INTRODUCTION
In the course of the monitoring program implementation in 2016-2017, the Russian LGBT Network has recorded 366 personal cases containing evidence of discrimination and violence towards LGBT people in Russia. Our trained volunteer team interviews survivors and works in several regions of Russia. The staff changes yearly, a geography of participation broadens, and at the same time, new cases of rights violations of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are being recorded. Collected data during the monitoring program cannot be considered exhaustive, since a lot of LGBT people are not aware of the monitoring, and among those who know about this program there are only few who are willing to talk about the discrimination that's happened to them. As a matter of fact, LGBT people face violence and human rights abuse much more often than the monitoring statistics reflects.

Many factors influence the high level of discrimination. Legally LGBT people are barely recognized as a social group, that is why crimes of violence cannot be classified as hate crimes and a motive of hostility cannot be recognized as aggravating circumstances. Cases of murders, that were committed only for homophobic reasons, according to the offenders themselves, consist statements as “disagreements during a sudden quarrel”.¹

Systematic discrimination in socio-economic institutions and domestic violence is affected by political course towards traditional norms and values and placing emphasis on differences between Western countries and Russia. Unfortunately, to Russians, the value of human rights and respect for personality in public are considered as alien expressions of tolerance and recede into the background, which inevitably leads to development of intolerance to different social groups.

Mass media continue portraying LGBT people mainly in a negative light. Popular politicians, celebrities and other public figures, who shape public mind, express their opinions by hate speeches towards LGBTQ people with no fear to get legal sanctions and public criticism. So-called “propaganda law”² has created a basis

¹ The wording is taken from the case of the murder of journalist Dmitry Tsilikin, see the section “Physical violence”.

² Federal Law “On amendments to Article 5 of the Federal Law on protecting children from information harmful to their health and development and to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation with the aim of protecting children from information that promotes negation of traditional family values” of June 29, 2013 № 135-FZ
for suggestions to limit LGBT people’s rights and by the 2017 has transformed into real appeals to deprive LGBT people of fundamental rights, in some cases – even the right to life. It has created and strengthened an idea in public conscience that LGBT people, as well as organizations that set up their mission to achieve equal rights regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, serve the interests of some “imposed enemy”, and society’s duty is to resist it through the fight against equality.

In regions where traditionalist discourse is recognized as fundamental, one can set a course for a radical struggle “with vice”. In 2017, cases of flagrant violations against LGBT people in the Chechen Republic became known. Law enforcement agencies in Chechnya launched an unprecedented campaign aimed to “purge the nation from gays”. The police and the military unlawfully detained and placed men in unofficial prisons those under suspicion of having a homosexual intercourse. The detainees were severely beaten, tortured, were set against other prisoners, deprived of sleep, light, food and water. According to informants from the North Caucasus region, there have been cases of homosexual murders that were sanctioned or committed independently by authorities of the Chechen Republic. There were women among the victims who reported the brutal persecution on the grounds of homophobia and transphobia. In most cases, lesbians and transgender women were “punished” by their relatives, but violence against homosexual and transgender women by police officers was also documented.

Since March 29, 2017, the Russian LGBT Network has been providing emergency assistance to victims, including evacuation of those who have been persecuted or threatened with extrajudicial killings from Chechnya because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Most of the organization’s resources and efforts were aimed to this area. This also explains the lack of activity of the monitoring team in interviewing victims of discrimination based on SOGI in other regions of Russia, which in turn affected the number of documented cases.³

³ For example, in 2015, as a result of monitoring 284 cases of discrimination and violations of rights based on SOGI were recorded. More detailed information on the monitoring data of the Russian LGBT network in 2015 - https://www.lgbtnet.org/sites/default/files/monitoring_lgbt-set_2015.pdf
At the same time, monitoring volunteers documented the testimony of 77 people from the region who were subjected to the massive persecutions of LGBT people in the North Caucasus. All stories recorded from the survivors' words confirm the facts of violence and threats of violence on the mere basis of belonging to the LGBT community.  

The events in Chechnya illustrate the consequences of systematic neglect of the rights of a particular social group and empowered by government representatives' eloquence against the protection of such group.

Above-mentioned law of propaganda of "untraditional sexual relations among minors", that was passed in 2013, has legitimated discrimination and contributed to significant reduction of LGBT people's opportunities in Russia. It has been tremendously influencing the matters of lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender people during 2016-2017.

Furthermore, the meaning behind "propaganda" in everyday perception includes both positive and negative mentions of LGBT people, that leads to suppression of sexuality as it is, especially in minors' presence. Sexual education of young people and teenagers is not provided, HIV and STD prevention is hindered by constant control of religious activists and ideologically caused reluctance to discuss sex-related issues with teenagers on a public institutions level. Non-adult LGBT persons are isolated from adequate information even more: a side effect of propaganda law imposes restrictions for under-ages to information that their sexual orientation and gender identity are not a deviation or a disease that needs to be treated. Those teenagers who have not met with support among friends and family face a high risk of becoming depressed and to suicide tendency. Adult activists are persecuted by government for information dissemination that could lower the risk degree for LGBT teenagers.

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4 The situation in the Chechen Republic is described in more detail in our report on the facts of the persecution of LGBT people in the North Caucasus. "They said that I am not a human, that I'm nothing, that I should rather be a terrorist than a faggot"/ https://lgbtnet.org/sites/default/files/doklad_ru_web.pdf

Suppression of topics, connected with sexuality and gender, results in systematic and complex negative consequences to LGBT people. That's why we conduct monitoring of discrimination yearly: not only to cover the status of human rights in Russia, that's left much to be desired, but also to break a taboo on sexuality discussion, increase visibility of lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender people and attract general public's attention to difficulties that millions of Russian LGBT citizens face.
GENERAL MONITORING RESULTS IN 2016-2017
During 2016-2017 the monitoring team has met victims of homo-/transphobia and recorded their stories. Sometimes survivors willingly turned to our volunteers to have their cases documented, sometimes volunteers accidently found out about acts of violence and discrimination and asked survivors to report it.

