

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Lithuania: Amnesty International condemns MPs' call to use recently adopted homophobic legislation to ban the Baltic Pride

Over 50 Lithuanian parliamentarians, including many from the two leading parties in the governing coalition, have signed a petition calling for the 2010 Baltic Pride march to be banned. The march is currently scheduled to take place in Vilnius on 8 May.

The organizers of the Baltic Pride received authorization for the march from the Vilnius City Council in January, but the signers of the petition are alleging that the march will violate the controversial Law on the Detrimental Effect of Public Information on Minors, which entered into force on 1 March this year.

The Law on the Detrimental Effect of Public Information on Minors classifies any information which "denigrates family values", or which encourages a concept of marriage other than the union of a man and a woman, as detrimental to children and consequently bans such information from places accessible to them.

Amnesty International has repeatedly voiced its fears that this law would be used to restrict the freedom of expression of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and advocates for their rights.

The parliamentarians who have signed this petition have clearly exposed the homophobic motivation behind the adoption of the recent law and their intention that it should be used to stifle any public discussion of homosexuality or public expression of the identity of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people.

Amnesty International reiterates its call for the Law on the Detrimental Effect of Public Information on Minors to be revised so as to remove all possibility of its being applied in a manner that stigmatises or discriminates against lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people or violates their rights to freedom of assembly and expression.

Amnesty International calls on the Lithuanian authorities and, in particular, the Vilnius City Council, to ensure that the Baltic Pride march takes place as planned and currently authorized, with all the necessary security arrangements to prevent disruption by possible counter-protesters.

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