

The UN Human Rights Committee Calls on Lithuania for More Answers, More Action

Geneva 11 July 2012. The United Nations Human Rights Committee finalized the examination of the 3rd periodic report of Lithuania, which took place on 10 and 11 July 2012 in Geneva.

The Human Rights Committee acknowledged the productive dialogue exchanged with the State delegation of Lithuania throughout the review, but also expressed that some important questions and concerns remain. The discussion covered a wide range of human rights issues, but focused in depth on LGBT rights, the prevention and regulation of hate speech, freedom of expression and assembly, pre-trial detention, and secret detention sites.

The Committee questioned the general level of intolerance and discrimination against vulnerable individuals and groups in Lithuania. The State delegation admitted that hate crimes against the LGBT community in Lithuania have increased over the last several years. The Committee repeatedly criticized legislation restricting the promotion of information the State considers detrimental to minors, specifically referring to information deemed by the State to be ‘in conflict with family values.’ The Committee stated this type of legislation goes too far, and may fuel discrimination against the LGBT community. It is paramount that the State implements legislation ensuring protection for Lithuanians against discrimination on any grounds.

The Human Rights Committee expressed grave concern about past demonstrations led by neo-Nazis, who openly displayed swastikas. The State referenced the freedom of assembly, but was reminded by the Committee that freedoms of assembly and expression are not absolute rights – they must be managed by the State when they are in violation of human rights.

The Committee questioned State policies on pre-trial detention, including whether said detention may be extended at the discretion of the prosecutor, and without the authorization of a judiciary. It criticized the State for its overwhelming reliance on pre-trial detention as a primary means of ensuring unhindered criminal proceedings, as opposed to more lenient measures such as bail or house arrest. The Code of Criminal Procedure prescribes pre-trial detention as a last resort.

The Committee also expressed concerns about conflicting information surrounding State-affiliated secret detention sites. The Council of Europe, UN Special Rapporteurs, as well as such respected NGO’s as Amnesty International, have stated that rendition has, in fact, taken place through the State party. The State delegation of Lithuania, however, insists that it conducted a number of investigations and concluded there was insufficient evidence to proceed. On more than one occasion, the Committee urged the delegation to reopen investigations and reconcile these discrepancies, but the State has summarily declined.

The Human Rights Committee concluded by urging the delegation to bridge the discernible gap between legal framework and social reality. Though new human rights legislation and programming are under development, they will be rendered ineffective without a strong commitment from the State to provide necessary funding. State support for awareness-raising, education, implementation, monitoring and evaluation are critical to bringing social and political attitudes in line with human rights for all Lithuanians.

The Human Rights Committee will make its recommendations public at the end of its session, on 27 July 2012.

The broadcast of the review of Lithuania can be seen on the [website](#) of the Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR Centre) and at treatybodywebcast.org.

For additional information on the review of Lithuania contact:

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