The number of recorded cases is increasing year after year, which can be explained by different tendencies. On the one hand, a number of offences has increased objectively since traditional political discourse is cultivating people’s homophobia that allows aggressors to get support, impunity and a free hand to demonstrate their negative attitude towards LGBT people. On the other hand, LGBT movement is gradually developing and formalizing in Russia. LGBT people, especially young representatives of the movement, involved in online space, more and more become aware of injustice that’s been developed by people’s attitude and also community of their political interests, that leads to deep reflection on their own experience of facing homo-/transphobia and willingness to change current situation for the better by, as well, participating in the monitoring program.

Altogether, the monitoring team has documented 366 cases of rights violations based on either sexual orientation or gender identity (abbreviated as SOGI) in Russia. We have come across horrifying cases of murders, beatings, rapes, harassment at school and at workplace, multiple refusals to provide services and violations of labor and parental rights based only on SOGI of survivors.
VIOLENCE
PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

During 2016-2017 the monitoring team has recorded 104 cases of physical violence. The most alarming ones were recorded from the ones subjected to purposeful persecutions of LGBT people in the Chechen Republic. This topic is much wider than the report's format allows to describe, therefore the Russian LGBT Network has made a separate report on the persecution cases in the North Caucasian. In the current report we'd briefly state that in March 2017 journalists and human rights activists started to receive information of illegal arrests of men in Chechnya, suspected of homosexual orientation. The amount of reports on atrocities in the region had increased and it was hard to believe the content. However, the first evidence emerged in April: the ones who survived tortures in secret prisons started to talk. The survivors described what had happened to them in detail with the help of human rights activists.

During the year of the Urgent aid program the Russian LGBT Network has evacuated 119 people who suffered from the persecutions in Chechnya and neighboring regions of the North Caucasian, including survivors' relatives, and those who were under threat of violence from hostile relatives due to disclosure of survivors' SOGI. All 49 people, kidnapped by military and the police, confirm they were demanded to give names of other gays in the Republic. 37 detainees were subjected to tortures, including electric shocks. Those, who were held hostage at so-called secret prisons by representatives of law-enforcement agencies, did not have access to food, the access to water was limited. The wardens did not let them rest and interrupted their sleep after a couple of hours. Severe beatings, constant interrogations, insults and humiliations of illegally arrested LGBT people were a regular part of being at the basements of cement barracks that were used by the Chechen national security.

Persecutions by law-enforcement agencies based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Chechnya had not stopped after first reports on unprece

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6 Report on the facts of the persecution of LGBT people in the North Caucasus. “They told me that I was not a human, but a nonentity, that it'd be better if I were a terrorist than a fagot” https://lgbtnet.org/sites/default/files/doklad_ru_web.pdf
dent campaign against homosexual, bisexual and transgender people in the Chechen Republic. Criminal case has not been initiated, as well as the criminal investigation of these crimes still has not been conducted after the beginning of pre-investigation inspection, whereas mass and planned character of the campaign, aimed at extermination of LGBT people in Chechnya, fall under the definition of crimes against humanity.

Besides the outrageous situation in Chechnya, there are other forms of violence that the monitoring team has been recording for a few years. Figurehead dating has been one of the most commonly encountered forms of physical violence since 2012. Victims of that crime are homosexual men looking for interaction on online dating sites. Offenders always stick to a similar scheme: they create a fake account on a site, meet their victims and invite them to their place on a date. When the unsuspecting man comes to the place, an organized group of aggressive men is already waiting there to humiliate, beat up and blackmail him. There were 15 cases documented by the Russian LGBT Network in 2016-2017 with a following scenario:

A., 28 years old, met a guy on date.bluesystem.org where he stated he was 18 years old. The new acquaintance invited the survivor to his place that he rented in Moscow's downtown (New Arbat Avenue, 26). There was a video surveillance in the apartment. There was no conduct of a sexual nature from the victim. All of a sudden, three men crushed into the apartment. Aggressors beat him up and accused of pedophilia because his date allegedly was 15 years old - his real age remains unknown. Besides physical violence towards the victim, offenders also took all the money he had, and moreover, they made him withdraw money from a deposit in the amount of 3,500 USD so that they didn't report to the police under a number of articles and institute criminal proceedings against the survivor. Aggressors succeeded in intimidating the victim so that he was afraid of being brought to criminal charges even though he committed no crime. Much later, the survivor realized there was no threat of being charged.

All cases of assaults, according to this scenario, are followed by duality of aggressors' aims. On the one hand, beatings and threats are practiced
for economic considerations – to make victims give away all their money to blackmailers. Victim’s homosexuality is considered as an opportunity for blackmailing, because coming out to a circle of friends and acquaintances may result in much worse problems for them. On the other hand, another aim is to punish a homosexual person for being “abnormal” and to put the fear of other gays being disclosed. There also are groups of men acting according to ideological reasons: they publicly state that their mission is to fight homosexuals. They record humiliations and then upload it to the Internet stating victims’ personal data without any ransom. However, criminals frequently state the second reason on a declarative level as a more “honorable” one, and economic motives become obvious from their actions:

On September 25, 2016 a man named David Abaev (the name is changed) was attacked in Vladivostok. Three young people beat him up, motivating their actions by “cleaning the region (the North Caucasus) of homosexuals”. Aggressors pointed a knife at his throat, threatened to kill him, demanding 100,000 rubles. David, extremely stressed, gave away everything he had: his phone and clothes. Later, David’s roommate, at his request, handed over a laptop and 20,000 rubles to the criminals. Perpetrators had kept the victim hostage all night in their car until they got all the money. Survivor’s overall material damage amounted to no less than 120,000 rubles. In spite of all injuries – a closed craniocerebral injury, brain concussion, multiple bruises and hematomas over his face and body – the man did not go to a doctor right away, experiencing intense emotional shock, but got medical help the next day, when he felt better. David could not go to the police because of its potential attitude, difficulties in getting a lawyer who would take the case, as well as a possibility of coming out in the region, which could result in even more harmful consequences.

