

2021 Kharkiv Pride March

МАРШ ХАРКІВПРАЙД 2021

12 ВЕРЕСНЯ
12:00



Kharkiv, 2021



The Center for Civil Liberties is a human rights organization that works to support human rights, democracy and solidarity in Ukraine and the OSCE region for the purpose of strengthening human dignity.

The organization's key objectives include facilitating the implementation of reforms related to observance of human rights; introducing civic control over actions of law enforcement agencies, judges, and local self-government authorities; documenting instances of political persecution in Crimea and international crimes committed in Donbas; educational activities aimed at promoting the human rights values; participating in international solidarity programs.

OZON Civic Monitoring Group was set up in January 2013 by the Center for Civil Liberties to institutionalize the system of civic control in Ukraine. A specific feature of its functioning is a wide involvement of ordinary citizens in civic control on a volunteer basis, regardless of their specialization or previous experience.

OZON **intends** to improve the work of government authorities in the field of observance of human rights and freedoms by organizing a system to monitor their activities as well as by popularizing in Ukrainian society the ideas of civic control over authorities. Through their efforts, OZON volunteers uproot a paternalistic approach to the authorities and educate both society and law enforcement representatives to the concept of “**authorities as hired managers**”, which is widespread in democracies, and where the effectiveness of authorities is evaluated by the public directly.

Introduction

Ensuring freedom of peaceful assembly during the annual Pride March in Kharkiv still poses a challenge for the organizers, the law enforcement agencies, and local self-government authorities. Several counter-gatherings, numerous participants, and continuous risks of being attacked represent the context in which maintenance of the public order at this event should be planned. From this Report you will find out how the positive duty of protecting assemblies and facilitating this freedom was discharged by the authorities.

The Report follows the large-scale monitoring performed by OZON Civic Monitoring Group, based on Ukrainian laws and regulations and best practices detailed in the “Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly” and ODIHR/OSCE’s “Human Rights Handbook on Policing Assemblies”.

On September 12, 2021, the 2021 Kharkiv Pride March was monitored by 6 observer teams along the entire route of the rally and counter-assembly. 18 observers were engaged in the coordination and conduct of the monitoring.

2021 Kharkiv Pride March

Duration of monitoring by civil observers: 10:47–14:37

Persons present at the rally: ~1,500

Persons present at the counter-assembly: ~125

Policemen and national guardsmen present: ~750

(excl. standby teams)

Main Directorate of National Police: ~130

Dialogue police: ~15

Tactical response police: ~100

Riot police: ~215

Patrol police: ~20

National guardsmen: ~200

Dog handlers: ~15 (incl. the National Guard)

Forensic experts: ~2

Press service: ~3

EOD service: ~2

Cadets from the National Academy of Internal Affairs: ~40

(Specialized vehicles)

10 buses

2 special NGU vehicles

40 special vehicles (including 4 police vans, police dog vehicles, dialog police cars, forensic lab vehicles, EOD service vehicles, etc.)

3 ambulances

1 State Emergency Service vehicle

1 emergency rescue service vehicle

9 members of the Red Cross fast response team

Kharkiv

09/12/2021

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Chapter I. Principal assembly



Duration of the rally: 12:40–14:06

Date: 09/12/2021

Stated venue/route: According to the announcements¹, participants were supposed to gather at 12 o'clock on September 12 on Svobody Square, at the Derzhprom Metro station exit. The route was not announced beforehand.

Actual venue/route: Active gathering of participants started at approximately 11:30 closer to the entrance to the northern building of the Karazin University. The assembly started its march from the actual meeting place and, turning from Svobody Square to 2 Nauky Avenue, moved along the right side of the avenue towards the final destination, i.e., the Botanichni Sad Metro station (40/3 Nauky Avenue).

Agenda of the assembly: As stated in the event description posted on Facebook², “*The Kharkiv Pride March is a march for everyone’s human rights, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. This human rights march has been created for freedom, equality, and safety. For us, it is essential to be consistent in our activities and ensure that the authorities respond to the needs of Kharkiv’s community.*” The demands included the following: fight against discrimination and hate violence; adopting a law on the investigation of hate crimes, regardless of the sexual orientation and gender identity of the victims.

Special components of the assembly: The rally was accompanied and led directly by its organizer. Besides, volunteer stewards were present to help the participants navigate and find free space in the columns. Underage participants and participants with animals also attended the gathering.

Summary of the events:

Even before the event started, metal detector frames had been installed to implement filtration measures, through which the participants had to pass after undergoing a cursory check.

¹ https://www.facebook.com/events/889718418246995/?post_id=919449921940511&view=permalink

² <https://fb.me/e/1aMKegQax>

At 11:48, the observer team passed through the police detector frames installed near the Derzhprom Metro station. Upon passing the police cordon, all new arrivals were promptly welcomed by the KharkivPride volunteers carrying flags of the organization and showing everyone their place in the columns. According to the OZON observers, a representative of the National Police, who was probably coordinating the work of law enforcement officers, maintained continuous contact with the organizer.

Episode 1. Before the cordon of law enforcement officers, military personnel and special vehicles could be fully formed, a man ran up to the head of the column. Passing through the cordon, the man started shouting, “Death to LGBT!”, and tried to snatch a poster from one of the participants. The attacker was evidently a representative of the counter-assembly or simply an opponent of the principal gathering. National guardsmen quickly moved the attacker beyond the cordon, preventing his further actions.

At 12:42, after the National Guard’s cordon formed around the principal assembly, the procession set off from the actual gathering site. Participants marched to the music, shouted slogans, sang, and displayed posters. The march was accompanied by two cars with loudspeakers in their trunks, which acted both as a PA system and a source of background music. The organizers’ car was fenced off with tape along its perimeter.

Episode 2. At 13:02, another aggressive man attempted to penetrate the assembly column, chanting “Death to LGBT!”; however, he was stopped by the police cordon. A dialog policeman kept watching him afterwards.

During the march, participants could only leave the column by going to its tail.

