

MONITORING OF VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHTS OF LGBTIQ PEOPLE IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION (JANUARY–MARCH 2026)

In the first quarter of 2026, the practice of applying the article on the organization of an extremist organization confirmed the trends of 2025. The primary focus has shifted from penalizing public statements to prosecuting the creation and maintenance of community infrastructure – both digital and physical. Criminal liability now attaches not to statements, but to the mere existence of any organized space, from human rights NGOs to entertainment venues.

I. CRIMINAL CASES

Case of Forced Annulment of Gender Marker and Marriage Record (Chelyabinsk)

A transgender woman from Chelyabinsk was convicted in 2021 by the Kurchatovsky District Court of Chelyabinsk of distributing pornography (selling nude photographs) and “incitement to suicide” (on the basis of depressive poetry posted on social media), and was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment, suspended. At that time, she was already undergoing transition, but her documents had not yet been amended.

In early 2022, while serving her suspended sentence, the woman formally completed her legal gender transition: she obtained a passport in a female name with a female gender marker and registered her marriage with a man. In May 2022, the Deputy Prosecutor of Chelyabinsk Oblast filed an appellate submission. The Prosecutor’s Office demanded that the suspended sentence be revoked, insisting that the gender transition had been a “trick” and that a trans woman’s remaining at liberty “does not ensure her rehabilitation.”

On 24 February 2026, the Kurchatovsky District Court of Chelyabinsk issued the following ruling: it not only revoked the suspended sentence, but simultaneously:

1. Declared unlawful the civil registry office’s (ZAGS) decisions to amend the gender marker.
2. Annulled the marriage registration record.
3. Sentenced her to four years’ imprisonment in a general-regime correctional colony.

The woman was taken into custody directly in the courtroom. Following the invalidation of her identity documents, she was processed and registered as male. On cassation review, the court confirmed that, notwithstanding her physical transition and identity, she must serve her sentence in a male correctional colony. The placement of a trans woman in a male correctional colony under male-designated documents creates an extreme risk of physical and sexualized violence, and deprives her of access to the gender-specific medical care she requires.

This case is unprecedented in the Russian legal system. It demonstrates the precariousness of civil status: any transgender person in the Russian Federation, even one who has legally changed their documents, is vulnerable to “civic death.” The Prosecutor’s Office may challenge a person’s legal status “in the interests of the Russian Federation” at any time.

The annulment of a marriage within criminal proceedings constitutes a direct violation of the right to private life. It demonstrates that family bonds of transgender persons in the Russian Federation are afforded no legal protection whatsoever. The court called into question the legitimacy of medical certificates issued by private clinics, which may permit the authorities to mass-annul gender transitions completed through private medical commissions prior to the 2023 prohibition.

This case combines violations of Article 3 (prohibition of torture), Article 8 (right to private and family life), and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the ECHR, and represents an exemplary instance of systemic state persecution.

New Case: Arstan Arstangaliev (Astrakhan)

In March 2026, the Sovetsky District Court of Astrakhan remanded the activist in pre-trial detention (SIZO) under Part 2 of Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code. This is another landmark case: the investigation officially equated the administration of a social media page with “participation in the activities of an extremist organization.” This case sets a dangerous precedent under which any social media management activity is deemed a form of active involvement in an “extremist movement” and results in immediate pre-trial detention.

Artyom Fokin (Samara; head of the human rights organization “Irida”)

Sentence: a fine of 450,000 rubles (Articles 282.2 and 330.1 of the Criminal Code). The court criminalized routine NGO activities: taking minutes of meetings and publishing reading lists. This case effectively outlaws any human rights work.

Tatyana Zorina (Chita; club "Jackson")

Sentence: four years in a general-regime correctional colony. The verdict rests on a charge of "creating infrastructure" for the banned LGBT movement. Imprisonment for organizing an entertainment venue (a drag show) underscores the authorities' intention to eliminate all forms of community gathering.

