



UA 81/21, **UPDATE 1**, AI Index: 50/4582/2021 of 10 August 2021

The original index number is EUR 50/4473/2921 of 19 July 2021

## **UKRAINE INVESTIGATION INTO HOMOPHOBIC ATTACK EXTENDED**

The investigation into the 2018 homophobic attack on Vitalina Koval, a human rights defender of women's and LGBTI rights, has been extended until 31 January 2022. The expert report looking into the discriminatory motive of the attack and its possible qualification as a hate crime, is expected to be finalised at the beginning of 2022. These are welcome developments as there was a risk that the investigation would not be extended beyond the deadline of 31 July, denying Vitalika Koval the right to equal access to justice.

**No further action is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.**

The investigation into this attack under Article 161 ("Violation of the equality of citizens") was opened in December 2018 and was at risk of not being extended beyond the deadline of 31 July 2021, which would have denied Vitalina Koval's right to equal access to justice.

Moreover, the court decision extending the deadline for the investigation also indicates that the opinion of experts looking into the discriminatory motive of the attack and whether the attack can be qualified as hate crime is expected to be finalized at the beginning of 2022. This is excellent news and brings hope to LGBTI activists and those seeking justice in similar situations.

On 8 March 2018, six members of the anti-LGBTI group Karpatska Sich shouted homophobic slogans and doused Vitalina Koval and other activists with paint during a public action marking International Women's Day at Teatralna Square in Uzhgorod. As a result, Vitalina Koval received chemical burns to both her eyes.

Amnesty International, with the support of thousands of people around the world, has been campaigning for justice alongside Vitalina Koval since 2018. She was featured in the 2018 edition of Amnesty International's Write for Rights campaign alongside other women human rights defenders from five continents. During Write for Rights, more than 380,000 actions were taken around the world expressing support for Vitalina Koval's work in defence of women's and LGBTI rights in Ukraine, calling for justice in connection with the violent attack she suffered in 2018 and for the discriminatory motive of the attack to be taken into consideration throughout the criminal process.

Amnesty International will continue monitoring the case and campaigning for justice and LGBTI rights in Ukraine.