Episode 3. During the march, one participant of the meeting felt unwell, she was holding her stomach and looked like a person in need of help, but did not turn to anyone. The observer took her to a security volunteer for further assistance, and continued monitoring. Immediately after that, KharkivPride’s security volunteer approached the internal police cordon, which comprised riot police officers (no dialogue police officers were in sight). She asked the policemen to let the participant through the cordon, but the police officer said that it was impossible. The security volunteer stressed that the girl was unwell and needed to get out to seek help. The policeman repeated that he could not let anyone out, and that the exit was only available from the tail of the column at the back of the law enforcement cordon. The security volunteer thus had to take the girl to the exit at the tail of the column.

At 14:04, the gathering ended with the final speech given by one of the organizers. The KharkivPride volunteers instructed the participants on safety rules, after which the tactical response police and the national guardsmen built a cordon so that the participants could easily walk from 40/3 Nauky Avenue to the Botanichnyi Sad Metro station entrance. Some participants changed their clothes and threw posters in the trash.

The Metro was entered in several waves, because a slight stampede occurred at the turnstiles inside the station after the people were let in the Metro. To reduce the crowd density in the Metro, police officers blocked the entrance to the station, while dialogue police officers

loudly explained to the participants what was happening and what the reasons for the blockage were. Other entrances to the Botanichnyi Sad Metro station, which were not used as departure routes for participants from the venue, were inaccessible. At the time the monitoring ended, i.e., at 14:37, they were still locked.

Episode 4. As told to the observers by a citizen who did not participate in the gathering, *“after 2pm, I was leaving the Metro at the August 23 station [next after the Botanichnyi Sad station], going towards the market. The train was evidently being boarded by the marchers, and I noticed a man with a 12-year-old daughter wearing a rainbow mask. At the same time, athletic-looking boys were bustling and running along the platform [...] hurrying to get on the train. [...] Right after that, I saw a couple in the Metro passage. A young man was lying motionless on the floor, with a one-and-a-half-liter bottle of water pressed to his face, which was covered in blood. A girl was sobbing next to him. People gathered around, called the police and ambulance. The girl said that while they were leaving the pride march, some guys ran up to them, punched him in the face and ran away.”*

Brief account of the actions of law enforcement officers during KharkivPride:

Approximately an hour before the gathering began, observers noted MDNP representatives who were scattered both in the Metro and in the adjacent areas near the participants' gathering place. At about 11:40, MDNP representatives and the dialog police were present at the venue itself, near the entrance to the Derzhprom Metro station and above it. People were allowed to the venue after passing through 3 frames located on different sides, with filtration measures, i.e., cursory checks applied. The venue itself was surrounded on all sides by a cordon of national guardsmen, specialized vehicles (about 15 units) parked on the road and near the frames. Besides, up to 10 units of specialized vehicles were parked across the road opposite the northern building of the Karazin University. Around the corner, on Nauky Avenue, passenger buses, police buses and other specialized vehicles were parked on the sidewalk, with law enforcement officers standing nearby or sitting inside.

Cursory check at the frames was performed by MDNP with the help of hand-held metal detectors; numerous violations were noted by the observers. Road blocking was carried out by the patrol police incrementally and where necessary; the police regulated the traffic using a red reflector disk.

Episode 1. While the column of participants was still being formed near the Karazin University building, the observers noted a counter-demonstrator approaching the march, standing on an elevation and beginning to chant slogans aimed against the principal assembly. A tense exchange took place between him and the participants, after which the march volunteers began calling up the dialogue police, but no one came, and the counter-demonstrator left the location.

At 12:37, law enforcement vehicles started moving along the road. Participants of the march were surrounded by a cordon of law enforcement officers and specialized vehicles. Three blue buses of the tactical response police were at the head of the column, with one ambulance in front of them; 19 specialized vehicles were moving behind the column (police vans, NGU cars, ambulances, SES cars, police dog vehicles, dialogue police cars, etc.), followed by the columns of riot police, dog handlers, MDNP policemen. Specialized vehicles and a bus were moving in

parallel and to the right of the march column; national guardsmen were moving in parallel, with tactical response police, riot police and NGU — a little behind them. Buses and representatives of riot police, NGU and MDNP were moving on their left. Around the perimeter of the column, on the outside of the cordon, dialogue policemen were also posted. At the tail of the column, the cordon was not too tight, and some areas were not sealed off at all.

Participants of the march, surrounded by the police and specialized vehicles, moved along the right side of the avenue, while a fence separated them on the left from a column of specialized vehicles and riot policemen; representatives of the MDNP, dialogue police, and the K9 service were scattered along the entire route. In front of the peaceful assembly column, an MDNP officer, using a special device, was checking flowerpots mounted on the poles along the avenue. Some law enforcement officers had regular and body cameras, while the police press service was also present. Some dialogue policemen had megaphones. Lack of personal identification devices (badges, chevrons) as well as improper wearing of special equipment (truncheons held in hands, sticking out of hip pads, bulletproof vests, etc.) was noticed on numerous policemen.

Episode 2. During a conversation between one of the observers and an MDNP representative, the law enforcement officer admitted that the truncheon attached to the belt made it hard to move freely and quickly and to use the truncheon fast where required, so it had to be kept behind the protective hip cap.

Upon reaching the final point of the route near Sarzhyn Yar, the NGU and tactical response police formed a cordon for safe departure of participants to the Botanichnyi Sad Metro station. Whenever some participants tried to go back through the police cordon, they were sent to the Metro and “home”. At a descent to Sarzhyn Yar, the MDNP, dialog police, and tactical response police were posted with first-aid kits and fire extinguishers. When the participants of the counter-assembly attempted to penetrate the cordon from Sarzhyn Yar, they were not allowed to pass. Five tactical response policemen stood a little lower, on the Sarzhyn Yar staircase.