Case of Alexander Martynov

Alexander Martynov was already serving a sentence in a correctional colony. In March 2026, a few weeks before his scheduled release on parole, a new criminal case was opened against him under Part 2 of Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of an extremist organization). The investigation concluded that Martynov "continued the activities of the banned international LGBT movement" while in custody. The prosecution was based on statements by "secret witnesses" (fellow inmates), who alleged that Martynov had "recruited" cellmates by discussing queer theory with them and criticizing state policy on "traditional values." During a search of his personal belongings, letters and diary entries were found that the prison censorship classified as "extremist literature."

Through this case, the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN) is legitimizing the status of "extremist communities" within correctional facilities. This enables the prison administration to impose any punitive measures – from indefinite placement in a disciplinary isolation cell (SHIZO) to a ban on correspondence – under the justification of "suppressing the coordination of extremists within the facility."

II. PROPAGANDA IN MEDIA AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS (Article 6.21, Part 3 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation)

This is the largest category by total fine amounts. In 2026, the authorities introduced a tactic of personal financial pressure on company management.

Statistics and Cases (4 companies + managers)

Total fines: 13,000,000 rubles (imposed on legal entities) + 650,000 rubles (imposed on individual managers).

1. **OOO Kinopoisk (LLC):** Fine of 3,500,000 rubles. Director General Alexander Dunaevsky fined 250,000 rubles. The case concerns the absence of content filtering in the Harry Potter films (the complaint relates to off-screen context and allusions to the sexual orientation of the character Albus Dumbledore; despite the absence of any explicit scenes in the films, the regulator insists that the character's portrayal, considered in light of the author's (J. K. Rowling's) public statements, requires an age restriction of 18+ or the removal of references to his romantic feelings in the subtitles).

In the film *Beanpole* (Dylida, dir. Kantemir Balagov; the entire film is built around the complex, intimate relationship between two women in post-war Leningrad; RKN (Roskomnadzor, Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media) concluded that the “romanticization of suffering” of the protagonists and their physical intimacy, even in the absence of pornographic content, constitutes propaganda, insofar as it evokes sympathy for their “non-traditional” bond), and in the film *Perfect Strangers* (the film features a gay character who conceals his sexual orientation from his friends; the regulator objected to the fact that, in the final scene, the other characters accept his choice and express their support, which was interpreted as “creating a positive image”).

2. **OOO Ivi.ru (LLC)**: Fine of 3,000,000 rubles. Deputy Director General Ivan Grinin fined 200,000 rubles. The grounds were the allegedly “approbatory” depiction of a character’s coming out in the series *Love, Victor*. The relevant scene occurs in the second season, in which the protagonist Victor comes out to his parents – and in particular to his father, Armando. RKN experts noted that the father, who had initially been conservative, ultimately accepts his son’s orientation and embraces him. According to the court, such representation “normalizes” same-sex relationships and presents them as an acceptable model of family development, which was classified as propaganda of an “approbatory attitude.”
3. **OOO Restream Media (Wink)**: Fine of 3,000,000 rubles. Manager V. Popov fined 200,000 rubles. The case concerns the film *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*. RKN objected to the presence of comic but normalizing scenes depicting the domestic life of the protagonist’s gay friend Tom and his partner. The court held that the portrayal of LGBT characters as an organic part of a social circle, without negative framing, constitutes covert propaganda.
4. **PJSC VimpelCom (Beeline)**: Fine of 3,500,000 rubles (on the legal entity only; also in relation to *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*).
5. **Case of Smotreshka (streaming platform)**: Fine of 3,000,000 rubles for the Spanish series *Galgos*. Roskomnadzor and the Tagansky District Court of Moscow identified scenes in which two women openly discuss their relationship and prepare for their wedding. The court stated that the broadcast of preparations for a same-sex wedding was “incompatible with the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 809.” The judgment notes that such depictions form a “distorted perception of the social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional relationships.” The court classified the scene depicting two women’s wedding preparations as “propaganda.”