Offenders make common cause and put intense psychological pressure upon victims. Survivors often do not even consider reporting to the police because of the intimidation, they are scared to face homophobia and to experience humiliation again by law enforcement authorities. After the completion of a quantitative study, conducted by the Russian LGBT Network in 2016, 69.4% out of 3759 respondents do not trust the police at all or do not have confidence in it. A case of a Tomsk activist is an example of such attitude to the police:
On December 1, 2016, a blogger from Tomsk Alexander Sidorov held a one-man campaign in Makhachkala (Republic of Dagestan) with a poster "To hate gays is an antiscientific misconception". The next day after the action, the activist was recognized on the street. Young masked men approached him and started beating him. Police officers observing the beating did not take any measures to stop criminals' actions. Instead, they brought the activist to the police station, where Sidorov tried to write two complaints: one on the attackers, the second on the police officers. However, the police officers refused to accept his complaints, threatening Sidorov that they would start a criminal case against him. For 6 hours Alexander was subjected to pressure from police officers who indulged in humiliating and insulting him. Some spoke openly that they would do the same as the attackers, that they were willing to kill him, and that persons like him should be burned. Only one officer said that he would treat him like a Russian citizen who has rights. After threats, Alexander agreed to write an explanatory note that he simply had an unfortunate fall. After he signed the explanatory note, the police officers took Alexander to his hotel room, but the next day Sidorov was again detained and taken back to the police station, because he was allegedly "being hunted". Alexander spent the night on a chair in the waiting room. According to him, "constant humiliations and insults continued from both the police and detainees in the department". In the morning Sidorov was released, and left the city.

Lawyers of the Russian LGBT Network asked public procurator's office to carry out an inspection of policemen's actions, however, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Dagestan replied that “after the completion of the inspection, there's no confirmation to the presented information”.

The police connivance of crimes towards LGBT people develops a feeling of impunity for homophobic people. It increases violence, and physical abuse sometimes goes to extremes. Russian LGBT Network documented 11 murders on the grounds of SOGI in 2016-2017, five of those were committed in the Chechen Republic. The most notorious case was a murder of journalist, Dmitry Tsilikin, by a homophobic activist:

On March 31, 2016, a famous journalist Dmitry Tsilikin was found dead in his apartment, with about 30 stab wounds found on his body. The murderer also took
his phone, laptop and wallet with money. A week later, on a suspicion of committing the crime, a student Sergei Kosyrev was detained. On the night of the murder, March 27, 2016, he was visiting Tsilkin, whom he had met online. After detention, Kosyrev gave confessions and, moreover, during the interrogation called himself "Cleaner", his life was "a crusade against a certain social group," and the feeling with which he killed Tsilkin was "not a dislike, as is written in the protocol, but hatred", while explaining that the crime was part of fulfillment of the "mission". Although the murderer openly admitted that he had killed Tsilkin because of his sexual orientation, the hate motive was not taken into account in the qualification of the case: Kosyrev was charged under article 105 part 1 and article 158 part 2 clause "c" of the Russian Criminal Code (murder without aggravating circumstances and theft with causing significant damage).

A hate motive is systematically ignored during investigations of crimes towards LGBT people, which complicates justicement and fair punishment for perpetrators. During investigations of violent crimes, communication with the police involves another threat for survivors: outing (undesirable revealing of their sexual orientation or gender identity) at a workplace or to survivor’s family due to police’s mishandling of personal data intentionally. Consequences of outing to homophobic family members can differ: to the point of kicking them out of home, physical violence or murder.
SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is a very complex and sensitive topic. Monitoring volunteers get certain training on how to communicate with survivors, but for the most part, they are not experts in the field of psychology to be able to discuss such a rough topic with survivors without bringing up horrible memories. That’s why we don’t make it our aim to seek for and document such incidents on purpose, and record only those that survivors want to share themselves. However, we have quantitative study’s data demonstrating that 3% (2016) and 2,6% (2017) of respondents confronted with sexual violence committed only on the grounds of SOGI. One of the striking examples is an incident in one of the North-West regions of Russia.

A transgender woman and her friend were coming back home late when she was attacked by a perpetrator of the same ethnicity, with whom she willingly had had sexual intercourse before. She and her friend were forced to get into the car and were taken to a rented apartment. The woman was being beaten, threatened and insulted with homophobic language while driving. In the apartment they made her tell her “real” male name (according to the passport) in front of a camera and forced to outing. Then one of the aggressors took the victim to a bathroom where he forced her to an oral sex act, recording everything on his phone. The perpetrators demanded all survivor’s money threatening to spread the video. The woman did not have the required amount of money so she turned to her friend to borrow the money to pay off the criminals. He agreed to help and went to get the money accompanied by two of the aggressors. The survivor and one of the criminals were alone, then he forced her to an anal sexual act. The victims were set free when the aggressors got the money. Survivors went to the police right away to report on blackmailing and rape. Two men were arrested, the third one went into hiding and was declared wanted by the police. A case of blackmailing was filed. In court, while deciding on punitive measures, the woman was directly threatened by the accused.

