

URGENT ACTION

PRESIDENT VETOES HOMOPHOBIC LEGISLATION

On 26 June, Lithuania's President vetoed a law which includes an amendment institutionalizing homophobia, violating the right to freedom of expression and the right to be free from discrimination.

President Valdas Adamkus sent the “Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information” back to the Lithuanian parliament. Amnesty International will monitor the progress of the law when it goes back to parliament.

This law prohibits material “that agitate (sic) for homosexual, bisexual and polygamous relations” on the basis that it causes “detrimental effect to the development of minors”. It classes homosexuality alongside issues such as the portrayal of physical or psychological violence, the display of a dead or cruelly mutilated body of a person, and information that arouses fear or horror, or encourages self-mutilation or suicide. This effectively institutionalizes homophobia and violates the right to freedom of expression and the right to be free from discrimination. Amnesty International is also concerned that this amendment could be used to restrict the work of human rights defenders working on issues of human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity.

In spite of this homophobic clause, the law does specify that information having a detrimental effect on the development of children includes mocking people's nationality, race, sex, origins, disability, sexual orientation, social status, language, religion, beliefs and attitudes.

Amnesty International members sent more than 4,000 appeals to the President, calling on him not to sign the law.

Amnesty International will continue to monitor the situation. For the time being, please do not take any further action. We would like to thank all those who participated in this action for contributing to this positive outcome.

This is the first update of UA 162/09 (EUR 53/002/2009, 19 June 2009)

Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR53/002/2009/en

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