

Russia, Krampus, or **Kompromat**

Non-Consensual Intimate Imagery, Politics, and Women

Purpose

This educational document explains how non-consensual intimate imagery (often called revenge filming or non-consensual pornography) intersects with political power, media systems, and gender-based harm. It is written for civic education, policy discussion, and survivor-aware understanding. The document does not promote or instruct harmful behavior and avoids collective blame.

Key Definitions

Non-Consensual Intimate Imagery (NCII): The recording, possession, or distribution of sexual or intimate images without the subject's clear, ongoing consent.

Revenge Filming / Pornography: A subset of NCII where imagery is shared to humiliate, control, coerce, retaliate, or silence.

Sexualized Political Coercion: The use of sexual imagery or sexual narratives to influence political outcomes by damaging reputation, inducing fear, or suppressing participation.

Kompromat: Compromising material used to pressure or discredit an individual, sometimes sexual in nature.

Why This Matters

Across societies, women are disproportionately harmed by the political misuse of sexualized content. The impact extends beyond individual victims, chilling women's participation in journalism, activism, and public office, and distorting democratic debate.

Global Patterns (High-Level)

1. **Narrative Weaponization** – Sexual imagery reframes a woman's identity around morality or scandal, replacing policy discussion.
2. **Plausible Deniability** – Material surfaces through intermediaries, anonymous accounts, or partisan channels rather than official campaigns.

3. **Algorithmic Amplification** – Sensational content spreads faster than corrections or context.
 4. **Coercion and Silence** – Threats to release imagery deter speech, candidacy, or reporting.
 5. **Synthetic Media** – Manipulated or AI-generated sexual content increases speed, reach, and residual doubt.
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Russia-Specific Context

1. Informal Power and Kompromat

In Russia, political pressure has historically included the use of kompromat. When sexualized imagery is involved, the social cost to women is magnified by stigma and moral framing.

2. Media Pathways

Sexualized political narratives typically spread through: - Anonymous or semi-anonymous online channels - Tabloid or sensational outlets - Messaging platforms and forums

Mainstream coverage may then reframe the issue as “controversy,” extending reach without ownership.

3. Legal Structure and Ambiguity

Russia does not have a single, comprehensive statute specifically naming non-consensual intimate imagery. Cases may be pursued under: - Privacy violations - Illegal dissemination of personal data - Pornography statutes - Extortion or coercion laws

This legal ambiguity can increase the coercive power of threats, even when prosecution is uncertain.

4. Gendered Moral Framing

Women’s imagery is often framed as evidence of: - Immorality - Unfitness for public life - Foreign influence or disloyalty

This redirects attention away from governance and policy.

Comparison With Other Systems

United States and European Union - Many jurisdictions explicitly criminalize NCII - Civil remedies and damages are available - Platforms face clearer takedown duties, especially during elections

Russia - Relies on general privacy and obscenity laws - Enforcement can be selective or inconsistent - Extra-legal pressure increases chilling effects

Effects on Women and Democracy

- Suppressed political participation
 - Reputational harm with lasting consequences
 - Psychological trauma
 - Degraded public discourse
 - Normalization of sexualized intimidation
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Areas of Broad Expert Agreement

- Non-consensual sexual imagery constitutes sexual violence
 - Consent must be explicit and revocable
 - Sexual exploitation is not legitimate opposition research
 - Rapid takedown and survivor support reduce harm
 - Legal clarity matters more than moral debate
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Safeguards and Protective Principles (Educational)

- Clear laws naming non-consensual imagery
 - Fast, election-period takedown mechanisms
 - Media ethics: no publication without verified consent
 - Platform accountability and transparency
 - Public literacy on manipulation and disinformation
 - Survivor-centered reporting and remedies
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Conclusion

The political misuse of women's intimate imagery may be a cultural trait and a violent campaign tool. It is a form of sexualized coercion enabled by media incentives, legal gaps, and gendered stigma. Addressing it requires clarity, restraint, accountability, and a commitment to protecting human dignity while preserving open civic debate.

1. What “revenge filming / non-consensual pornography” means

Across jurisdictions, this refers to:

- Recording intimate images or video **without consent**, or

- **Distributing** consensually recorded material **without permission**, often to humiliate, control, extort, or retaliate

This is treated as a form of:

- Sexual exploitation
 - Privacy violation
 - Psychological abuse
 - In some cases, **cyber-extortion** or **human trafficking–adjacent abuse**
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2. Legal status in Russia

Russia **does not have a single, comprehensive “revenge porn” statute** equivalent to those in some Western countries. Instead, cases are handled under **existing criminal and civil laws**, including:

Criminal law tools

- **Illegal collection or dissemination of private information**
- **Violation of privacy**
- **Illegal production or distribution of pornography**
- **Extortion or coercion** (if threats are involved)

Enforcement authority includes:

