



Winston Secures Asylum for Russian Who Was Persecuted Because of His Sexual Orientation

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A Winston team helped a Russian man receive a grant of asylum after he fled to the United States in 2022 because he experienced intense state-sponsored persecution and brutal violence simply because he was gay.

Our client, Artem Novikov, knew he was gay by the time he was in ninth grade. Out of fear, he kept his sexual orientation a secret, but other boys spread rumors about him and bullied him relentlessly. This same type of homophobic harassment followed him when he attended university in a different town.

Hoping that life in a larger city would allow him to fully express himself without fear, Artem moved to Moscow in 2012. Nonetheless, throughout the next decade of his life, Artem suffered severe discrimination, persecution, and violence because of his sexual orientation.

He was fired from his job for being gay and arrested for protesting homophobia. He was arrested a second time when St. Petersburg police raided a gay bar. While in custody, Artem and a friend were brutally beaten, with his friend eventually dying from injuries inflicted by the police. Seeking justice for his friend's death, Artem filed a complaint against the St. Petersburg Police Department.

A few weeks later, he was summoned to the police station, where officers handcuffed him to a chair and tortured him until he was close to losing consciousness. After being released, Artem began receiving anonymous phone calls threatening his life. The calls continued until he was violently assaulted outside his apartment building.

Shortly afterward, Artem fled to the United States and Winston began representing him in his quest for asylum. In early 2024, Artem's petition for asylum was granted.

The Chicago team that helped Artem obtain asylum, and the right to authentically express himself and his sexual orientation, included **Nathan Gilbert**, **Annie Steiner**, **Emma Sutton**, and **Eric White**.

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