

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
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## **Latvia: Riga Pride must go ahead**

Amnesty International today urged the Latvian authorities to ensure that the planned Baltic Pride event on Saturday 16 May is allowed to take place and said that banning it would be unlawful.

The statement came after a majority of Riga's City council members signed a letter calling on the Council's Director to revoke permission for the march. They claimed the Parade was offensive to public decency and posed a threat to public security.

The Council members stated that if the Executive Director did not revoke permission by 16.00 on 14 May, they would seek to overrule the decision through a vote in the City Council.

"A march cannot be banned simply because something might shock, offend or disturb another person," said Nicola Duckworth, Amnesty International's Director of the Europe and Central Asia programme. "Banning the demonstration would violate the rights of Baltic gay rights activists to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly."

Amnesty International calls on the Latvian authorities to ensure that the Baltic Pride event is allowed to take place under the originally agreed conditions and to ensure that marchers are provided with the necessary protection against the threat of violent disruption by counter-demonstrators.

Permission was granted for the march, organised by Mozaika – a Latvian organisation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people – by Riga City Council on 8 May 2009. In response to security concerns, relating to possible conflicts with counter-demonstrators, it was agreed that the march could take place in Vermandarzs Park and a few surrounding streets.

### **Background information**

Seventy-five Amnesty International activists from 23 European countries will be travelling to Riga to take part in the march and express their solidarity with LGBT people in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

According to international human rights law, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association should not be restricted or prohibited simply on the grounds that something might shock, offend or disturb. Therefore, a peaceful assembly may not be restricted merely on the grounds that it might offend an individual or group. Moreover, states have an obligation to protect the right to peaceful assembly even if a peaceful gathering may attract violent counter-demonstrations.