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Georgia: NGO Tbilisi Pride cancels Pride Festival following a violent attack by anti-LGBTIQ+ groups

On 8 July 2023, a group of at least 2000 anti-LGBTIQ+ individuals attacked the NGO **Tbilisi Pride's** Pride Festival in Tbilisi, Georgia. They attacked the event location and attendees, setting multiple fires and destroying rainbow flags and other Pride-related paraphernalia. Tbilisi Pride had to cancel all the Pride-related events following the attack.

The NGO [Tbilisi Pride](#) is the union of LGBTIQ+ people and allies that organises the annual Pride week festival in Tbilisi. It is a civic movement which opposes homophobia and transphobia and contributes to forming an environment where LGBTIQ+ people are protected, accepted, free and equal with other citizens of Georgia. They also carry out media campaigns, advocate for policy changes and strive for the recognition of the rights of LGBTIQ+ people.

On 8 July 2023, the human rights organisation Tbilisi Pride was scheduled to open the Pride Festival, an open-air LGBTIQ+ visibility event, on the banks of the Lisi Lake in Tbilisi, Georgia. In the weeks coming up to the festival, local police forces and the Georgian Ministry of Interior worked in collaboration with Tbilisi Pride to ensure the safety of the festival's participants. On the morning of 8 July, far-right and anti-LGBTIQ+ groups gathered in the city centre and made public threats to prevent the festival from happening, using hate speech and homophobic slurs. The anti-LGBTIQ+ groups then marched to the Lisi Lake, entered the festival area, attacked the persons present, vandalised booths, tents and other installations, and tore down and burned rainbow flags and other festival paraphernalia. The police evacuated the festival organisers and attendees from the affected area. Following these attacks and the evacuation, the human rights organisation Tbilisi Pride announced the cancellation of the Pride Festival and its related events.

Tbilisi Pride reported that on 5 July 2023, representatives from the far-right groups voiced threats against the LGBTIQ+ community and their intention to attack the Pride Festival. In their [statement](#) issued on 8 July, the human rights organisation Tbilisi Pride suggested that there was an insufficient police response to these threats and to the attack itself. They also posted a video showing a police officer hugging one of the leaders of the anti-LGBTIQ+ groups, instead of arresting him, during the attack on the event.

This is not the first time that the human rights organisation Tbilisi Pride has been forced to cancel their events after receiving threats from far-right anti-LGBTIQ+ groups in Georgia. On 5 July 2021, LGBTIQ+ rights defenders were forced to cancel the "March for Dignity", the final event of the Pride week festival in Tbilisi, after far-right groups [stormed](#) the offices of Tbilisi Pride, Shame Movement and [Human Rights House Tbilisi](#), and attacked a number of journalists. As a result, more than 50 people, including journalists and one human rights defender, were injured and many of them then required medical treatment in hospital. On 11 July 2021, one of the journalists who was attacked, cameraman Alexander Lashkarava, was found dead in his home.

Front Line Defenders condemns the threats and subsequent attack by far-right anti-LGBTIQ+ groups on the Tbilisi Pride Festival that led to its cancellation. It believes that the festival and its organisers, Tbilisi Pride, were targeted solely as a result of their work in promoting and protecting the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons in Georgia. Front Line Defenders is gravely concerned about the systemic targeting of LGBTIQ+ rights defenders, which may have a chilling effect on civil society,

and is not conducive to a safe and enabling environment in which human rights defenders can carry out their work in Georgia.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Georgia to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attacks on the Pride Festival in Tbilisi and LGBTIQ+ rights defenders from Tbilisi Pride with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of members of Tbilisi Pride and other LGBTIQ+ rights defenders;
3. Take all necessary measures to ensure efficient state support to LGBTIQ+ events in Georgia, with an aim to prevent attacks against LGBTIQ+ rights defenders and allies;
4. Ensure that LGBTIQ+ rights defenders do not face any discrimination, in accordance with Georgia's 2014 *Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination*;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Georgia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.