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Moldova: LGBT rights must be respected after pro-equality march is banned

Amnesty International today condemned a Moldovan appeal court's decision to uphold a ban on an upcoming pro-equality march due to "security and public morality concerns".

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights activists had planned to attend the demonstration on Sunday in the capital, Chişinău, to call for improved anti-discrimination legislation in Moldova.

However, Chişinău city authorities applied to get the march banned in response to numerous petitions from a range of religious and other anti-LGBT rights groups. Meanwhile, a counter-demonstration organized by those groups has been allowed to take place on the same day.

"It is truly grotesque that individuals and groups who are marching in favour of equality and respect for human rights should be prevented from doing so," said John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International's expert on discrimination in Europe.

"Meanwhile, those who seek to sow division and prejudice are allowed to celebrate their successful restriction of other people's right to freedom of assembly in Chişinău's main square."

The Chişinău Court of Appeal refused to allow the pro-equality demonstrators to assemble in the Great National Assembly Square - the main square in Chişinău where all important public events take place.

Instead, the Court has allowed the demonstration to take place in a secluded park some distance from the city centre.

GenderDoc-M, the organization behind the planned march, is appealing the decision to the Supreme Court.

"Public morality concerns can never be used to justify restrictions on the freedom of expression of LGBT people," said John Dalhuisen.

"The right response to the threat of disturbance by counter-protestors is not to cave in to their demands, but to police them properly and ensure that those seeking to exercise their right to freedom of expression lawfully are in fact able to do so in safety and in dignity".

Amnesty International is calling on Chişinău City Hall, and the Moldovan authorities, to ensure that the march planned by LGBT rights activists for Sunday 2 May is able to take place in the main central square with all the necessary security arrangements.

“For several years now, LGBT activists have either been denied the right to organize public events, or faced disruption and violence when they have done,” said John Dalhuisen.

"This appalling series of violations of the rights of LGBT persons in Moldova must stop. The Moldovan authorities have a chance to put this right on Saturday: they should not miss it.”

Background

International human rights law states that freedom of expression and assembly extends to all groups, including LGBT people. These rights also cover ideas and views that shock or offend other parts of society.

International human rights law standards also place a positive obligation on states to protect those seeking to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression and assembly from the threat of violence or disruption.