The situation is directly shaped by Presidential Decree No. 809 "On Approval of the Foundations of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values" (signed 9 November 2022). This is a strategic policy document that establishes the "state ideology" and serves as a mandatory reference framework for all government bodies: courts, Roskomnadzor, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Ministry of Culture.

The Decree invokes: the "strong family," the primacy of the spiritual over the material, and the protection of historical memory.

The Decree officially designates as a threat to national unity the dissemination of values that include the "cultivation of selfishness, permissiveness, immorality, and the denial of ideals of procreation."

Although the acronym LGBT is not directly mentioned, "non-traditional sexual relations" are classified as part of the destructive influence of the United States and other "unfriendly states" on Russian society.

The Decree shifted the campaign against LGBTIQ+ people from the plane of "protecting children" to the plane of "protecting national security." This has produced the following changes in judicial practice:

Courts (as in the Ivi.ru, Kinopoisk, and Beeline cases) no longer search for erotic content in films. By virtue of Decree No. 809, a "neutral-to-positive portrayal" is itself deemed a violation. If an LGBT character is shown as happy, accepted by their family (the Ivi.ru case), or integrated into society (the Beeline case), this is interpreted as "creating a positive image of a destructive ideology."

Any element of ordinary life – such as preparations for a wedding (the series Galgos, the Smotreshka case) – is classified as "an attempt to impose alien reference points," since, under the Decree, marriage in the Russian Federation may only be a union between a man and a woman.

RKN uses Decree No. 809 to apply pressure on company management. Where previously only legal entities were fined, personal fines are now issued to individual managers through the prism of "protecting values," on the grounds of "facilitating the spread of destructive content."

In criminal cases, the Decree serves as the moral and ideological justification for judges when imposing custodial sentences: any provision of leisure activities for LGBT people is classified as the creation of a "hostile cultural environment."

Article 6.21 – “Propaganda”: Individual Cases

Case of Danila O. (Kemerovo): Fine of 100,000 rubles for an image of SpongeBob SquarePants in a dress. The court declared the cartoon character to be an instrument for “forming the attractiveness of non-traditional relationships.” The same case involves fines for icons depicting the faces of Beyoncé and Nicki Minaj, whom the court officially described as “champions of sexual perversion.”

Case of Katerina Gordeeva: Fine of 120,000 rubles for an interview with Mikhail Zygar. The precedent is especially dangerous because the punishment was imposed not for the author’s own statements but for the mere act of providing a platform for discussion of LGBTIQ topics.

“The Social Media Profile Case” (Astrakhan): A man was fined 130,000 rubles for completing a personal profile on a social network. The court ruled that “personal information about oneself” in the public domain constitutes public propaganda.

Case of Natalya Barskaya (Rybinsk): A teacher was fined 100,000 rubles for displaying a slide featuring a rainbow during a tolerance lesson. This is a key example of the purge of educational spaces.

Case of Yevgenia August (Yekaterinburg): Fine of 100,000 rubles for posts in the “Tsentr T” (Centre T) channel. The court criminalized the provision of psychological counselling and discussion of queer matchmaking.

Case of singer SavannaOki: The grounds for prosecution were her music video and social media posts, in which law enforcement identified “propaganda of non-traditional values.” The charges were based not on song lyrics but on her stage image: the use of rainbow light filters, androgynous makeup, and visual references to queer culture, which “experts” from the Ministry of Internal Affairs characterized as a repudiation of traditional gender roles. The court imposed a fine of 100,000 rubles.

Other Media Fines

Aleksei Bernat: 200,000 rubles for “exposing” content to minors.

Itil Tyomnaya (Vladivostok): 100,000 rubles for activist content.

Olesya Krivtsova: 200,000 rubles for journalistic activity.

Yaroslav Rasputin (Moscow): Three administrative protocols for Parni+ publications, pending decisions.

Natalya Tsymbalova and Sergei Kondrashov (St. Petersburg): Convicted of “propaganda directed at adults” (Article 6.21, Part 3).