Posters:

Safety, Equality, Kharkiv Pride
My friend is gay and I'm OK with it
My friend is straight and I'm OK with it
Loving is the only tradition. Respecting is the only order
Freedom and equality
I'm not a woman. I'm a human being. I'm not a man.
Homosapients Not Heterosapients
Homophobia is a disease
Be vivid! Shine! Purrride
Kudos to the police
Equality is my religion
Zaporizhzhia Cossack
Liuk Media hates scoundrels
Organize a gay wedding? Easy!
Allies not Aliens
Women are the best*
This is not propaganda, this is love

Human rights are my pride
Let homophobia get extinct like dinosaurs
Our love is not a shame. Your hate is
I want to breathe free
I'm a lesbian and I'm proud of it
Love over hate
Fight today, enjoy your rights tomorrow
Love is everything
Fuck the System
After the march, the cops will stand and watch as the fuckers
beat the shit out of me
Your body should be here. Police kill.
So many police but so little security
Pride is a mutiny against the police
Which slogan would save my ass from being kicked?
Do you feel safe being close to the police on other days?
Security for the select few?

The police at the pride march call us faggots
Why be tolerant to the enemies of tolerance
Don't be dumb! Be tolerant!
Freedom is our tradition
Ukrainian nation, down with discrimination!
Traditions may differ
Homophobia sucks
Love wins
Witches supporting other bitches
Equal. Different.
I don't wanna be ur friend I wanna kiss ur lips
It's a pity that your heterosexuality is only held together by its
propaganda
Not normal
Want to get married? Me too
As soon as there are rights, there will be no marches
Love can't be a disease
You are love
Mom, mom, who and what's gnawing at me? Homophobe
The Constitution of Ukraine
My feelings are none of your business
Do you like boys or girls? Yes.
Zelenskyi, stop the cringe
Why is your mom a lesbian? And why is your mom straight?
My traditions: Love and freedom
Foo gender
Why hate love?
Every color has the right to exist, except sad ones. But this is
moot
Cringe.
Traditions may differ
Hatred has nothing traditional or valuable about it

Safe in the hands of LOVE
Not girlfriends
Sexuality is no tabooed
TIU Platform! Holy Martyrs of Forbidden Love
This is normal
Psychologists are here
I didn't choose to be bi
I just got lucky
I'm straight, but my girlfriend is bisexual. Ukraine is a
country of free and kind people
Only in a childbirth can a woman understand the torture
experienced by a member of Tradition and Order when he sees
a nude male ass
I love people, and what would you do with that?
State Rainbow Rays
One united bisexual Ukraine
I want to kiss the girl I love and not be afraid of bricks thrown
in my head by good Christians
It has been scientifically proven that sexual orientation is not
chosen
404 we're no error
Love is the most important thing
My feelings are not your business
I promote freedom
Don't want to be afraid anymore
Human rights are my pride
Kharkiv for all
Loving is the only tradition; Respecting is the only order
Can you see me?
Witches supporting other bitches
Strong in confidence

Slogans:

Be a rebel, make love, don't give up your rights
Kharkiv, Ukraine for human rights
Hey, Kharkiv, give us rights instead of parks
Our struggle for freedom and rights is alive
We don't need any protection, we don't want any
attacks
Down with discrimination
Safety, equality, KharkivPride
Ukrainian nation, down with discrimination
Lesbians are right: Discrimination is not right
Kharkiv is not only Derzhprom
What do we need? - Safety
Kharkiv is Derzhprom for professional feminists
Kharkiv is Derzhprom for lesbians

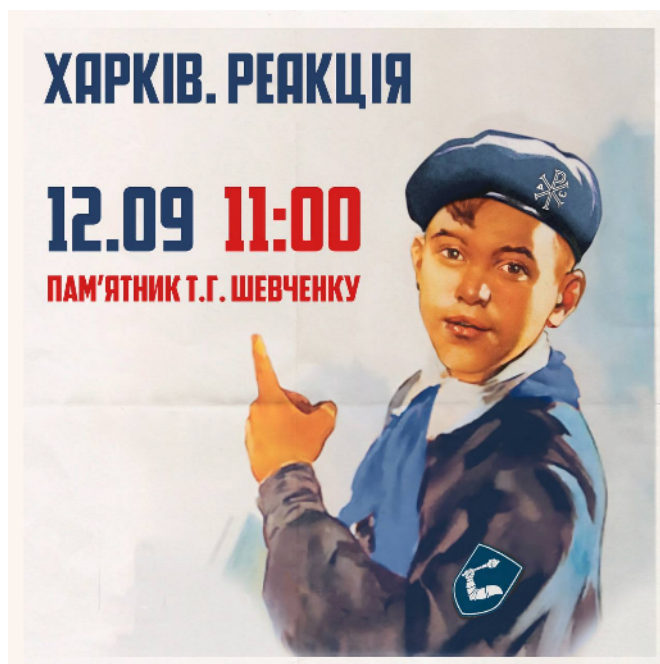
I want rights — you bear sex
You walk the streets of Kharkiv as you are
Human rights above all else
Give them vaccination against discrimination
Together we are many, we cannot be defeated
Kharkiv — rights
Putin is a dickhead
Safety, equality, inclusiveness
Kudos [to the police]
Rights are not given, rights are taken
Kharkiv Pride greets Kharkiv
Freedom is our tradition
Pride (×6)
Kharkiv Pride (×3)

Flags: *KharkivPride against the white background, KharkivPride stylized as Kharkiv's coat of arms, TJA (Tolerantiško Jaunimo Asociacija), Rainbowrose (promoting LGBTI rights in Europe), Tolumination, flag of asexual people, lesbian flag, Sphere Women's Association CSO, flag of LGBTKI+ community, Spectrum*

*Kharkiv CSO, FREE, State Flag of Ukraine, Neft Theater, flag of Lithuania, Trans Generation,
Zaporizhzhia Pride.*

Chapter II. Counter-assembly

2.1 Assembly: “Kharkiv. Response”



Protesters: ~60

Organizers/representatives: Tradition and Order organization, and Youth of Tradition, its youth wing.

Duration of the assembly: 11:00–12:20

Date: 09/12/2021

Announced venue/route: A monument to Taras Shevchenko (37 Sumska St.)

Actual venue/route: A monument to Taras Shevchenko (37 Sumska St.), and an additional route from Shevchenko Park to the Historical Museum.

