

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Belarus: Amnesty International calls on the authorities to respect LGBT rights

Amnesty International regrets the decision of the Minsk City Executive Committee to refuse permission for the Slavic Pride march to take place on Saturday 15 May.

The organizers of the march received a letter on 8 May from the Minsk authorities, prohibiting the march on the grounds that the proposed route violated Article 9 of the Law on the staging of public events. The article stipulates that public events cannot take place within 200 metres of underground stations and pedestrian crossings.

Amnesty International believes that the strict application of the law in this case will result in a disproportionate, and unjustifiable, restriction on the freedom of assembly and expression of those organizing and wishing to take part in the march.

Amnesty International reminds the Belarusian authorities that international human rights law is very clear that freedom of assembly and expression extend to all groups, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons. These rights also cover ideas and views that may shock or offend other members of society. Furthermore, the rights to freedom of assembly and expression are clearly protected in the Belarusian Constitution.

"The Belarusian authorities must demonstrate greater commitment to their human rights obligations, which clearly require the authorization of such events," said John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International's expert on discrimination in Europe. "The authorities' refusal constitutes a blatant disregard for equality and the full respect of human rights in Belarus."

Amnesty International calls on the Belarusian authorities to allow such events to take place and ensure that participants seeking to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of assembly and expression are protected against the threat of violence or disruption by counter-demonstrators.

Slavic Pride was established in autumn 2008 to bring together the members of the LGBT communities of Belarus and Russia. The first Slavic Pride march was scheduled to be held in Moscow on 16 May 2009, but was also banned.

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