

URGENT ACTION

LITHUANIAN PARLIAMENT ADOPTS HOMOPHOBIC LAW

On 14 June, Lithuania's Parliament voted to overturn the Presidential veto of the “Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information”. The law institutionalizes homophobia and violates the right to freedom of expression and the right to be free from discrimination. It will now enter into force on 1 March 2010.

The “Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information” was initially approved by the Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament) on 16 June but was vetoed by the Lithuanian President on 26 June. With a majority of the 140 Seimas representatives required to overcome the Presidential veto, 87 parliamentarians voted in favour. 25 parliamentarians abstained and only six voted against the law.

This law prohibits material “that agitate (sic) for homosexual, bisexual and polygamous relations” on the basis that it causes “detrimental effect to the development of minors”. It classes homosexuality alongside issues such as the portrayal of physical or psychological violence, the display of a dead or cruelly mutilated body of a person, and information that arouses fear or horror, or encourages self-mutilation or suicide. This effectively institutionalizes homophobia and violates the right to freedom of expression and the right to be free from discrimination. Amnesty International is also concerned that this amendment could be used to restrict the work of human rights defenders working on issues of human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity.

In spite of this homophobic clause, the law does specify that information having a detrimental effect on the development of children includes mocking people’s nationality, race, sex, origins, disability, sexual orientation, social status, language, religion, beliefs and attitudes.

Amnesty International will continue to monitor the situation in Lithuania. Further homophobic legislative amendments will probably be considered during the next Parliamentary session beginning in September. Amnesty International will take action on these developments, which will also provide further opportunities to raise our concerns about this particular law.

We would like to thank all those who participated in this action. No further appeals are requested at present.

This is the first update of UA:185/09 (EUR 53/004/2009)

Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR53/004/2009/en

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