

URGENT ACTION

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS MARCH AT RISK OF ATTACK

Transgender rights activists in Ukraine's capital, Kiev, are planning to hold a march on 23 November to mark Transgender Day of Remembrance. In 2018, the police failed to protect those participating in a similar march from attacks committed by violent groups advocating hatred and discrimination. This year, there is a serious risk of new attacks. The police must ensure people can safely exercise their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression without discrimination.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

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Dear Head of Kiev Police,

I am writing regarding the upcoming transgender rights march, known as Trans-March 2019, which is planned to take place at Mykhailivska Square in Kiev on 23 November.

I am concerned that the participants of the Trans-March 2019 are at serious risk of attacks from violent groups advocating hatred and discrimination. In 2018, the police failed to protect participants in a similar peaceful rally and failed to take action against members of violent groups who attacked the march – instances of abuse include; throwing smoke grenades, shouting homophobic abuse and threats, and in some instances resorting to direct physical violence against participants and at least one journalist. Instead, police officers surrounded the group of transgender rights activists and forced them into a nearby metro station, effectively stopping their peaceful assembly. The counter-protesters then stood in front of the metro station, unfurled their banners and flags, and made transphobic speeches. The police did not make any visible effort to intervene.

LGBTI rights activists in Ukraine have been facing physical attacks from such violent groups for many years. These attacks happen in a climate of impunity where perpetrators are rarely held accountable for their actions and this trend must be reversed.

I am urging you to ensure that participants of the Trans-March 2019 are effectively protected from attacks and are able to exercise their right to freedom of peaceful assembly without discrimination.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

LGBTI rights activists in Ukraine have been facing physical attacks from violent groups advocating hatred and discrimination for many years. The perpetrators of such attacks are rarely held accountable for their actions and thus enjoy near total impunity.

The right to freedom of peaceful assembly is provided in legally binding international human rights treaties that Ukraine has ratified, including Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This right, as detailed by international law and standards, imposes obligations on the state, including to provide adequate security measures, and the onus falls on the authorities to ensure that peaceful assemblies can go ahead.

In 2018, transgender rights activists in Kiev informed their supporters via Facebook of their plans to hold a transgender rights march on 18 November. In response, several violent groups known for their advocacy for discrimination and for targeting LGBTI people, publicly promised to disrupt the event and invited their supporters to join them. Their open threat of violence forced the organisers to move the original location of the rally from Mikhaylyvska square to Taras Shevchenko Park. At around 10:30 am on 18 November, Amnesty International members witnessed dozens of individuals, some masked and many wearing insignia of the violent groups that had issued the threats, assemble in Taras Shevchenko Park. They were carrying transphobic placards and holding prayers.

At about 11:30 am, thirty minutes before the rally, the police told the organisers that they would not be able to guarantee the safety of the event and insisted that the rally be moved to the Universytet metro station nearby.

At noon, when 30-some transgender rights activists assembled in front of the Universytet metro station, they were encircled by police in riot gear. Shortly after, violent counter-protesters began throwing smoke grenades towards the rally from the opposite side of the street. The police did not stop them from throwing the smoke grenades or detain any of them.

Several minutes later, a group of about a dozen counter-protesters aggressively approached the rally and positioned themselves around the transgender rights activists. Following this, the police stopped the peaceful assembly, surrounded the participants and forced them inside the metro station; effectively putting an end to the rally. The counter-protesters then took their place in front of the station, unfurled their banners and flags, and made transphobic speeches. The police did not make any visible effort to intervene and allowed the counter protesters to hold their rally on the spot which the transgender rights activists were forced to leave.

Later the same day, the press service of the National Police of Kiev announced that the police had prevented a “provocation” from the far-right groups against the transgender rights activists but made no mention of whether anyone had been detained in connection with the incident. Amnesty International repeatedly attempted to contact the Ministry of Interior press service, unsuccessfully, for comments and further information regarding its response to the incident.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Ukrainian, English and Russian.
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 26 December 2019
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

ADDITIONAL TARGETS: Embassy of Ukraine, 60 Holland Park, London W11 3SJ