III. PROPAGANDA IN BOOK RETAIL (Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation)

In 2026, a "Fifth Wave" of repression in the book sector has set in. It is characterized by a shift from external enforcement pressure to total self-censorship by publishers.

Case of Chitai-Gorod bookstore chain and OOO Gramota (Chita / January 2026)

The chain was fined 800,000 rubles (subsequently reduced to 400,000 rubles on cassation review).

List of books "banned" in this case:

Fredrik Backman – the entire trilogy: Beartown, Us Against You, and The Winners. The novels feature a hockey player named Benji Ovich who faces difficulties on account of his sexual orientation. The court-appointed expert characterized this as "sexual anarchism."

John Boyne – The Heart's Invisible Furies: The novel traces the life of a gay man in Ireland across several decades. The court considered this to constitute the "creation of a positive image of non-traditional relationships."

Ursula K. Le Guin – The Left Hand of Darkness: A canonical science fiction novel about an alien civilization in which humans have no fixed biological sex. This was classified as a repudiation of family values.

Dom Knigi (House of Books), Arkhangelsk: An administrative protocol was issued against Director Katerina Trubina in connection with F. Backman's novel Us Against You.

Case of Popcorn Books: The publisher has completely ceased operations. Major market players (including Eksmo) began sending stores disposal lists for print runs, without awaiting inspections.

Case of Karina Videnina (Bryansk): In early 2026, a raid on bookshops was conducted in Bryansk. At the retail outlet "Knigi" (Books), owned by businesswoman Karina Videnina, police officers discovered printed materials with LGBT themes. The owner was charged under Part 1 of Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences (propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships among adults). Unlike internet-based cases, the emphasis here was placed on the "public offering" of goods. The court fined Videnina 50,000 rubles (the statutory minimum for natural persons under this provision).

The Five Waves of Repression Against Publishers and Book Retailers

1. **First Wave (late 2022 – early 2023): Labels and Plastic Wrap.** This period immediately followed the enactment of the law imposing a blanket prohibition on “LGBT propaganda” among adults. Books featuring LGBT characters were not confiscated but were labelled “18+” and sealed in plastic wrap. Publishers believed that compliance with technical requirements (wrapping + age restriction) was sufficient to remain within the law.
2. **Second Wave (mid-2023): Stop-Lists and Removal from Display Shelves.** Following the first activist-led raids and warnings from Roskomnadzor, book chains began to exercise caution. The first internal stop-lists appeared. Books were not destroyed but were removed from prominent display positions and from the search results of online stores. They could only be obtained by making a direct request or by searching deep within the shelves. The strategy was reduced visibility (visual censorship) to minimize the risk of inspections.
3. **Third Wave (2024): Redacting Text and Terminating Contracts.** This period followed adaptation to new fines and pressure in the wake of the designation of the “LGBT movement” as extremist (late 2023). Publishers began blacking out entire paragraphs in books (as in the case of *A Little Life* by Hanya Yanagihara) or changing the gender of characters in translation. Major publishing groups began mass-terminating contracts with authors writing queer-themed Young Adult fiction. The strategy was to attempt to retain rights to foreign bestsellers through drastic in-house editorial redaction.
4. **Fourth Wave (2025): First Criminal Risks and the Closure of Niche Publishers.** This wave was characterized by the first substantive fines under Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences and the threat of prosecution under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code. The collapse of Popcorn Books. Large retail chains (Chitai-Gorod, Bukvoed) began demanding written “safety guarantees” from publishers for every manuscript. Publishers began rejecting any books with even a hint of “non-traditionalism” to protect their management from personal liability. The economic logic was compelling: a potential fine of 1-4 million rubles outweighs any profit from a print run.
5. **Fifth Wave (2026): Total Physical Destruction and Samizdat.** The shift to physical elimination of books. As in the cases involving Bukvoed or Dom Knigi, prosecutions now extend to world literary classics and mainstream commercial fiction (the Backman case). Major market players such as Eksmo-AST are distributing disposal lists. Where previously a book could be “hidden,” it is now ordered to be destroyed (pulped). LGBT literature has migrated entirely into a “grey zone” – printing abroad and distribution through closed Telegram channels and “underground” book clubs.

