



Petro Porosjenko
President of Ukraine
11 Bankova St.
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Ukraine

Oslo 10 May 2016

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC) hereby addresses the President of Ukraine regarding the "Equality festival" scheduled for 14 May 2016 at the MediaHub¹. The festival is organized by Insight Public Organization, with support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

NHC encourages that Ukrainian authorities extend their full support for the event, and take all necessary measures to ensure that the event can proceed in a safe manner.

Taking into consideration the level of threats that the organizers have received while planning the event we are concerned about the safety of the organizers and participants.

We commend that the Police in Kyiv have expressed readiness to take necessary measures to make sure that the festival proceeds in a safe manner 14 May.

The «Equality festival Lviv-2016» that Insight attempted to organize 19-20 March 2016 was subject to threats, attacks as well as a ban imposed by the Lviv City Administration. Rather than extending support and condemning the attacks public officials expressed their resistance to the event taking place. The organizers did not receive adequate assistance from the police despite continuous inquiries, and finally had to cancel the festival and flee the city.

We ask that Ukrainian authorities make it clear to the public that using threats and violence to prevent such an event is unacceptable. Succumbing to pressure from hate groups might give the impression that such acts are legitimate. It is important that Ukrainian authorities do their utmost to show that there will be no impunity for such acts and that they support initiatives that can contribute to an open and inclusive society.

The "Equality Festival" uses culture to draw attention to the challenges and diversity within minority communities. It brings people together to show how fighting for equal rights should be a common struggle for a society where all people have the opportunity for their own cultural expressions regardless of group belonging.

NHC knows from previous experience with supporting this festival and cooperating with the organizers that they do their utmost to create a safe and inclusive event, and work in a professional manner.

Respectfully,

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