One of specific crime types towards LGBT people is corrective rape. Victims are usually women: lesbians, bisexual and transgender women. Rapist openly states that he is aimed to fix their sexuality and/or gender identity and turn them
heterosexual or cisgender (person's gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth). However, most of the time the real purpose of these rapes is not to “fix”, but to punish them for failing to meet patriarchal standards. That is why corrective rapes are committed by victim’s acquaintances with particular cruelty.

The monitoring program documented several cases of corrective rape in 2016-2017, but none of the survivors wanted to share details and have given a consent to use their stories in this report.

PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Among all cases recorded by the monitoring team, 221 cases include elements of psychological violence. According to quantitative studies results, conducted in 2016 and 2017, every second LGBTQ+ respondent faces psychological violence. Psychological violence includes both direct insults based on SOGI and veiled aggression with cold disdain. A special type of psychological violence is hate speech – a form of self-expression that includes, justifies or stimulates homophobia (and other forms of xenophobia). Hate speeches are strongly settled down in media and political fields within the Russian neopatriarchal discourse. A vivid example of public speeches of hatred in 2017 can be the statements of deputy Vitaly Milonov from his interview on the TV channel “Dozhd” (TV Rain) to the LGBT activist:

“Faggot! Sodomite!.. He's a faggot, all faggots have AIDS... So where did this disease come from?.. If there were no faggots, there would be no AIDS. These fags slept with monkeys, then with each other, and then AIDS appeared!.. Maxim Gorky said: “Remove homosexuals — fascism will disappear”. This is his words. All the fascists were originally homosexuals, by the way... If there is no propaganda of homosexuality, if we don’t state on separate channels that homosexuality is a norm, then they [homosexuals] will not remain.”
Milonov's perlocutionary speeches present homosexual persons in a negative light. There's no doubt such speeches affect LGBT persons, making them feel anger, disappointment or even become depressed. Hate speeches influence heterosexual and cisgender readers as well: they form a dehumanized and pathologized image of LGBT people as enemies, and so make it welcome to aggressively express one's opinion (without providing arguments) about LGBT people. This forms a homophobic discourse that justifies and supports violent and discriminatory practices of behavior towards LGBT people. The following story can be given as an example of a manifestation of hate speeches on a personal level:

*Survivor's father passed away. At his funeral service, the woman was being insulted with homophobic language either by her relatives or passers-by. It all started with discussion of her sexuality and appearance – that a woman should not look “like that”, that she should wear dresses. It ended with discussion of survivor's personal life. The relatives called her to change her mind, saying: “Why do you need this? You should live a normal life! Change your mind!” The woman was trying to talk to them until she realized there was no point. During the talk, 8 aunts had tried to educate her how to live: “Do you understand what your children will become? They are ashamed of you! They cannot tell who their mother is around people! Your son is about to get married – how would he introduce you to his fiancée's parents? What would they say? How could this influence their relationships?”. The woman was being put on an intense psychological pressure (around 8 hours). After staying with the relatives for 2 days the woman was advised to visit church and a doctor.*

This example illustrates a widespread homonegativistic rhetoric based on the idea of protecting children and teenagers. According to this discourse, besides being “ashamed” of being related to LGBT people, non-adults should be guarded from LGBT people’s supposedly bad and corruptive influence on their immature psyche and sexuality. Most of all, specialists, working with children, are obsessed with those ideas.

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7 Homonegativity is a rational, intellectual non-acceptance of homosexuality, whereas homophobia is an emotional non-acceptance.
DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT
LGBT TEACHERS

In recent years, school teachers have become a noticeable vulnerable group in terms of observing labor rights. Homophobic activists and simply conservative citizens often interpret the law on propaganda very radically and, in accordance with it, consider it necessary to eliminate any LGBT contacts with minors. They write denunciations of homosexual teachers to the school administration, and then these educational institutions have problems with reputation and municipal bodies. Due to real pressure and fears of such pressure, the administration asks the teachers to resign at their own free will, or resorts to the dismissal of LGBT teachers for committing “immoral misconduct, incompatible with the continuation of work, refers to employees performing educational functions”\(^8\). In the latter case, access to work with children in the future is guaranteed to be closed. The monitoring team has documented only 13 cases of wrongful dismissals of teachers based on their SOGI, 2 of them were recorded in 2016. Here is the following story of a teacher from Krasnoyarsk:

*Maria, a teacher of pop vocal, was fired from the city music school in Krasnoyarsk because of complaints of a Saint Petersburg activist Timur Bulatov (Isaev). Bulatov called the school after a thorough study of the woman’s personal page in VK (about 3,000 posts and more than 800 photos). Considering the data contained in the profile as “propaganda of homosexuality”, Bulatov handed all the collected materials to the staff of the music school, to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to the Krasnoyarsk mayor’s office. The director of the Center for Continuing Education called Maria and warned about the upcoming conversation, during which she would be asked to write a letter of resignation at her own request, and also said that the administration would force Maria to leave the school herself or be fired under the article. The next day, in the administration's office, Maria was under pressure for six hours. The woman was blackmailed with all sorts of methods – from her and the whole center's reputation to the fate of her parents. Maria refused to write a letter of resignation, so she was fired, indicating the reasons for “immoral behavior”.***

\(^8\) In accordance with paragraph 8 of part 1 of Article 81 of the Labor Code of the Russian Federation
TYPICAL SITUATIONS OF DISCRIMINATION
Maria's opportunity to do what she loves was taken away due to homophobic prejudice and public pressure on school administration because of Bulatov. This incident is not unique but typical for LGBT teachers, whose sexual orientation or gender identity was disclosed at a workplace.