- **Roskomnadzor** – internet regulation and takedown authority
- Law enforcement cybercrime units (capacity varies by region)

Key limitation:

Prosecution is **inconsistent**, and cases often depend on whether:

- The victim can prove lack of consent
 - The content spread widely
 - The perpetrator is identifiable
 - The case attracts media or political attention
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3. Online platforms and enforcement reality

Russia has:

- Domestic platforms (some regulated, some loosely moderated)

- *Encrypted messaging apps*
- *Shadow forums and file-sharing networks*

Practical issues include:

- ***Delayed takedowns***
- ***Weak victim-support pathways***
- ***Limited civil damages***
- ***Reluctance of victims to report***, especially women, due to stigma

This mirrors patterns seen globally, not uniquely in Russia.

4. Use as a coercion or intimidation tactic

In documented cases (journalistic and NGO reporting), non-consensual sexual imagery has been used to:

- *Silence women*
- *Pressure former partners*
- *Blackmail individuals*
- *Target activists or journalists*

*This is part of a **broader cyber-abuse ecosystem**, not a culturally specific practice.*

5. Comparison with the United States and EU

United States

- *Most states now have **explicit revenge-porn statutes***
- *Federal remedies may apply (interstate transmission, extortion)*
- *Stronger civil liability and victim advocacy infrastructure*

European Union

- *GDPR provides **powerful privacy remedies***
- *Several countries criminalize NCP explicitly*
- *Faster takedown obligations for platforms*

Russia

- *Relies on **general privacy and obscenity laws***

- *Less predictable outcomes*
 - *Enforcement can be selective*
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6. Important distinctions to keep clear

It is critical to distinguish between:

- **State policy vs. criminal misuse**
- **Individual offenders vs. national culture**
- **Pornography industries vs. non-consensual abuse**
- **Consensual adult content vs. sexual exploitation**

*Failing to separate these leads to **overgeneralization**, which weakens legitimate advocacy and legal reform efforts.*

7. International consensus (where systems agree)

Across borders, there is growing agreement that:

- *Non-consensual sexual imagery is **sexual violence***
 - *Consent must be **explicit and revocable***
 - *Platforms have **responsibility to act***
 - *Victims deserve **rapid takedown, legal remedy, and protection***
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Russia: how the tactic operates

1) Informal coercion and “kompromat” culture

*In Russia, political pressure has long relied on **kompromat**—compromising material used to **coerce, silence, or discredit**. When sexual or intimate imagery is involved, women face **disproportionate harm** due to stigma and moral framing.*

- **Function:** *intimidation, forced withdrawal, silence*
 - **Plausible deniability:** *material surfaces via intermediaries rather than official campaign channels*
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2) Selective amplification through media ecosystems

Sexualized narratives are rarely launched from official outlets. Instead, they move through:

- *Anonymous Telegram channels*
- *Partisan blogs*
- *Tabloid-style media*

Once attention spikes, **mainstream coverage reframes** the issue as “controversy,” which spreads it further without assuming responsibility.

3) Gendered moral framing

Women’s imagery is framed as:

- *Evidence of “immorality”*
- *Proof of “foreign influence” or “unreliability”*
- *A distraction that sidelines policy*

This framing **redirects public debate** away from substance and toward character.

4) Legal ambiguity as leverage

Russia lacks a single, explicit statute dedicated to **non-consensual intimate imagery**. Cases are pursued under:

- *Privacy violations*
- *Illegal dissemination of personal data*
- *Pornography laws*
- *Extortion (if threats are documented)*

Result: enforcement is **inconsistent**, which increases the **deterrent effect** of threats even when prosecution is unlikely.

Regulatory actions—such as takedowns—are overseen by **Roskomnadzor**, but responses can be slow or selective, especially during politically sensitive periods.

5) Campaign utility without fingerprints

Political actors benefit even without direct coordination:

- *The **existence** of material chills participation*
- *Opponents expend time rebutting allegations*
- *Supporters mobilize around “values” narratives*

This asymmetry makes the tactic attractive despite legal risk.

6) Deepfakes and synthetic content

*As elsewhere, **AI-generated sexual content** has raised the stakes:*

- *Faster spread than verification*
- *Residual doubt even after debunking*
- *Heightened fear among women considering public roles*

*Russia has discussed regulation, but **practical remedies lag** behind the technology.*

How this differs from other systems

- **United States / EU:** *Explicit NCP laws, stronger civil remedies, faster platform duties during elections*
 - **Russia:** *Reliance on general laws, selective enforcement, and **extra-legal pressure**, which amplifies chilling effects*
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What analysts broadly agree on

- *Using intimate imagery for political ends constitutes **sexualized coercion***
 - *It suppresses women's participation in public life*
 - *Clear statutes, rapid takedowns, and independent media ethics **reduce impact***
 - *Ambiguity benefits perpetrators more than victims*
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