



October 08 2018

The Hon. Arsen Avakov
Minister of Internal Affairs
Vul. Akademika Bohomoltsa, 10
Kyiv, 01601
Ukraine

Dear Minister Avakov:

I am writing you in my capacity as advocacy director for Europe & Central Asia at Amnesty International USA. I wish to urgently raise the case of [Vitalina Koval](#) and others like her to your attention. Ms. Koval is a brave LGBTI activist from the city of Uzhgorod.

In March 2018, Vitalina was attacked during a protest held on International Women's Day. Six people from the radical group "Karpatska Sich" doused her with red paint, causing severe chemical burns to her eyes. Several days later, two activists who protested alongside Vitalina were followed home and attacked by "Karpatska Sich" members.

Vitalina's case is not exceptional but part of a pattern of impunity for members of groups advocating discrimination and hatred. Since January 2017, my organization has documented over [30 similar attacks](#). With rare exceptions, Ukrainian authorities failed to hold the perpetrators of these attacks accountable and consider the discriminatory motive of these attacks.

As you are surely aware, Amnesty International has been clear and consistent in condemning human rights abuses perpetrated by the Russian Federation on the sovereign territory of Ukraine. We are proud to stand with brave activists such as [Oleh Sentsov](#). My colleagues and I have repeatedly drawn attention to Crimean Tatar human rights defenders such as [Emir Usein-Kuku](#) through our public writings and in conversations in Washington and European capitals. However, as Ukraine legitimately

protests the maltreatment of its people by authorities in Crimea and the Donbas region, it must itself live up to the values claims to espouse.

We are calling on you to ensure the attack on Vitalina Koval and all other reported attacks by groups advocating discrimination and hatred are immediately investigated and that their perpetrators are brought to justice. The discriminatory motive of these attacks should be taken into account during the investigations. We are also urging you to acknowledge the problem of growing violence by these groups, and to make necessary changes to the policies and rules regulating police conduct at public assemblies and closed gatherings. In particular, the police should be instructed to effectively protect participants of events and prevent the use of violence. In the interim, I will continue raising these issues at the highest levels in Washington.

A copy of this letter has been formally posted to your office, but I hope you won't wait for receipt to act against the impunity described herein. The price of delay will be paid in human lives.

I am grateful for your attention to this matter. Should you wish to discuss this issue further, you or your staff may contact me at dbalson@aiusa.org.

Sincerely,



Daniel Balson
Director – Europe & Central Asia Advocacy
Amnesty International USA