

Yakut movie 'Aita' was censored in Russia

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The movie is about a Russian policeman suspected raping a Yakut girl

A movie by [Yakut](#) director [Stepan Birnashev](#), "Aita," was [removed from](#) streaming services in Russia by the [demand](#) of Roskomnadzor [the Russian media and internet watchdog and main censorship body].

The reason Roskomnadzor [cited](#) was that the movie attempted to 'break the principles of the unity of the peoples of Russia'. Aita centers around a case of rape, where a Russian policeman is a suspect in raping of a Yakut girl.

Official trailer of the movie Aita

News outlet Meduza [revealed](#) the movie's plot. Aita is a drama enriched with detective nuances. Set in Yakutia in 2019, the narrative unfolds when Nikolai Innokentyevich, the village's [Yakut] police chief, is alerted about Aita, a local schoolgirl, being hospitalized after an attempted suicide. The reason? A note in her pocket reading, "Afonya, I hate you !!!." Afanasy [Afonya] Shchukin, a local [Russian] police officer, had brought Aita home after she was found with a raucous group of intoxicated adolescents. The plot thickens when it's revealed that the note claiming Aita's mother was at home was falsely written by Shchukin. Tragically, Aita doesn't survive and the revelation that she was pregnant sends shockwaves through the village, casting suspicions on Shchukin. Despite the village's raging accusations, Innokentyevich places Shchukin in a cell to shield him from potential harm. With tensions escalating, the village's isolation due to weather conditions intensifies the suspense, leaving the audience questioning the true sequence of events.

Contrary to Roskomnadzor's perspective, the film doesn't strongly contrast the good and bad facets of distinct nationalities. While Yakut police chief Nikolai Innokentyevich is showcased as a stern, albeit brusque, officer, another policeman, Ayaal Sleptsov [also Yakut], is portrayed as a volatile yet not entirely malicious figure. Shchukin's portrayal, on the other hand, leans towards a friendly chatterbox, albeit with his own set of flaws. The rapid spread of rumors and the digital age of misinformation are key themes, leading to false accusations and community-wide hysteria. The director skillfully sows seeds of doubt in the audience's mind regarding Shchukin's innocence and the real reasons behind Aita's tragic end.

The conclusion, though didactic, emphasizes the lessons the characters have learned about the importance of patience, understanding, and communication in our fast-paced digital age. Some critics found the explicit nature of this ending slightly awkward, yet it was this very clarity that seemed to elude Roskomnadzor's interpretation.

As the cinema critic Anton Dolin [wrote in](#) 2020,

It's become a recurring sentiment among film critics to emphasize the uniqueness of Yakut cinema. Even though Yakutia is a part of the Russian Federation, its cinematic

style distinctively stands apart from mainstream Russian films. While Yakut films find a dedicated audience within their region, they are often met with curiosity and hesitation in the larger parts of Russia.

The true essence of Yakut cinema is its deep connection to the daily life, issues, and cultural richness of the Republic of Sakha. It captures the breathtaking Yakut landscapes and age-old traditions without the intent of broad universal appeal. This authenticity is what draws local audiences in droves, making even the riskiest and most experimental of films profitable within Yakutia, whereas they might be deemed too adventurous to produce or distribute in cities like Moscow or St. Petersburg.

It is still unknown if Roskomnadzor will allow Aita back onto streaming platforms. As Meduza [emphasises](#), this film's essence, which champions understanding and unity amidst tragedy, would be celebrated rather than censored, were Russia a normal society.

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