal investigation.

Yulia Tsvetkova has been continually targeted since 2019 for her activism for women’s rights and the rights of LGBTI people. She has faced three administrative proceedings under the homophobic Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences (“propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors”).

Yulia Tsvetkova also been repeatedly targeted by homophobic individuals, harassed and received threats over the phone, via social networks, and by mail, since the criminal case against her was opened. Her mother has also been receiving threats, including threatening calls, from unknown individuals.

For over a year, Yulia Tsvetkova has been subjected to harassment by police, including repeated searches of her home and workplace. She spent almost four months under house arrest, during which she was deprived of access to the medical care she required.

Yulia Tsvetkova has committed no offence and is being relentlessly persecuted for exercising her right to freedom of expression through her drawings and as part of her human rights activism. By prosecuting Yulia Tsvetkova the authorities are violating both Russia’s Constitution and their obligations under international human rights law.

In the light of the above, I urge you to end all criminal and administrative proceedings against Yulia Tsvetkova and to take all necessary steps to ensure the harassment of Yulia Tsvetkova and her mother stops.

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” (Article 242(3b) of the Russian Criminal Code). These absurd charges were brought against her in connection with 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 empowerment campaign. On the day of her detention, searches were carried out in her apartment and in the children's educational club where she had 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”. She was released from house arrest on 16 March 2019 but remained under travel restrictions.

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, 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).

On 17 January 2020, Yulia Tsvetkova informed the media that administrative proceeding had been opened against her once again, under the same Article, this time for posting her drawing “Family is where love is. Support LGBT+ families” (depicting two same-sex couples with children) on social media. 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 2020 she was found guilty and fined 75 000 rubles (1050\$). On 7 July 2020 a third administrative case was opened against her under Article 6.21.

During 2020, the criminal case against Yulia Tsvetkova was referred back and forth between the investigator and the prosecutor five times. Only in January 2021, the Prosecutor's Office in Komsomolsk-on-Amur approved the case and her trial is expected to start soon.

Yulia Tsvetkova has been the target of an overtly homophobic campaign since March 2019, when she had to end her cooperation with the youth amateur theatre company Merak after the police had launched an investigation into her 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

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 26 March 2021

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)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/2977/2020/en/>

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

Prosecutor's office in Khabarovsk region
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