Agenda of the assembly: On September 04, an announcement³ of the “Kharkiv. Response” rally appeared in Tradition and Order’s Telegram channel containing the following description: “*Christians were severely beaten in Odesa last week. Among those beaten were Kharkivites who came to speak out against LGBT activists. They came there because their native Kharkiv is next in line on September 12, when fans of sexual perversions would gather to work off their grant bucks with their dirty hands. [...] A minute of interesting math: LGBT multiplied by zero gives zero. A cipher. Kharkiv is a city of heavy industry, serious scientific achievements, and hard work. Rainbow butterflies are not welcome here.*” On 09/09 it was announced⁴ that the gathering itself will be held at 11:00 on September 12 near the Shevchenko monument.

Summary of the events:

At 11 o’clock, members of the organization approached the Shevchenko monument, started unfurling flags and banners, and taking photos. About half an hour later, a performance began, which was dedicated to the detention of the organization’s members after the 2021 Pride

³ https://t.me/tradition_and_order/10731

⁴ https://t.me/tradition_and_order/10753

March in Odesa. 15 participants lined up and tied themselves with ropes, lay down on the ground and stayed there for a while. Next, the chairman of the organization's Kharkiv branch went on stage and gave a speech condemning draft law 5488 and recalling the detention of the members of their movement after the Odesa Pride March.

Posters:

*"They are against LGBT. THEY WERE BEATEN BY THE POLICE FOR THAT."
"You will be next" [as a matter of context, the poster had a photo of persons being detained after the Pride March]
"L — the Left; G — Give you; BT — BullshIT."
Banner "Response: You can't lock up everyone"*

Slogans:

*"You can't put everyone behind the bars."
"Tradition, family, order!"
"Glory to Jesus Christ — glory forever!"
"God! Motherland! Patriarchy!"*

Flags:

*Tradition and Order.
1 flag of Youth of Tradition.
4 flags of Ukraine.*

2.2 Assembly: "Protecting the family"



Protesters: ~55

Organizers/representatives: Freikorps, Student Freedom, Falcon, Right Sector, the New Generation Church, and other citizens who visually represented none of these organizations

Duration of the assembly: 11:10–12:20

Date: 09/12/2021

Venue/route: A monument to Taras Shevchenko (37 Sumska St.)

Agenda of the assembly: On 09/09, the “Protecting the family” gathering was announced in the Telegram channels of Freikorps⁵ and Right Sector⁶, containing the similar description: “... *Our future lies in our children, whom we must protect from perverts with mental deviations. Protect the future of Ukraine and your children! Stand up to protect your family!*”

Summary of the events:

At about 11:10, Freikorps members approached the Shevchenko monument. By that time, representatives of other organizations and concerned citizens had gathered near the monument. Posters and flags appeared. Two loudspeakers were mounted on the stage. Some protesters lined up closer to the road and held posters silently. Other protesters stood next to the members of Tradition and Order.

At this time, some Freikorps members put the banner “Hands off the historical center” near the “Everything for victory” tent, and the banner “No to homodictatorship!” — on the tent itself.

At 12:10, a group of the counter-assembly participants, who visually represented none of the organizations, went to the park where another group of people, who did not position themselves as participants of any rally, was sitting on the benches, wearing sportswear, masks, and sunglasses.

Episode 1. At 12:24, the observers registered a verbal altercation between the MDNP and this group of people wearing sportswear without symbols. According to one of the persons involved in the verbal altercation, a large number (about 30) of police officers approached them (also a group of about 30 people scattered along the alley) to inquire if they had any weapons on them, i.e., the police were merely asking, rather than trying to perform a cursory check. One of the members of the group started talking rudely to the police, trying to find out why there were so many of them. He also said that he would not have behaved aggressively if he had been approached by 2 or 3 policemen. Following the conversation, this group of people left the location and went towards the University Metro station.

Some members of this group, similar to the “Protecting the family” protesters, were later seen along the KharkivPride route together with other participants of counter-assemblies.

Reports in social media⁷ indicate that councilors Oleh Abramychev and Ihor Pushkarov spoke after the rally.

Posters:

“Traditional family — successful State.”

“Traditional family is the nation’s future”

“Family is the nation’s future.”

“Marriage = man + woman.”

“Against LGBT propaganda.”

“LGBT are new Marxists.”

“There are two sexes and numerous mental disorders.”

“Traditional family — great Ukraine”

“Ukrainian Family: Mom, Dad and Child”

The banners “Hands off the historical center” and “No to homodictatorship!” near the tent.

⁵ https://t.me/freikorps_org/2733

⁶ https://t.me/ps_kharkiv/555

⁷ https://t.me/freikorps_org/2747

Flags:

*3 flags of Ukraine
2 flags of the Right Sector
1 Falcon flag
1 Student Freedom flag
2 Freikorps flags
1 OUN flag*

2.3 Assembly. The “Against propaganda of perversions through a gay pride parade” rally.



Protesters: ~10

Organizers/representatives: Christian Front

Duration of the rally: The start of the gathering was not recorded, since the venue and time were not previously announced. The gathering was over at approximately 14:00 (when the KharkivPride column went into the Metro)

Date: 09/12/2021

Actual venue/route: Derzhprom — Nauky Avenue

Agenda of the assembly: On 09/05, The Christian Front’s Telegram channel announced⁸ a journey to hold a counter-rally (“Against propaganda of perversions through a gay pride parade”) with the following description: “*A GAY PARADE is to be held in Kharkiv on September 12! MOBILIZATION! Christian Front CSO organizes a journey to Kharkiv to hold a counter-rally (against propaganda of perversions through a gay pride parade)*”

Summary of the events:

The rally assembled near Derzhprom, after which the participants marched on the sidewalk alongside the KharkivPride column. The pride march and the counter-assembly were separated by a cordon of policemen and specialized vehicles. The protesters used a loudspeaker and a banner. They were followed by a dialogue police team.

Episode 2. Interaction with a policeman was noted, looking very much like a friendly conversation — the protester and the policeman were smiling, while the conversation itself concerned their opinions of the principal assembly (the dialogue policeman was overheard to say something like, “*After all, these are their lives and their decision*”).

