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Latvia: Riga Pride 2007: championing equal rights

On 3 June 2007, a Pride march was held in Riga to celebrate the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. While participants in similar events in 2005 and 2006 had been subject to physical attacks and did not receive adequate police protection, this year's march was adequately protected and no major attacks were carried out.

Over 400 persons, including Latvian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender group Mozaika and dozens of Latvian activists, an Amnesty International delegation of approximately 70 persons, several Members of the European Parliament and a Swedish government minister, marched in a park in central Riga. The park was closed off and guarded by hundreds of Latvian law enforcement officials, making it virtually impossible for counter-demonstrators to carry out attacks on participants in the Pride parade.

While Amnesty International commends the Latvian authorities for providing adequate protection for the march in the park, the organization reminds Latvia that more work is needed in order to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons can exercise their right to freedom of assembly by marching publicly on the streets of Riga rather than in a closed off park.

There was, however, a noticeable presence of a large number of counter-demonstrators at the march. Counter-demonstrators, engaging in loud verbal abuse and making obscene gestures towards the Pride march participants, ranged from persons of retirement age to pre-teen youngsters. Two home-made explosives were set off inside of the park.

Considering this very public display of hostile feelings towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, Amnesty International considers it necessary for the Latvian authorities to take steps to promote tolerance and respect for diversity in Latvia, and to ensure that the right of all Latvia's citizens not to be discriminated against is protected not just on the day of the march, but 365 days a year.

See also:

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR520032007?open&of=ENG-LVA>

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR520012007?open&of=ENG-LVA>

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR010192006?open&of=ENG-LVA>

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR530012007?open&of=ENG-LTU>

<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/rus-310507-news-eng>