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Ukraine must stop police criminality or Euro 2012 fans risk abuse

The Ukrainian police needs urgent reform ahead of the Euro 2012 football competition, Amnesty International said in the wake of the robbery and severe beating of two men by six officers in Lviv on 21 April.

Lviv will host three matches featuring Germany, Portugal and Denmark during the competition.

With only 38 days to go until Euro 2012 kicks off, Amnesty International wants the Ukrainian government to send a clear message that rights abuses will no longer be tolerated, by publicly committing to the creation of an independent body to investigate complaints against the police.

“The Ukrainian government must take action now to stop widespread police criminality,” said John Dalhuisen, Director for Europe and Central Asia at Amnesty International.

“Failure to do so will encourage them to continue acting as a law unto themselves and put Euro 2012 fans in danger from a force that is out of control.”

Ihor Savchyshyn and Andrei Semenyuk were arrested following a disagreement in a bar and CCTV footage shows the men being robbed by six officers of \$2,075.

The police also subjected the men to a brutal assault in which they were punched, kicked, sprayed with tear gas and then handcuffed. The pair were then repeatedly struck with batons as they lay in restraints on the floor.

They were taken to Sykhyvskiy police station at 6am and kept in custody without medical care or access to a lawyer for 12 hours before being released and taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital as neither man was able to walk. They were given no explanation for their detention.

Local prosecutors refused to open a criminal case against the officers until the victims’ lawyer gave an interview to a local television channel. Five of the policemen were arrested on 25 April. The other officer admitted himself to hospital the same day, claiming that he had been injured by the two men four days earlier.

“This case is yet another example of how the current system allows criminal behaviour by police officers to go unchecked in Ukraine - the authorities only took action when the media became involved,” said Dalhuisen.

“The country desperately needs a new and robust system for investigating crimes by police.”

In a briefing released today on human rights violations in Ukraine, Ukraine: Euro 2012 jeopardised by criminal police force, Amnesty International documents numerous other cases in Euro 2012 host cities in which police have tortured people in an attempt to extort money, extract a confession, or simply because

of the victims' sexuality or ethnic origin.

“Our government claims to be striving towards European human rights standards, but officials live on a different level and ignore human rights. They think they can do what they like with people,” said Andriy Golod, the lawyer representing Ihor Savchyshyn and Andrei Semenyuk.

During the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship between 8 June and 1 July, 11 matches will be played in four Ukrainian cities, and tens of thousands of football fans will be visiting the country.

See also:

Briefing: [*Ukraine: EURO 2012 jeopardised by criminal police force*](#)

Video: [*Police Criminality Endemic in Ukraine*](#)

[*Amnesty International's Ukraine country page*](#)

Report: [*'No Evidence of a Crime': Paying the price for police impunity in Ukraine*](#)