



RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES ASK THE SUPREME COURT TO DECLARE THE LGBTQ 'MOVEMENT' EXTREMIST - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Photo: LGBT activists wave their flags during a rally to cancel the results of voting on amendments to the Constitution in Moscow, Russia

The Russian Justice Ministry on Friday said it has filed a lawsuit with the nation's Supreme Court to outlaw the LGBTQ+ "international public movement" as extremist, the latest crippling blow against the already beleaguered LGBTQ+ community in the increasingly conservative country.

The ministry said in an online statement announcing the lawsuit that authorities have identified "signs and manifestations of extremist nature" in "the activities of the LGBT movement active" in Russia, including "incitement of social and religious discord." Russia's Supreme Court has scheduled a hearing to consider the lawsuit for Nov. 30, the ministry said.

It is not yet clear what exactly the label would entail for LGBTQ+ people in Russia if the Supreme Court sides with the Justice Ministry, and the ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. But the move in itself represents the latest, and possibly by far the most drastic, step in the decade-long crackdown on gay rights in Russia unleashed under President Vladimir Putin, who has put "traditional family values" at the cornerstone of his rule.

The crackdown, which began a decade ago, slowly but surely chipped away at LGBTQ+ rights. In 2013, the Kremlin adopted the first legislation restricting LGBTQ+ rights, known as the "gay propaganda" law, banning any non-critical public depiction of "nontraditional sexual relations" among minors. In 2020, Putin pushed through a constitutional reform to extend his rule by two more terms that also outlawed same-sex marriage.

In 2022, after sending troops into Ukraine, the Kremlin ramped up its rhetoric about protecting "traditional values" from what it called the West's "degrading" influence, in what rights advocates saw as an attempt to legitimize the war in Ukraine. That same year, the authorities adopted a law banning propaganda of "nontraditional sexual relations" among adults, too, effectively outlawing any public endorsement of LGBTQ+ people.

Another law passed this year prohibited gender transitioning procedures and gender-affirming care for trans people. The legislation prohibited any "medical interventions aimed at changing the sex of a person," as well as changing one's gender in official documents and

public records. It also amended Russia's Family Code by listing gender change as a reason to annul a marriage and adding those "who had changed gender" to a list of people who can't become foster or adoptive parents.

"Do we really want to have here, in our country, in Russia, 'Parent No. 1, No. 2, No. 3' instead of 'mom' and 'dad?'" Putin said in September 2022 at a ceremony to formalize Moscow's annexation of four Ukrainian regions. "Do we really want perversions that lead to degradation and extinction to be imposed in our schools from the primary grades?"

Authorities have rejected accusations of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. Earlier this week, Russian media quoted Andrei Loginov, a deputy justice minister, as saying that "the rights of LGBT people in Russia are protected" legally. Loginov spoke in Geneva, while presenting a report on human rights in Russia to the U.N. Human Rights Council, and argued that "restraining public demonstration of non-traditional sexual relationships or preferences is not a form of censure for them."

Putin, speaking at a culture-related event in St. Petersburg on Friday, called LGBTQ+ people "part of the society, too" and said they are entitled to winning various arts and culture awards. He did not comment on the Justice Ministry's lawsuit.