**LGBT PEOPLE AT OTHER OCCUPATIONS**

A resident of Novosibirsk, Anna Balash (a lesbian) twice tried to get a job in a company “Sib-Alliance”. The first time was in October, 2015, the second time, when the vacancy was still open, was in February, 2016. Both times the woman was denied employment for the same reason – because of “unconventional sexual orientation”. The company even provided a letter to the woman explaining that the conclusion of the employment contract was denied “because non-traditional sexual orientation does not meet the requirements of the organization in relation to the post, may negatively affect the company's image and impede the fulfillment of immediate duties. The specificity of a manager's position is to work with clients. The overwhelming majority of clients support traditional family values. Employment can lead to losses”. In the summer of 2016, the Novosibirsk Railway District Court found the denial of employment illegal, and obliged “Sib-Alliance” to take Anna to work and pay her compensation of 1,000 rubles for moral damage.

*While interviewing for a job, the employee of the company, who conducted the interview, noticed a victims’ notebook sticker that said “some people are gay, get over it!”, and noted, as well, the unusual appearance of the victim, and then, with a disapproving glance, coldly said “I understand what kind of person you are”, and rejected a job application.*

According to the quantitative study’s data of 2016, 17.3% of respondents (653 people) faced labor discrimination, 521 of them were fired due to homophobic reasons and 49 were rejected to be employed.
DISCRIMINATION IN SERVICE INDUSTRY

LGBT people may experience difficulties in service industry for the same reasons. In 2016-2017 the monitoring team recorded 19 cases of discrimination in service industry. Service provider's prejudice and bias play a ponderable part, especially in the field of medicine. Patient's hiding homo/bisexuality or transgenderness may hinder making a diagnosis and timely adequate treatment, especially when it comes to health of sexual or reproductive behavior. However, when SOGI is disclosed, patients often face negative reaction or attitude towards them as if they were mentally ill. Unfortunately, in the field of psychiatry, there are still proposals to carry out conversion therapy on LGBT people (a “cure” of homosexuality or transgenderness). The world psychiatric community recognized such therapy as unscientific and non-working, and homosexuality was excluded from the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10), adopted by Russia in 1999. Such proposals can be regarded as quackery:

R. (25 years old, bisexual genderqueer) was in a state of severe psychological crisis. Having decided to get professional help, R. went to a therapist with the expectation of getting medicines prescription. During a conversation with a specialist, R. disclosed her sexual orientation, in response the psychotherapist stated that “only heterosexual orientation is considered full and developed”. In connection with her statement, the psychotherapist, I.O.

Zheleznova, proposed R. to undergo a course of psychotherapy that “would make R. heterosexual if she wants it”. As a result, the problem, due to which R. turned to a specialist, was not solved. Serious mental disorder remained untreated.

Doctors are often not competent in matters of SOGI, because in many modern Russian institutions of higher education homosexuality is still considered within the framework of pathologizing discourse, directly or indirectly representing all variations of sexuality as “abnormal”. Inadequate education of doctors leads to the fact that some of them allow themselves, unprofessionally, to put their own prejudices above the care of a patient’s health:
Lolita turned to a private clinic for preventive examination by a gynecologist. Initially, the woman doctor was nice and tactful in communication. However, after Lolita answered to “What kind of protection do you use?” that she lived with a girl and didn’t need protection, the doctor changed her attitude towards her. She began to ask tactless questions and give comments: “You’re not just examining! I dare you slept with a guy?”. Sometimes she turned to rudeness and directly ridiculed Lolita’s relationship with her girlfriend. Lolita left the appointment that she had paid for without having completed the examination and getting necessary information and consultation.

In other service industries, both commercial and social, LGBT people often face discrimination as well. For example, for same-sex families there are difficulties connected with the inability to officially register a marriage and receive benefits provided to families for the purchase of housing. In the case when official registration could confirm the family status of partners, same-sex couples have nothing to assert against devaluation of their experience as a family:

On January 7, at the “Chaika” skiing base, in the suburbs of Samara, a same-sex couple with children was denied services on the same terms as the rest of the applicants. In the rules of providing services of this institution – the price list – there was a discount on the provision of services (rental of winter sports equipment) “Family”, which was defined as “two adults and two children”. In the presence of the young family, the discount was provided not only to married couples with children, but also to people who weren’t even a family, and possibly not even related, but who came together and represented themselves as a family. For example: an elderly woman, a young girl, two children; a man of advanced years, a young woman, two children. Workers of the base did not ask for any documents, especially certificates of marriage. The victims (a bi-couple with two children of one of them) in the presence of other visitors of “Chaika” asked to give them the discount as well, explaining that they were a couple living together as a family. However, the person responsible for issuing the inventory and payment for services denied, explaining to them: “No, girls, I cannot. We live in Russia!”. At the same time, they obviously could have just introduced themselves as sisters to get the discount.

In this case, there is no need to use protection against unwanted pregnancy. Women who practice sex with women also run the risk of contracting HIV and other STDS if they do not follow the safety rules. The material about safe lesbian sex in Russian can be found here: http://www.wonderzine.com/wonderzine/life/sex/234375-lesbian-sex
VIOLATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

LGBT families with children not only can be restricted from access to various services, but also can be at risk of interference of guardianship authorities into their family life. In 2016-2017 within the monitoring program, we documented four cases of violation of parental rights. The public perceives homosexuals and transgender people as people who are unable to be loving and caring parents. Moreover, they are considered to be able to “impose” their SOGI to children because of the homophobic prejudices and images of LGBT people in the media as non-permanent partners and simply strange and unpleasant characters. Sometimes this distorted perception turns into action against specific families: for example, the homophobic activist Timur Bulatov, well known for blackmail campaigns of LGBT teachers, purposefully influences the guardianship authorities to prevent LGBT people from raising their children.

In 2016, a transgender woman, the guardian of three children, became Bulatov’s victim. She was subjected to numerous insults and outing by the activist on his page in VK social network, where he expressed his disapproval of the fact that transgender people can have a family in derogatory form. According to the materials that Bulatov posted, he contacted the guardianship authorities in order to deprive D. of parental rights.

