



Andrii Sadovyi  
Mayor  
1 Rynok Sq., Lviv 79006  
Ukraine

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC) hereby express our concerns regarding the «Equality festival Lviv-2016» organized by Insight Public Organization. The festival is scheduled for 19 – 20 March at the *Museum of ideas*<sup>1</sup> with support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee.

14 March 2016 the *Museum of ideas* informed the organizers that they were no longer able to provide premises for the festival. The reason given is fear of repercussions from homophobic and transphobic groups, who have presented credible threats.

NHC is naturally worried that this may lead to cancellation of the festival. We are also concerned about the safety of the organizers and participants.

NHC therefore encourage that the City Council of Lviv extend their full support for the «Equality festival Lviv-2016», making it clear to the public that using threats of violence to prevent such an event is unacceptable.

We also want to emphasize that necessary measure be taken for the festival to be implemented in a safe manner.

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.

NHCs previous experience with supporting this festival and cooperating with the organizers is that they do their outmost to create a safe and inclusive event, and work in a professional manner.

The Kyiv branch of the Equality Festival 10-13 December 2015 was attacked twice, but the festival could continue as planned due to the course of action taken by the organizers and the police.

Succumbing to pressure from hate groups might give the impression that such acts are legitimate. It is important that Ukrainian authorities do their outmost 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.

Respectfully,

Bjørn Engesland  
General Secretary  
The Norwegian Helsinki Committee  
Kirkegata 5 0153 Oslo  
Norway

tel. +47 957 53 350  
email: [engesland@nhc.no](mailto:engesland@nhc.no)  
[www.nhc.no](http://www.nhc.no)

---

<sup>1</sup> Valova str. 18A, Lviv, Ukraine