⁸ https://t.me/c_frontend/356

Besides, participants of the principal assembly were taking photos right next to them, which caused no response on the part of the protesters.

Posters:

“Propaganda of homosexuality threatens national security”
“Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable.
Leviticus 18:22”
“Father + mother family ukrainian destiny”

Slogans:

“Children are much more likely to become victims of sexual abuse in same-sex marriages or partnerships.”
“Children are much more likely to suffer from depression in same-sex partnerships.”
“Children are much more likely to attempt suicide in same-sex partnerships.”
“Spreading the sin of homosexuality is dangerous to society”

2.4 Opponents of KharkivPride in the areas adjacent to the route

At about 13:00, a group comprising about 20 people wearing no symbols was registered, who proceeded in a scattered manner along KharkivPride’s route outside the cordon, occasionally expressing their disapproval of the agenda of the principal rally (occasionally shouting phrases of disagreement). They were almost invariably accompanied by the dialogue policemen.

Episode 3. Several participants of the principal assembly holding a poster with the transgender people flag started taking pictures of themselves against the background of the police and the march. A group of participants of a spontaneous counter-assembly, who had accompanied the Pride March, approached them and snatched the poster away; the exclamation “You’re fucked!” was noted separately. The police were standing by the road, 4–5 meters or so away from them.

At about 13:10, one of the opponents threw an egg in the direction of the rally, and when the dialogue police rushed to him, he trotted away from them. The same person kept on shouting loudly (*including “Death to LGBT !”*) and approaching the police cordon near KharkivPride. Later he was also recorded as setting the KharkivPride flag on fire. A dialogue policeman first tried to intervene and to communicate with the opponent of the principal assembly, but was ignored. All the time after this incident, several dialogue policemen would continuously accompany the aggressive man.

Episode 4. Along the KharkivPride route, outside the cordon, a law enforcement officer without personal identification devices (chevrons, number tags, badges) and with his face covered was seen holding something that looked like a pump shotgun. Whenever the observer tried to take a picture of him, the law enforcement officer would turn away to conceal the shotgun.

Closer to 14:00, when the cordon of law enforcement officers and servicemen changed formation, so that the KharkivPride column could move into the Botanichnyi Sad Metro station, a few participants of counter-assemblies were seen standing at the entrance. The dialogue policemen stood in front of the cordon and would approach these people with a request to move

further away, doing it politely and calmly; no aggression on behalf of counter-assemblies or onlookers or any attempts to obstruct the movement were noticed.

Episode 5. A police cordon was posted near the staircase leading to Sarzhyn Yar. A group of the counter-assembly participants, who were previously seen near the monument, wanted to pass through it. The police would not let them through, arguing that they “represented a threat to public order.” When they left and descended the ravine, the policemen started discussing them quite loudly, using the phrases “they just wanted to mess with us” and “I would kick their ass right here and now.”

When the core of the gathering entered the Metro, several counter-assembly participants were also noticed among them.

Brief account of the actions of law enforcement officers during the KharkivPride counter-assemblies:

Prior to the announced start of the gatherings, the police were scattered around the park in groups of 2 to 10 persons, while a few law enforcement officers stood in the square near the Taras Shevchenko monument.

When the counter-assembly organizers began their rally, and the participants lined up near the monument, the police surrounded them in a loose ring (2–3 persons each). 20 representatives of law enforcement agencies encircled the rally, including 17 — from the Main Directorate, 2 — from the patrol police, and one representative of the police press center. The policemen guarding the rally were equipped with walkie-talkies (2 policemen), pistols and handcuffs (2 policemen), bulletproof vests, although the majority of them seemed to be lacking any visible special equipment.

Scattered groups of about 50 law enforcement officers were present in the park, including 10 policemen from the main department, and 40 cadets.

At 12:07, a counter-assembly consisting of a speaker and two assistants with loudspeakers was seen near the entrance to the march. Three dialog policemen were standing nearby. Another group comprised a speaker and 4 men with flags. Two dialog policemen, and a group of 4 patrolmen and 1 guardsman were standing close to them.

After the rallies near the Shevchenko monument were over, the police remained on the site until the participants left the square.

Episode 4. Law enforcement officers were seen to perform a cursory check in the areas around the Pride March. Opponents of KharkivPride were asked to show what they had in fanny packs, under their shirts, and would be released after that. Eggs were smashed on the ground.

At 14:00, at the moment when the organizers announced the end of the march, a likely protester threw an open can of BeerMix over the police cordon. The police tightened the cordon in response and pushed the group of opponents of the assembly further away from the Pride March. The police would monitor the actions of the most active protesters who attempted to obstruct free movement of the marchers.

Episode 5. At 14:11–14:14, two patrolmen and two plainclothes policemen were seen near the Botanichnyi Sad Metro station. The policemen asked two teenagers to throw away eggs and bottles containing liquid, and then performed a cursory check in the presence of police officers. An athletic belt was found on one of the teenagers, and he was allowed to keep it only after he said that his back hurt. At the end of the conversation, the policemen recorded the teenagers' ID details and showed them the exact road they should take so that there would be no more questions asked.

Section III. Conclusions and recommendations.

Ensuring the freedom of assembly is quite an uphill task for the authorities. This is a particularly difficult challenge for the police who are primarily responsible for ensuring that assemblies can be held, while simultaneously maintaining public order.

On the whole, the work of law enforcement officers to ensure the freedom of peaceful assembly during the 2021 Kharkiv Pride March may be regarded as successful. Coordination, fast response, and de-escalation tactics offered an opportunity for both the march and the counter-assembly participants to freely express their position and exercise their rights. Special mention should be made of the work carried out by the dialogue policemen who would promptly respond to conflict situations and properly communicate with various groups in order to both de-escalate conflicts and to inform onlookers about traffic and closed roads.

Compared to 2019, improved visibility of a peaceful assembly should be particularly noted. Unlike the previous 2019 KharkivPride, when the march walked across the blocked Svobody Square and, in fact, remained invisible to the public eye, in 2021 the route was chosen in a way that would offer the public an opportunity to see and hear the assembly participants directly, although behind the cordon of law enforcement officers and servicemen.