Open LGBT families are rare phenomenon in Russia not only because of the lack of opportunity to formally register a marriage or partnership. Despite the fact that there are no formal prohibitions on restricting LGBT people from parental rights acquiring, many LGBT families are concerned about the propaganda law because of the broad interpretation of the “propaganda of non-traditional relations” concept. It is not entirely clear what exactly in accordance with this law can be considered as information that can harm children health. For this reason, LGBT parents try to remain unnoticed: often lesbian couples show their relationship off as friendship, male gay couples pretend to be blood relatives in order to avoid suspicion.
However, the risk of government and guardianship agencies interference in family affairs exists not only for LGBT people: suspicions of homosexuality or transgenderness of parents are enough to attract the attention of custody to the family. This happened to Yuliya Savinovskikh from Ekaterinburg:

On August 7, 2017 the Custody and Guardianship service officers in Ekaterinburg illegally took away two adopted children from the family of Savinovskikh on the grounds of suspicion that Yuliya was ostensibly a transgender person – she carried out mastectomy and had a blog on behalf of a man. Custody and guardianship service staff did not conclude any deeds and did not assert any lawful charges. On September 21, 2017 the court approved the Custody and guardianship service actions legal and refused the adopting family to get the children back. On December 06, 2017 Ekaterinburg court considered the appeal filed by the family, abolished the previous decision and forwarded a new case for the consideration. The next court, held on February 5, 2018, also did not decide to return the children to Yuliya and her husband, motivating its decision by the fact that “self-identification of Savinovskikh Yuliya as a male representative, taking into account her marriage with a man and the desire to accept the social role inherent to men, contradicts the principles of the family law of the country, the traditions and mentality of the society”. Parents are struggling to restore their rights, while their adopted children are in the orphanage for more than six months.

The level of non-acceptance of LGBT people in society is interlinked with the categorical division of gender norms into male and female. As the Savinovskikh’s case shows, some deviations from the image of the “real woman” can be read as sufficient grounds for the destruction of the family. It should be noted that this position of guardianship agencies and courts is very specific about the observance of the norms, since it affirms the non-acceptance of LGBT parents being more important rather than a well-being and quiet life of two young children and one big happy family.
PRESSURE ON ACTIVISTS

Government interference in private life can be carried out by law enforcement agencies, unfortunately, not always out of good intentions, and over the years more and more often – out of considerations to suppress undesirable activities in the country. There is a wide trend of police intimidating activists of various opposition movements, which, according to our information, concerns LGBT activists as well. In recent years, this has been happening with the use of the Internet: there are cases when law enforcement officers choose one or more publications from the personal pages of activists and initiate an administrative or criminal case. LGBT activists are easy enough brought to administrative responsibility, for example, if they place LGBT related materials in their accounts, as follows from the vague wording of the law on the propaganda prohibition (let us remind that it lacks the definition of “propaganda”, so almost anything can be brought under this article). The investigation of such cases is often biased, and the focus of “propaganda” on minors in practice becomes an unnecessary basis for initiating a case. It was the situation Evdokia faced:

Evdokia is a civil activist and a member of several regional and international human rights and educational organizations. In July 2017, Evdokia received a mail summon to the police department. Evdokia complied with the summon and went to the police department where she was informed that she had been summoned for the charges under Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation “Propaganda of unconventional sexual relations among minors”. Evdokia refused to testify and contacted the lawyer of “Avers” LGBT organization in Samara, who advised her to take pictures of the materials of the case with her smartphone. The police refused to give her access to the materials. Evdokia again contacted her defender and handed the phone over to the police officer. The police officer talked to the lawyer in a rude manner, after which, she threw a folder with the materials in front of Evdokia. As soon as Evdokia began to look into the materials, one of the police officers snatched the folder from her hands, while rudely reproaching

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10 Recently, cases of persecution of activists for publication on the Internet and conviction under article 280 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation “Public calls for extremist activities” have become more frequent. More information can be found in Agora reports, Russian version is available here: https://meduza.io/static/0001/Agora_Internet_Freedom_2017_RU.pdf
his colleague for giving the accused the case for insight. The police allowed themselves to threaten with hints and ridicule, putting pressure on Evdokia. For example, one of the officers began to ask Evdokia questions about the legality of her partner’s stay in Russia, an Austrian citizen, whereas she had not mentioned her relationship with this person in the police department. The police hinted that it was necessary to check whether “everything was okay with his documents”. Evdokia refused further communication, signed the protocol of the questioning and left the department.

Later on, the case was brought into court. Having access to it, Evdokia, along with her defender S. Chernova, found out that the subject of the accusations were publications that Evdokia had made on her personal page in the Facebook social network two years earlier. Evdokia had a private account, and there were no minors among her friends on the Internet, therefore, minor Internet users did not have access to the materials she posted, but it did not influence the accusations. The publication materials were in a foreign language and Google Translate was used to translate them. A citizen with a criminal record was brought in as an expert for linguistic expertise, so it can be assumed there was pressure put on him by the investigation party.  

Unfortunately, in modern realities of our country such accusations of propaganda are by no means an attempt to follow the law by policemen, but a desire to mute those who disagree, and serve as just another manifestation of homophobia that structural elements of society and the government are permeated with.

POSITION OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

The traditionalist course on rigid gender and sexual guidelines leads to the fact that transgender people are becoming an especially vulnerable group of discrimination. The monitoring team has documented 46 cases of discrimination on the grounds of transphobia. Discrepancy between the gender marker in the passport and their changed appearance during hormonotherapy leads to difficulties to get services that require showing passport. Disclosure
of transgender status may cause improper questions, insults, public humiliation and physical violence; therefore, transgender people frequently avoid situations that involve passport confirmation. For example, due to discrepancy between a passport gender marker and appearance, transgender man from Tolyatti had to dispute with bank workers for 40 minutes in order to withdraw money from his bank account.