IV. SYMBOLS AND DIGITAL CONTROL (Article 20.3, Part 1 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation)

By early 2026, prosecution for “displaying symbols” (Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences) had completed its transformation into an automated assembly line. The defining trend of the quarter was the total disregard for context: the system is indifferent to whether the individual supports the community or calls for its elimination – the mere fact of the visual display of prohibited elements is punishable

1. Case of Vladimir Sugakov (Kemerovo)

This case became the pinnacle of legal absurdity in 2026. Vladimir Sugakov is a radical proponent of “traditional values” and a committed homophobe. In an attempt to ingratiate himself with the system, he published screenshots of LGBT content on social media, accompanied by aggressive abuse and calls to “cleanse the country.”

The system’s logic, however, proved stronger than ideological loyalty: the AI system Okulus recorded the presence of rainbow symbolism on his page. The court did not trouble itself to read his homophobic tirades. The judge ruled that Sugakov had “carried out a public display,” and that his motive (criticism or endorsement) was legally irrelevant. Even this self-styled “guardian of traditional values” was found guilty and fined 100,000 rubles. The state has made its position clear: the topic is so toxic that even hatred of it must be silent. Any image of the flag is a criminal offence – even if used as a target.

2. Case of Ksenia Sh. (Mordovia)

Ksenia was fined for a photograph from 2018 found in her “Saved” folder (which many users mistakenly regard as private). The Vepr system scanned archives going back eight years. The court dismissed the fact that in 2018 the “movement” had not yet been designated as extremist, applying the doctrine of a “continuing offence.”

3. Case of Ilya Orekhov (Tula)

Ilya Orekhov was turned by the system into a revenue source for the state budget. Rather than issuing a single protocol for “extremist activity,” the AI identified five separate posts featuring rainbow symbols and framed them as five independent offences. The result: five separate court hearings in a single day. This “fragmentation” tactic is employed in 2026 to psychologically break activists, compelling them to spend weeks attending court proceedings.

4. Case of Nika Odinkova (Ufa)

Fine of 1,500 rubles for a two-second appearance of the flag in an old video. This illustrates the use of AI monitoring by the GRFC to detect micro-episodes of purported "extremism."

5. Case of Daria A. (Mordovia)

In February 2026, officers of Centre E (Centre for Combating Extremism) in Mordovia identified several photographs featuring rainbow symbols (flags and badges) on the VKontakte page of a 20-year-old local resident, Daria A. Rather than issuing a single protocol, police filed four separate protocols under Part 1 of Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences. The Chamzinsky District Court of Mordovia examined the materials and issued four separate rulings imposing fines of 1,000 rubles for each image: four protocols and a total fine of 4,000 rubles for rainbow symbols.

6. Case of Dmitry Dyukov (Moscow)

The basis for the protocol was the presence of images of the six-stripe rainbow flag (the Pride flag) on Telegram. Dyukov's conduct was charged under Part 1 of Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences as "the public display of the symbols of an extremist organization" (the banned "International LGBT Movement"). A Moscow court found the blogger guilty. While the precise fine amount is obscured in several sources, the very fact of a conviction for visual content posted on Telegram underscores that messaging applications are now subject to the same intensive monitoring as Russian social networks.

Pressure on Activists

Regina Dzugkoyeva: A repeat fine of 30,000 rubles for failure to submit "foreign agent" reporting.

Maksim Ivantsov and Masha Latsinskaya: Newly added to the foreign agents registry (February – March 2026). The Ministry of Justice explicitly cites "LGBT propaganda" as the basis for the designation.

OOO "Fokus" (Moscow–Baku): Fine of 40,000 rubles for failure to include the mandatory disclaimer regarding the extremist status of the LGBT movement. This marks the beginning of mass media censorship under threat of blocking.