It should be pointed out, however, that while protecting public order, the police officers were not adequately provided with all the necessary resources, including proper uniform, footwear, and special apparel components to keep special equipment (numerous instances were recorded of old helmets and bulletproof vests that were torn, or of the wrong color, or could not be fastened; no regulation footwear; truncheons not worn on belts, etc.) as well as with the necessary comfort, including toilets (a policeman was seen relieving himself near the Botanichnyi Sad Metro station).

It should also be added that deeper structural problems exist in the design of the uniform, since, as noted by a police officer, belts for special equipment are inconvenient for holding truncheons, because they interfere with free movements and prevent quick use of special equipment where necessary.

Furthermore, a number of violations and problems in the law enforcement work were noted by the observers in the process of monitoring, such as:

1. **Violation of the cursory check rules during filtration measures taken before the start of the 2021 Kharkiv Pride March**
 1. **Violation of the rules for wearing uniform and personal identification devices** (*no badges or number tags on helmets (or covering them with visors), no chevrons on the right shoulder (which identify unit affiliation)*)
 2. **A law enforcement officer outside the backup team, ostensibly carrying a firearm for no apparent reason** (*posing risks to the lives of the peaceful assembly participants and other persons*)
 3. **Violation of the rules of ethical behavior (improper jokes and statements aimed at the assembly participants)** (*“soon there will be no straight people left,” “poofs,” “faggots,” “the LGBT herd,” etc.*)

Recommendations
Kharkiv City State Administration

1. Provide more Metro trains for KharkivPride organizers to ensure safe transportation of the assembly participants and prevent any dangerous stampedes that might threaten human life and health.
2. Ensure that medical personnel are available throughout the assembly area, especially where a risk of stampede exists, e.g., in the Metro.

Local self-government authorities and the National Police of Ukraine

1. Promote the exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly by the public, such as facilitating the holding of peaceful assemblies in the “visibility and audibility” zone of its target audience, in this case — the general public.

National Police of Ukraine

1. Conduct an internal investigation of the instances of violation by its officers of the statutory requirements for adequate identification, rules for wearing uniform, and of intentional concealment of numbers on helmets by law enforcement officers involved in the protection of this peaceful assembly.
2. Ensure adequate monitoring over compliance by officers of the National Police of Ukraine, who are involved in the protection of public order during peaceful assemblies, with the rules for wearing uniform and the Law on the National Police of Ukraine to the extent associated with wearing of insignia and special badges, visibility of numbers on helmets, and prohibition on their concealment.
3. Provide appropriate uniforms, shoes and equipment for police officers engaged in the protection of public order in line with their functions and potential aggravation of the operational situation.
4. Refrain from involving police officers with firearms (other than those assigned to backup teams) in the protection of public order without reasonable grounds.
5. Ensure the presence of law enforcement officers in the areas adjacent to the place of the assembly’s departure in order to prevent attacks on the participants after the event.
6. Brief the personnel on the cursory check procedure, including on the requirement that a person should him/herself show belongings to law enforcement officers.
7. Conduct outreach among personnel concerning the provisions of Section II of the Order No. 1179 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine dated 11/09/2016 “On approving the Rules of ethical behavior for police officers” (Basic requirements for police behavior).
8. Gradually improve logistical support for law enforcement officers engaged in the protection of public order at peaceful assemblies, and contribute to better working environment at such events. This, in particular, may concern the minimum comfort (providing water, toilet facilities).
9. Gradually improve the design of uniform of law enforcement officers engaged in the protection of public order at peaceful assemblies to make wearing the uniform more comfortable and to enable faster use of special equipment where necessary. This, in particular, applies to special apparel components intended for police equipment (belts), which are unfit for carrying truncheons.

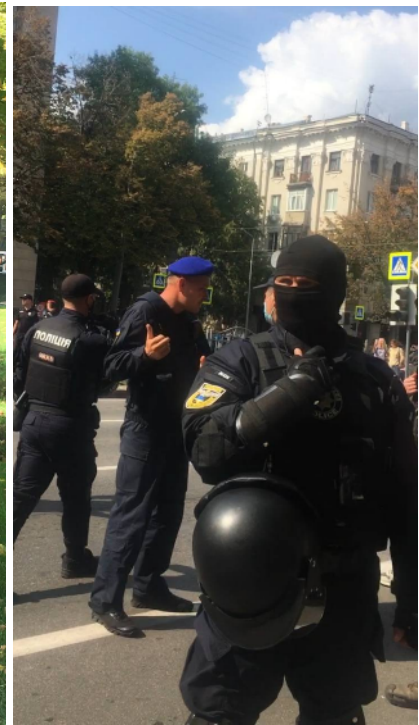
10. Reduce gradually the presence of military units during the protection of public order at peaceful assemblies.

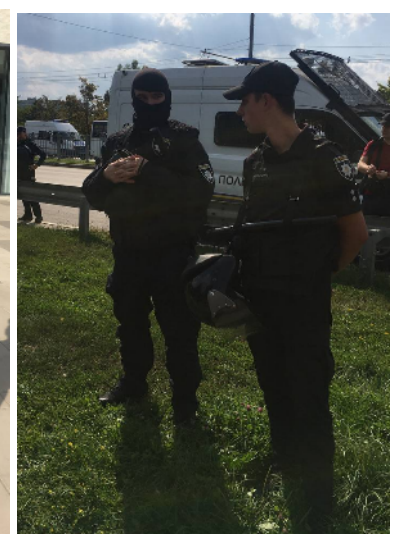
Photo evidence of violations by law enforcement officers

1. *Violation of the cursory check rules during filtration measures (law enforcement officers themselves inspect the contents of bags)*