Replacement of documents would solve this kind of issues, although such procedure implies whole number of difficulties. It requires physical examination that would confirm presence of F64.0 (ICD-10) diagnosis — “Transsexualism” — to get permission for replacement of documents. Monitoring shows that transgender people encounter transphobia even at this stage when talking to specialists:

Transgender woman got an appointment to a specialists' consultation to have psychiatric diagnosis set. Before that, she underwent a hormone therapy that took 2 years. Her appearance was transformed according to female gender standards; besides, her hormonal background was affirmed by endocrinologist. In fact, she only had to pass formal procedure to get her gender marker changed in documents. As the victim claims, consultation at a local psychoneurological dispensary was horrible. The questions that qualified doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists asked the woman, who recently lost her job because of transition, were unprofessional and highly emotional: “Do you know that you will only have 5-10 years to live? Do you know that you will not be 100% woman? Do you realize that you condemn yourself to loneliness? The questioning that took a few hours without a break brought the woman to tears several times and devastated her emotionally.

In another case, a victim went to a local endocrinologist in order to get a prescription for hormones and medical report on his hormonal background (hormonal gender reassignment). The doctor refused to provide both, acted coldly with disgust. Afterwards, the doctor gave a referral to another clinic.

However, even successful obtaining of all the medical documents does not guarantee gender marker change in documents. Until 2018, registry offices widely denied transgender people referring to the lack of medical certificate that
confirms gender reassignment that is required by law. The problem lied in the fact that the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation for many years still did not establish any standardized medical certificate template for such inquiries. Having received a formal waiver from the registry office, the transgender person went to court, using all collected medical documents to prove that his/her hormonal and social gender does not correspond to the passport gender marker. After getting a positive decree, registry office changes person's passport gender marker on the basis of a court decision.

In October, 2017 the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation finally submitted a draft of a gender recognition certificate for discussion, and in January, 2018 it was approved. The approved form of the certificate, in comparison with the draft, contains positive amendments. For example, the draft stated that there would be a year and half long examination period at psychiatrist's, however, there are no clinical guidelines on what a psychiatrist needs to do with a transgender patient, especially for such a long period. The approved certificate does not have this term. In general, the approval of the certificate significantly simplified the process of changing documents, now transgender people do not need to assert their right to change their passport gender marker in court. However, a number of other characteristics of the document remained the same, which could provoke difficulties for transgender people. The certificate is valid for only one year, and if a person for some reason was not able to replace documents during that time, it remains unclear whether it would be possible to update the certificate or it would be necessary to undergo the entire procedure to get it from the very beginning again. According to the document, there must be three specialists in a medical board: a psychiatrist, a sexologist and a medical psychologist. Nevertheless, for example, a sexologist is a rare specialist, especially for small towns. It is likely that people would need to independently find and pay such specialist of the medical board out of their own money.
This forms a vicious circle: documents replacement process (as well as hormone therapy and required surgeries) requires significant amount of money, although a mismatch between actual appearance of transgender people and their documents, they face employment discrimination and cannot earn enough money to pass the medical commission and change their passport gender marker.

O. had several attempts to get a job in the field of IT in companies that specialize in websites creation and promotion, but each time she faced denial. There were about seven interviews; however, O. does not remember the exact names of the companies. During each interview, employers were willing to hire O. saying, “You can start tomorrow”, but as soon as O. showed her passport with a male name in it, she immediately got a denial: “Replace your documents and come again”, “We’ll call you back soon”. Due to the fact that she did not manage to get a job by her specialty within four months, she got a job of a courier-registrar (she was registering fictitious organizations herself). This led to conflicts and fines by the tax service. O. says that employment problems caused her depression.

Problems with employment often force transgender women to go into the industry, where their physiological characteristics are desirable and demanded – sex work. At the same time, like any sex worker, they are at a high risk of being subjected to physical and sexual violence, being exploited by pimps, getting drug or alcohol addiction. Transgender women are subjected to violence much more often, since they are perceived as the quintessence of homosexuality in heteropatriarchal culture.

POSITION OF LGBT TEENAGERS

Another group with special risk factors among LGBT people are teenagers. Underage LGBT people cannot get support from lawyer or psychologist without the consent of their parents or guardians. Children and teenagers are often not
even aware of their opportunities to get help, as they are limited in adequate information on LGBT issues by Federal Law of Russian Federation № 436-FZ of 2010-12-23 “On Protection of Children from Information Harmful to Their Health and Development”. Since the concept of “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations” is not clearly defined, the judiciary and the executive authorities freely interpret it. For this reason, any reference to LGBT people in a conversation with a minor in a positive or neutral manner may result in administrative penalties. Due to these restrictions, HIV-service and LGBT organizations cannot educate teenagers about sexuality and STDs, including HIV/AIDS, high prevalence rate of which alarms modern virologists and experts.

