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Lithuania: Baltic Pride march must go ahead

Amnesty International condemns the suspension by a Lithuanian court of the 2010 Baltic Pride march, which was set to take place in the capital Vilnius on 8 May.

The city's administrative court today agreed to an application by the Lithuanian Interim Attorney General to temporarily suspend the march on public security grounds despite police assurances that they are able to protect participants from attacks from counter-demonstrators.

"The authorities in Lithuania must ensure that the march goes ahead unobstructed and safely as they are obliged under international law to guarantee the rights to freedom to expression and assembly. Anything less will amount to discrimination," said John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International's expert on discrimination in Europe.

"The Attorney General's application is an abuse of the legal process and will result in the violation of human rights."

The court agreed to temporarily suspend the march pending a full hearing expected only after the march is scheduled to take place.

The march is Lithuania's first in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

The organizers of the march, the Lithuanian organization *Gay League*, *Tolerant Youth Organisation*, the Latvian *Mozaika* and the Estonian *Gay Youth*, are appealing against the suspension.

Amnesty International is calling for the appeal to be considered in time to lift the suspension before the march is due to take place.

Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaite said today that if groups or organizations are not banned by law, they have the right to express their opinion as guaranteed by the Constitution of the country.

Amnesty International activists from over 20 countries will take part in the events in Vilnius together with LGBT activists from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to protest against the discrimination and abuse LGBT people face and to assert their right to express themselves in public.

They will be calling on the governments of the three Baltic countries to tackle widespread intolerance and exclusion LGBT people.

"Diversity and tolerance, equality before the law for all, no discrimination on sexual orientation and gender

identity grounds are the messages that LGBT rights activists will take to the streets,” said John Dalhuisen.

“They must be able to do so without fear of threats and verbal or physical abuse. They must have the support of their authorities who are obliged by international law to protect the rights of the LGBT community.”

During the course of the Baltic Pride 2010, Amnesty International is planning to take part in the following events:

Friday 7 May

10.00 - 17.00 International conference “Human Rights Combating Fear and Prejudice” in Conti Hotel with the participation of Amnesty International representatives.

13.00 – 13.30 Baltic Pride press conference in Conti Hotel.

Saturday 8 May

12.00 -14.30 Baltic Pride March for Equality in Central Vilnius.

Amnesty International delegates will be available for interviews throughout the Baltic Pride 2010.

For more information and to arrange an interview, please contact:

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