Technological Infrastructure

By 2026, manual monitoring for online violations has been largely discontinued. All surveillance work has been transferred to the hardware-software systems of the Main Radio Frequency Centre (GRFC), a structural unit of Roskomnadzor.

AI system “Okulus”: This neural network analyzes up to 200,000 images per day. Its principal capability is the recognition of “concealed symbolism”: colour combinations in clothing, gradients, and even specific makeup styles. Okulus is the system that retrieves old photographs (as in the Ksenia Sh. case), indexing files that are hidden from general search but remain stored on servers.

AI system “Vepr”: This system searches not for images but for “connections.” It analyzes who likes activists’ posts, which groups users belong to, and how rapidly information spreads. Vepr generates lists of “unreliable” individuals in the regions before those individuals have committed any offence.

Statistics for Q1 2026

| Indicator | Data: January–March 2026 | Change vs. 2025 |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Blocked resources (websites, links, group chats) | Over 85,000 | +40% |
| Administrative cases under Art. 20.3 CAO | 4,200 | +120% |
| Average fine for natural persons | 35,000 rubles | 10-fold increase |
| Content units removed via AI | 1,200,000 | – |

V. TRANSNATIONAL PERSECUTION

Transnational persecution is not an innovation of 2026. It is a long-standing practice of the Kremlin, which began in 2012 with the “foreign agents” law and was intensified in 2022–2024. In 2026, we are recording only the system’s transition to maximum automation and heightened aggression.

1. Case of Igor Kochetkov

Kochetkov is a historian, publicist, and human rights defender who stood at the origins of the organized LGBTIQ rights movement in contemporary Russia. In the eyes of the Kremlin, he is the architect of the infrastructure of resistance that the state has methodically dismantled over the past twenty years. Igor Kochetkov has been subject to persecution for decades.

His addition to the international wanted list in March 2026 is not the beginning of that persecution, but the system's final attempt to legally "annul" his status.

After the Russian LGBT Network was designated as extremist (late 2023), the authorities systematically compiled a dossier. The current wanted-list entry represents the deployment of evidence accumulated over years (administrative protocols, NGO reports) to hinder the human rights defender's freedom of movement in countries "loyal" to the Kremlin and to obstruct his work within UN mechanisms.

2. Case of Sasha Kazantseva

A sex educator and author of the book *The Sex Itself: How to Discuss, Experience, and Give Pleasure* (Russian: *Sam seks: Kak obsuzhdat', poluchat' i dostavliat' udovol'stvie*). Long before any formal proceedings, Kazantseva was placed on blacklists maintained by venues and event spaces. Whenever her appearance or book presentation was announced, representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs or pro-government activists would approach the venue (a bookshop, a lecture hall). Venues, fearing closure or fines under Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences (LGBT propaganda), cancelled events en masse. Kazantseva was effectively deprived of both a lawful income and a public platform within the country.

As legislation on the "international LGBT movement" (designated as extremist) was tightened, her blog and educational materials became the object of continuous monitoring by the GRFC. Professional complainants (such as Timur Bulatov and Yekaterina Mizulina) used her publications as grounds for referrals to the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation. Any reference to sex-positivity or queer identity was now interpreted not as "education" but as "recruitment into an extremist organization."

Unlike the case of Tatyana Zorina (whom the authorities chose to imprison as a public example), in Kazantseva's case the system selected the scenario of "soft exile." Following direct "preventive" visits by security service officers or summons for "conversations," Sasha Kazantseva was compelled to leave Russia.

After her forced relocation to Vilnius (Lithuania), the persecution did not cease but entered a phase of direct physical threat. This case, extensively reported by Meduza, Verstka, Nastoyashcheye Vremya, and Delfi, illustrates a new form of transnational aggression.

The principal instrument of pressure in Lithuania was the far-right homophobic group "Tseliteli" ("Healers"), which is linked to Russian radical online communities. The group engages in doxxing and physical stalking.

In June 2025 and January 2026, activists from the group succeeded in identifying Kazantseva's actual address in Vilnius. Unknown individuals appeared at her home, left threatening messages in her letterbox and on social media, and made explicit threats to "send killers" or "drag her onto a bus and send her back to Russia." The group's chat forums openly discussed plans to abduct or kill her.