Being dependent on adult relatives, minors do not have leverage to protect themselves from the parents’ arguments about the different SOGI of the child being affected by mental disorders, age or peer environment. The monitoring team recorded cases of violence against teenagers by parents:

*Parents of a 16-year-old girl read her messages in a social network and found out that their daughter was dating a 16 years old girl. Parents subjected the girl to physical violence, put under house arrest, forbade going to school, took away her phone. Parents refused to pay for the education of the victim in a private school resulting in her expulsion. Parents also carried out pagan rituals, took the girl to a sorcerer, and threw her into cold water. After being expelled from the private school, the girl herself applied to a public school and arranged with the principal to be accepted for education. However, the parents, after learning about this, talked with the principal of the school, and the girl was denied a right to education. She was unable to continue education until reaching her majority.*

In addition to problems with relatives, teenagers may face harassment and violence at school by schoolmates. Since bullying is hardly ever discussed as a problem in Russian schools and preventive measures are rarely taken to prevent harassment in order to maintain the spirit of equality and non-discrimination, authorized adults (teachers, social educators, psychiatrists) pay attention only to the most extreme cases of collective aggression, and most of the bullying of schoolchildren passes far from their eyes. Issues related to SOGI
remain tabooed in almost all areas of teenagers’ communication, and the minor, unable to turn to anyone, often is left alone with the problem of harassment without receiving the necessary assistance. Bullying at school leads to social isolation of a child, can cause depression and lead to suicidal moods. Not being prevented, the harassment is poured into mockery and humiliation, down to physical violence:

Anton (16 years old) moved to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky from the Altai Krai and went to a new school. From the beginning of the school year until April, Anton was in good relations with peers as they were welcoming and friendly people. For a long time, he had been hiding his sexual orientation and was not ready to discuss it with someone until he decided to come out to his lesbian classmate. The girl subjected Anton to outing. On the same day, 7 students of the same school, attacked him at the schoolyard. After humiliations because of his sexual orientation, three of the attackers began beating Anton, leaving the victim with numerous bruises, abrasions and a strong nose injury. The action took place in front of at least 40 people who came to the schoolyard to watch what was happening. Anton went to a local hospital because he was worried about a nose injury. Anton had to tell his mother what had happened because of obvious signs of violence, concealing the motive of the crime. Due to insistent requests from the parents of the teenagers who attacked Anton, there was made a decision to forgive the attackers and not to institute legal proceedings against them. Now Anton still faces regular insults from other teenagers who are aware of his sexual orientation.

The monitoring program documented six stories of violence against LGBT teenagers. The scale of the problem reflects the online survey of the Russian LGBT Network in 2016: 1740 LGBT people under the age of 18 (46,3% of the total number of respondents) participated in the survey about discrimination. 13,5% of the respondents reported that they faced homo-/transphobia motivated by physical violence against them, 58% – psychological violence, 2,5% – sexual violence.
CONCLUSION
The stories recorded during the interviews with the survivors show deep-seated practices of discrimination against lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender people. The activities of existing LGBT organizations are complicated by the propaganda law and the “foreign agents” law, which impose legal restrictions on the distribution of materials, organizing events and street actions, direct assistance to teenagers. Enforcement of the laws is also based on personal prejudices of representatives of the executive and judicial authorities, cultivated by the current traditionalist discourse, and is carried out in the overwhelming majority of cases against LGBT people with excesses in the form of illegal detentions and arrests.

On January 12, 2016 in Moscow, an event for LGBT people was planned in the rented office. The first visitors of the event said that there was the police and three young people downstairs who took pictures of visitors. She asked those who made photographs, by what right do they took photos of strangers, they said: “Go your own way, lesbian”. Office Administrator looked out the window and saw two buses of riot police with a capacity of about 50 people. After a while, five policemen went upstairs. One of them was capturing everything that was happening on the camera. The administrator asked why the camera was being used, the police officer answered that it was a “timely coverage”. All the policemen were polite, showed their identity cards. One of the police officers in the rank of Major said that they received a message that there could be minors at the meeting, hence the check was organized. After the police had left, the event continued.

The next day, the administrator and activist went to the police to find out why and on what grounds the police officers came to the center. They also reported that they worked with different vulnerable groups. The police started talking to women, saying: “It’s good that you came to explain, because yesterday we were thinking whether we should shut down your office”. The police said that they received an emergency call the previous day with a message that a lecture on the topic of LGBT people would take place in the center, and minors were going to be at the meeting as well. The coordinator asked whether it was a common practice to bring two riot police buses on such occasions, the police responded positively, adding that the office is located in the “skinhead area” and they were afraid of disturbances. During the conversation, the police allowed themselves homophobic remarks and hate speech. They advised “not to provide a platform for any faggots”.
If until 2013 LGBT people were in the “blind zone” for the general public, then in 2016 and 2017 the negative attention to LGBT people, initiated by the propaganda law, is quite obvious and alarming. The law stimulates homophobic rhetoric in the mass media and gives conservative and homophobic activists a sense of mass support and illusion of untied hands. Discrimination and violence affect all spheres of LGBT people’s life. Even in the system of higher education, seemingly independent and free academic sphere, cases of undisguised and dense homophobia regularly occur:

Students of the Astafiev KSPU in Krasnoyarsk were proposed to choose a topic for a paper at the subject “Fundamentals of healthy living and hygiene”. There was the theme named “What is dangerous about homosexuality” among others in the list. This caused indignation of one of the students because of the ambiguous wording of the topic, indicating that homosexual relationships are dangerous, as well as the very existence of an unscientific name in the list. A teacher with a medical education entered the discussion with the student about homosexuality; they did not come to a common opinion on the matter, so the teacher sent the girl to the dean’s office. There were eight teachers in the dean’s office that began to discuss the topic and divided into groups. Opponents of homosexuality behaved inadequately and aggressively. As a result, the girl and another teacher together suggested the wording “Why homosexuality is the norm”. The student chose this topic for the research.

The formation of new, non-homophobic social norms is a complex and long process. Even if legislation and enforcement would suddenly, by magic, match the needs of LGBT people, domestic homophobia will continue to exist for a long time. The change in mass consciousness begins with the refraction of practices in very specific places at a local level. The suppression of a friend’s homophobic or sexist language; explanation to a teacher that xenophobia is unacceptable in an educational institution; educating and informing friends about LGBT people and the problems that homophobia creates; love, struggle, life and joy of life, regardless of SOGI and contrary to circumstances – all these actions affect not so much harsh homophobes, but neutral cisgender heterosexuals. And from silent and indifferent observers, they become allies in the struggle for equality and freedom for everyone.