

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Speaker of the Seimas

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Dear Irena Degutienė,

On 14 July 2009 the Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas) adopted a “Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information”. The law was adopted despite an earlier Presidential veto and widespread international criticism that it violated the right to freedom of expression and the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. As it currently stands, the law is scheduled to enter into force on 1 March 2010.

If adopted, this legislation would violate a range of human rights, including the freedom of expression and association, the principle of non-discrimination, and the rights of the child. Amnesty International states that the organization would consider anyone imprisoned under this law to be a prisoner of conscience.

A working group published its amendments on 19 October. It proposed that the reference to homosexual or bi-sexual relations be removed from Paragraph 13 of Article 4 of the Act.

Amnesty International welcomes the proposed removal of the discriminatory provisions.

On this background, I call on you and on all responsible Lithuanian authorities

- to respect their obligations not to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Not to endorse any legislation that would criminalize, or otherwise prohibit, the public portrayal, expression or promotion of homosexuality, or any information relating to it
- to ensure that all persons in Lithuania, including children, fully enjoy the right to freedom of expression – including the right to seek, receive and impart information;
- remove all discriminatory references to homosexuality from the "Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information" and Paragraph 13 of Article 4 in particular.

Yours sincerely