TGEU Condemns Anti-LGBT Attacks in Ukraine

statement & call to action, protection from violence and hate, lgbti

In the face of war, Ukrainian civil society has shown unity, solidarity, and mutual support. Unfortunately, there have also been attacks on LGBT people during the war. We consider these manifestations of intolerance and hatred in the context of war deeply concerning.

Like other Ukrainians, trans and LGB people are defending their country in every way possible: organising humanitarian aid for civilians, raising funds to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and joining the ranks of territorial defence. Those willing and possessing relevant skills have joined military service.

Despite the deep solidarity shown by Ukrainians, the war has also brought an increase in transphobic and homophobic attitudes. Ukrainian organisations have reported several incidents.

On 5 April, two LGBT people were detained while crossing an internal checkpoint in Odesa. According to media reports, uniformed men took the detainees to a basement where they subjected them to humiliation, physical abuse, and insults. Ukrainian ombudswoman Lyudmyla Denisova has condemned the attack and qualified it clearly as a hate crime.

On 14 April, activist Olena Shevchenko, one of the public leaders of the LGBT movement in Ukraine and head of LGBT organisation Insight, was attacked in Lviv. Olena was approached by an unidentified man near the building where activists were collecting humanitarian aid for Ukrainian women. The stranger sprayed pepper spray in her face, causing burns to her eyes and airways. There is no doubt that the attack was deliberate: the perpetrator called Olena by her name before attacking her.

TGEU is aware of other recent cases of attacks against Ukrainian LGBT activists. Unfortunately, increased violence and brutality against vulnerable groups is a typical consequence of any war. In the context of the current war in Ukraine, far-right, transphobic, and homophobic violence may be an extension of the aggressor country's policies or play into the hands of such policies, breeding division and hatred in society.

TGEU considers all of these attacks as targeted acts of violence and hatred against LGBT people in wartime. We are in solidarity with the survivors. We urge:

- Ukraine's leadership to duly investigate the attacks and protect the rights and freedoms of all LGBT people.
- Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights Lyudmila Denisova to follow up on the investigation of these cases and take measures to prevent further crimes.
- The international community to support the Ukrainian LGBT movement. Sign the petition to investigate the attack on Olena Shevchenko. Don't stay on the sidelines!