

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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GEORGIA: AUTHORITIES MUST GUARANTEE SAFETY OF TBILISI PRIDE PARTICIPANTS

On 18-22 June, the first LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) Pride week in Georgia and the South Caucasus will take place, featuring a public march in the Georgian capital Tbilisi. Georgian authorities must take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of Tbilisi Pride participants amidst unprecedented threats of violence including from homophobic groups.

A homophobic group led by a local businessman who has close links to the Georgian Orthodox Church is planning a violent counter-demonstration to stop the Tbilisi Pride march from going ahead. On 16 June, the group's leader declared that he is forming civil guard units equipped with wooden clubs to attack participants of the peaceful Tbilisi Pride march. He also issued threats against international observers and diplomats who plan to attend the march. On 16 June, several Georgian media reported that dozens of supporters were enrolling in the civil guard.

On 17 June, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia launched an investigation into "the establishment of illegal formations". Local media reported that despite this investigation enrolment of homophobic supporters into the civil guard formations is ongoing. Tbilisi Pride organizers told Amnesty International that they continue to receive death threats.

Also on 17 June, Ministry of Internal Affairs officials met with Tbilisi Pride organizers and stated that they are not able to guarantee the safety of the Pride march in a public space. The homophobic group leader declared that he is halting plans to establish civil guard units but will resume should the plans for Pride march proceed.

International human rights standards guarantee without discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity the right to assemble peacefully in public. Georgian officials have a positive obligation to take all necessary measures to protect the Tbilisi Pride march from attacks.

Amnesty International calls on the Georgian authorities to publicly express support for the Tbilisi Pride march, effectively investigate the threats and plans of attack described above and immediately implement genuine and effective measures to prevent acts of violence.

An Amnesty International monitoring team will observe the Tbilisi Pride march.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

LGBTI people face discrimination and violence in Georgia, while the authorities often fail to effectively investigate crimes motivated by homophobic and transphobic hatred. On 17 May 2012, a peaceful march in central Tbilisi marking the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) came under attack when a group of Orthodox Christians began insulting and threatening

LGBTI activists. On 17 May 2013, the IDAHOT public protest was thwarted by a violent attack by thousands of demonstrators while the police failed to ensure participants' safety. None of the attacks on the IDAHOT assemblies have been investigated effectively.