

URGENT ACTION

POLICE MUST PROTECT WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Across Ukraine, marches marking International Women's Day, on 8 March, were marred by violence against peaceful demonstrators. Far-right groups physically attacked and have threatened with further violence women's rights activists taking part in the event. The local police say that they are unable to offer protection from far-right groups.

On 8 March, a group of about ten **women's rights activists** in Uzhgorod, Western Ukraine, held a peaceful march to mark International Women's Day. During the march, a group of four women and two men from the right-wing organization, Karpatska Sich attacked participants and doused them in red paint. **Vitalina Koval**, a women's rights and LGBTI activist, and one of the event organizers, was among those attacked. She is currently being treated for chemical burns to her eye as a result of the paint attack. The police detained the group of attackers and charged three of them with hooliganism and hate crimes, only to release them a few hours later.

On 12 March, members of Karpatska Sich surrounded activist and International Women's Day march participant, **Aleksandr Peresolyak** in a café and threatened him with violence. After the incident, Karpatska Sich posted a photo on its Facebook page of 18 men in black with their faces blurred, some of them making the Nazi salute. The caption of the photo read "(this is) one of the nationalist groups that is imposing order in the city and teaching lessons to [those] who are paid by the government or criminals, and are ready to forget about morality, the laws of dignity, moral conscience and fulfill the ordered tasks". On 13 March, local activist **Ivan Danatsko** went to the local police station and filed a complaint against a planned right-wing demonstration due to take place on 17 March because it would likely feature Nazi symbols, which are banned under Ukrainian law. Ivan Danatsko posted a photo of his complaint on Facebook and three hours later was attacked by members of Karpatska Sich on the streets of Uzhgorod. On the same day, **Ivan Dyulay**, who also attended the march on 8 March, was also attacked and beaten in Uzhgorod city center, in broad daylight.

A large number of far-right individuals are expected to rally on 17 March in Uzhgorod, to mark the 79th anniversary of the proclamation of the Carpathian Ukraine State. Because of the local police's failure to protect participants marching on 8 March from right-wing attacks, LGBTIQ people, and other local activists fear that their safety and well-being are at risk during the rally on 17 March. They have publicly criticized the inaction of the local police on social media, who have a positive obligation to ensure the peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of assembly.

Please write immediately in Ukrainian, English or your own language:

- Expressing deep concern regarding the threats and violence that marred International Women's Day marches across the country and urging the authorities to conduct a prompt, effective and impartial investigation into all attacks perpetrated against activists, and ensure those responsible are held to account;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure a safe and enabling environment for activists in Uzhgorod to exercise their right to freedom of assembly and expression by issuing effective protection measures to safeguard activists, particularly women's rights and LGBTIQ activists, from further attack or intimidation.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 APRIL 2018 TO:

Head of Zakarpattya Region Police
Roman Stefanyshyn
Vul. F. Rakotsi, 13
Uzhgorod wil, Zakarpatska oblast,
Ukraine, 88000
Email: gung@zk.npu.gov.ua
Salutation: Dear Mr. Stefanyshyn

Head of Zakarpattya Prosecutor's Office
Volodymyr Havrilyuk
vul. Kotsyubinskoho 2A, Uzhgorod
Zakarpatska oblast, Ukraine, 88000
Fax: +38 (0312) 61-23-91
Email: zvern@zak.gp.gov.ua
Salutation: Dear Mr. Havrilyuk

And copies to:
Governor of Zakarpattya Region
Hennadiy Moskal
Pl. Narodna, 4 Uzhgorod
Zakarpatska oblast, Ukraine, 88008
Fax: +38 (0312) 69 60 78

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below. HER EXCELLENCY Ms Natalia Galibarenko, Embassy of Ukraine, 60 Holland Park W11 3SJ, 020 7727 6312, Fax 020 7792 1708, emb_gb@mfa.gov.ua, www.ukremb.org.uk
Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2017 and 2018, violent attacks involving right-wing groups in Ukraine rose in frequency. In 2017, members of right-wing groups attacked several women's rights and LGBTIQ events in Kyiv, Lviv, Zaporizhzhya and other Ukrainian cities, interrupting the events and, in some cases, causing physical harm to its participants. The Ukrainian police did not adequately react to these incidents and rarely detained the perpetrators. In all cases where perpetrators were arrested, they were charged with minor hooliganism and released quickly after.

This year, women's rights activists across Ukraine organised peaceful marches on 8 March to mark International Women's Day. Right-wing individuals assaulted the event's participants in Kyiv, Lviv and Uzhgorod. In Lviv, attackers threw bricks at a tram car with activists who were leaving the march, but despite available video evidence of the attack no one was arrested. Later in the day, another participant in the demonstration suffered from a fractured skull after reportedly being beaten by far-right activists near his home.

In Kyiv, the International Women's Day march was also marred by violence from right-wing groups. Attackers threw paint at the march participants, but not only did the police not apprehend the attackers who threw paint at the march participants, they detained one of the event organisers, **Olena Shevchenko** for alleged "violation of order to conduct public demonstrations." On 12 March, a court hearing in the case was held at a Kyiv court but had to be adjourned after some 20 men entered the court building and threatened Shevchenko and her lawyer Oksana Guz with violence. They had to call a private security service to be able to leave the premises.

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