The absurdity of the 2026 situation lies in the fact that even in a European democracy, a human rights defender proved defenceless against the "export" of Russian aggression. Lithuanian police repeatedly declined to open criminal proceedings. The reasoning given by law enforcement was shocking to the human rights community: officers stated that phrases such as "it's time for you to disappear" or threats to "come back and kill" did not constitute a "real threat" because "there had been no physical contact." The case prompted a public scandal at the state level. The leader of the Conservative Party, Laurynas Kasčiūnas, acknowledged that the case goes beyond an "ordinary dispute" and constitutes an element of Russia's hybrid warfare against activists on EU territory.

The Kazantseva case illustrates the defining trend of 2026: the Kremlin is delegating "dirty work" to decentralized, fanatical groups. This enables Russian authorities to officially disclaim involvement, while activists live in a state of constant fear, paralyzed by surveillance. The combination of digital control (account hacking, AI monitoring) and physical presence (home visits) creates the effect of "transparent borders," under which an activist in Lithuania feels as vulnerable as one in the Russian Federation.

VI. PERSECUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

In March 2026, **ILGA World** and the **LGBT group Vykhod (Exit)** were recognized as "extremist organizations" by court order.

The designation of **ILGA World** and the **LGBT group Vykhod** as extremist organizations in March 2026 definitively criminalizes any form of engagement with them. For staff and volunteers, this means the risk of charges under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (up to 10 years' imprisonment) for the mere act of participating in the activities of "banned organizational cells," and for donors, the risk of charges under Article 282.3 of the Criminal Code (up to 8 years' imprisonment) for financing extremism. Even a single transfer of one hundred rubles, if recorded by the banking system, now constitutes evidence of a criminal offence.

For petitioners and complainants, any mention of these organizations without the mandatory disclaimer regarding their banned status, or the presence of their logos in social media archives, is grounds for prosecution under Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences.

The authorities are using these court rulings to achieve a total purge of the human rights infrastructure, depriving the community of access to legal and psychological assistance. Under the conditions of 2026, seeking assistance from such structures is equated with engagement with a terrorist underground, resulting in placement on a preventive surveillance register and a de facto professional ban for those deemed “unreliable.”

VII. RAIDS AND SWEEPS

Case of the Raid on Club “Territoriya” (Yaroslavl)

On 14 March 2026, approximately 30 armed security service officers interrupted a live music performance, subjecting all persons present (approximately 130 people) to harsh detention measures. Visitors were forcibly held face-down on the floor for five hours. Any movement was suppressed and access to identity documents and means of communication was blocked. Under the pretext of searching for “prohibited tattoos” (extremist or Nazi symbols), men and a number of women were forced to undress. In practice, this procedure was used as a tool of psychological pressure and sexualized humiliation. People were led away in turn to back-office premises and the club's kitchen for interrogation and inspection of the contents of their mobile phones. Witnesses reported screaming emanating from these areas, indicating the use of physical force. Officers wrote the slurs “faggot” and “fascist” on the skin of the hands and bodies of “suspicious” attendees.

Twenty-three people were **detained** and taken to police stations; security service officers identified them in their reports as “radicals.”

Of these, **20 people** were designated as persons “with Nazi tattoos and symbols” (these were the individuals subjected to forced undressing and inspection in the first instance). Administrative protocols were filed under the articles on “propaganda” and “display of Nazi symbols.”

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

In early 2026, similar anti-LGBT laws were adopted in Belarus and Kazakhstan, creating a unified repressive zone across the CIS. Prosecutions for symbolic offences will proliferate through the expansion of automated AI systems. Relatives of activists remaining within the Russian Federation are increasingly being used as leverage against those in exile.

Recommendation: International bodies should recognize LGBTIQ people in the Russian Federation as a group subjected to systematic persecution on grounds of identity, and should streamline the mechanisms available for their protection.