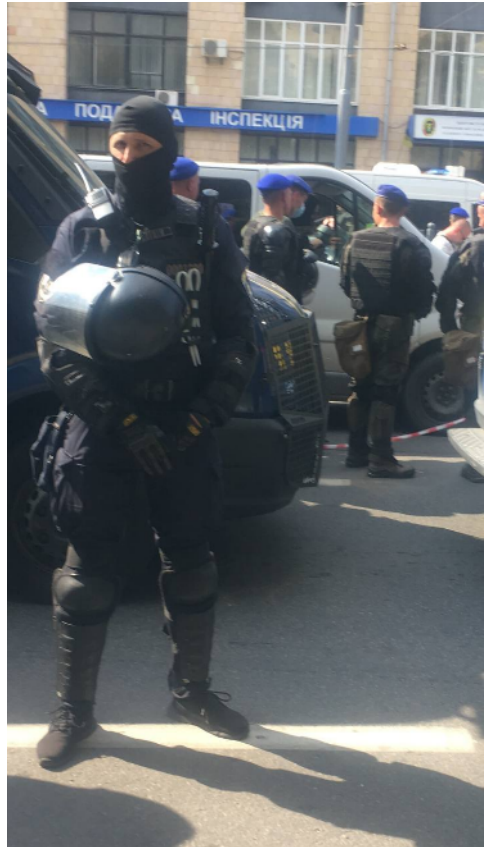
2. *Lack of proper personal identification devices*

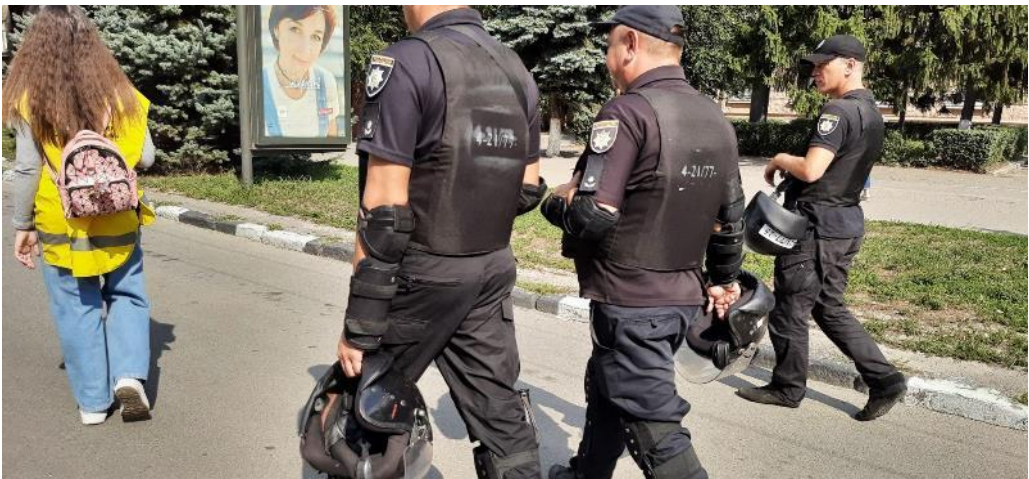
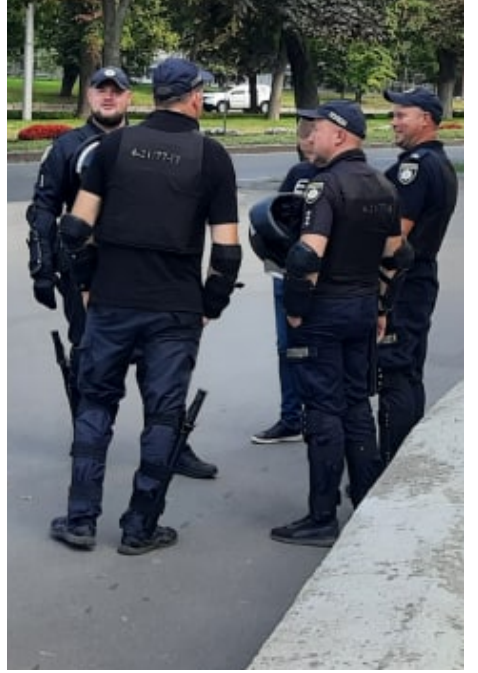




3. *Violation of rules for wearing of uniform, and inadequate supply of uniforms*







4. *A law enforcement officer ostensibly carrying a firearm for no apparent reason*

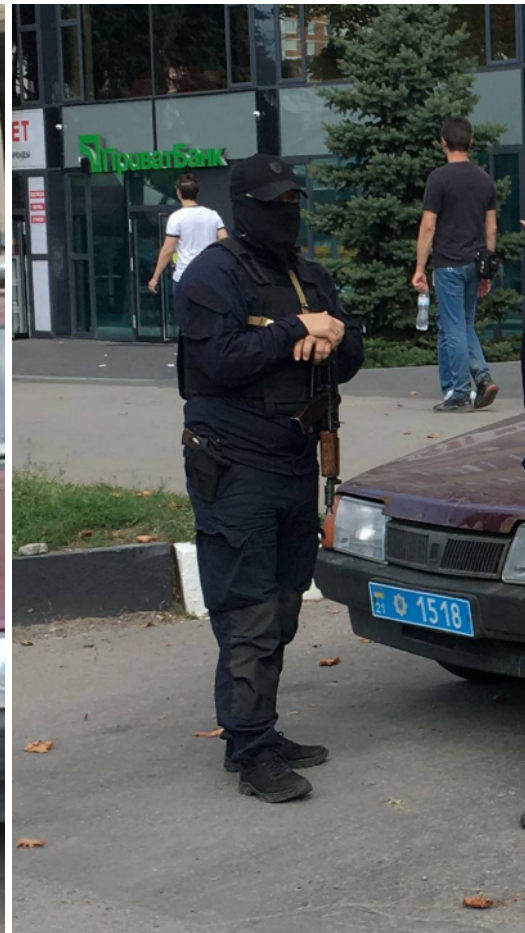
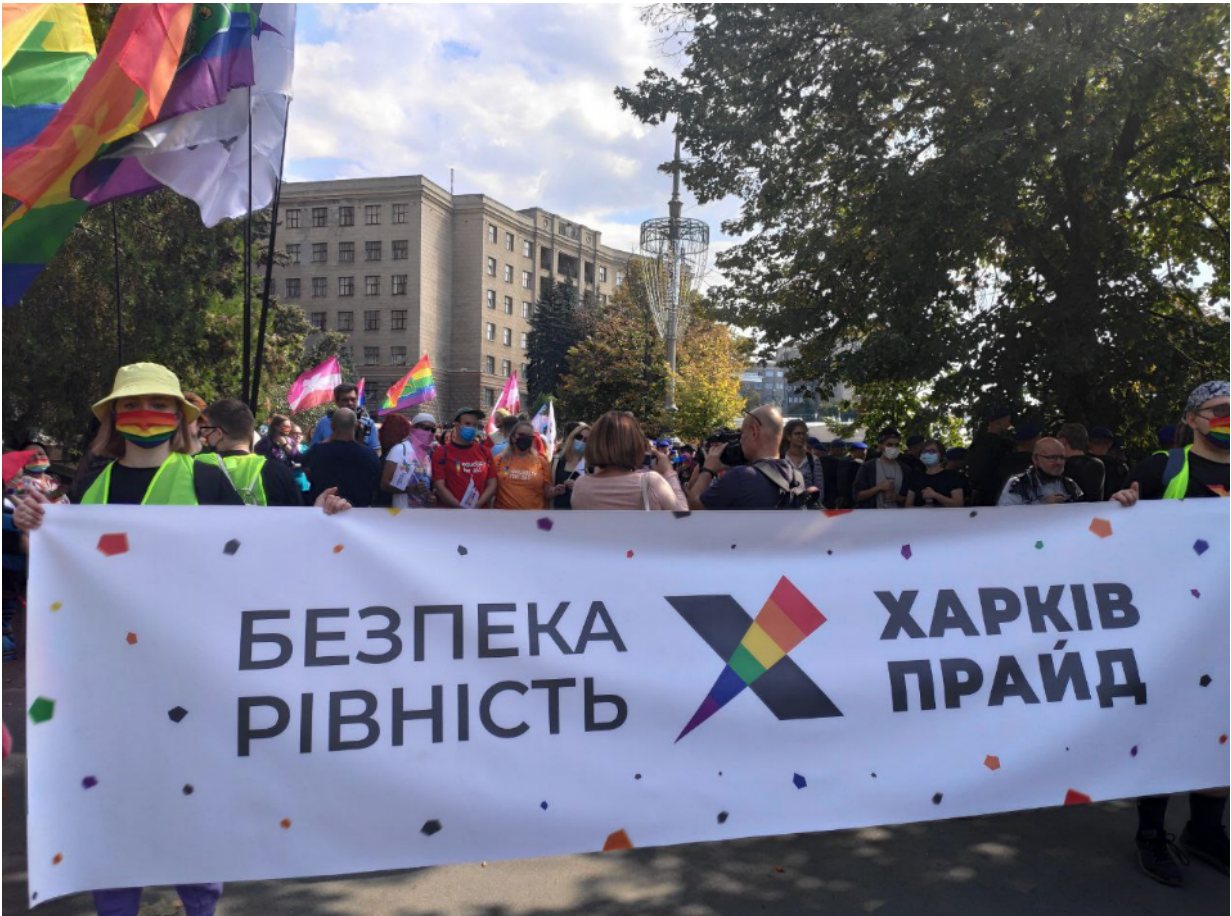


Photo Gallery



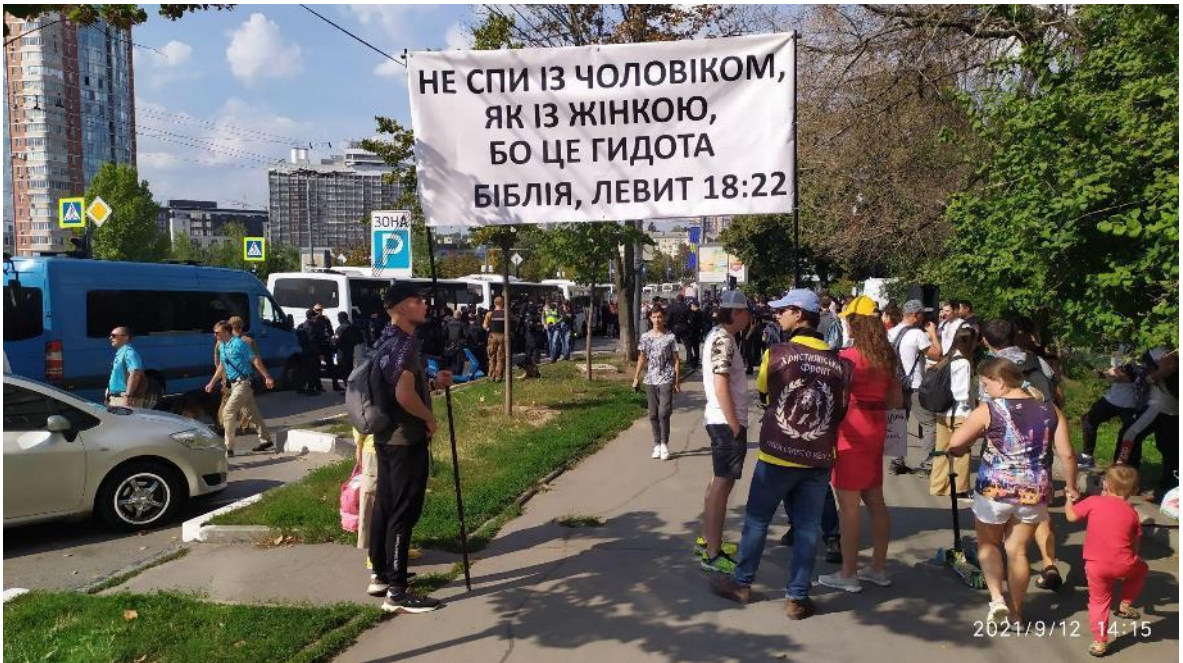
Observers from OZON Civic Monitoring Group





2021 Kharkiv Pride March





Counter assembly during KharkivPride 2021







Law enforcement officers and servicemen during the protection of public order at KharkivPride 2021 and counter-assemblies



(Checking flowerpots for dangerous items)





Health care and SES

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