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Ukraine: National Police Inactive Following Attack on Olena Shevchenko and Anastasiia Gerasymenko

On 10 May 2026, six unidentified men attacked women human rights defenders **Olena Shevchenko** and **Anastasiia Gerasymenko** in the city of Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine. They were returning from a peaceful protest against the new draft of the Civil Code of Ukraine, which the Verkhovna Rada (the parliament of Ukraine) passed in its first reading on 28 April 2026. After the attack, the women human rights defenders faced significant challenges when attempting to report the incident to the local law enforcement, having to insist that the police accepts their complaint.

[Olena Shevchenko](#) is a prominent woman human rights defender and community organiser from Ukraine, working on advancing LGBTIQ and women's rights. Olena Shevchenko is the Chairperson of [Insight](#), an NGO that focuses on promoting and protecting the rights of LGBTIQ persons in Ukraine. The woman human rights defender is also a European Representative at the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association ([ILGA World](#)), the co-chair of the [European Lesbian* Conference](#), and a co-chairperson of the [Coalition Against Discrimination in Ukraine](#).

[Anastasiia Gerasymenko](#) is a woman human rights defender and feminist activist leading the initiative [Марш Жінок](#) (Women's March) in Ukraine. The initiative is grounded in the values of sisterhood and solidarity, aiming to create a strong force for change in Ukraine, particularly by advocating for women's rights through activists' direct participation and visibility.

On 10 May 2026, Olena Shevchenko and Anastasiia Gerasymenko attended a peaceful protest in Ivano-Frankivsk against the the new draft of the Civil Code of Ukraine. The draft, particularly the sections addressing women's and LGBTIQ rights, was widely criticised by Ukrainian human rights defenders and led to a number of peaceful protests across the country. After the protest ended around 15:30, the women human rights defenders reported being followed by at least six men who had participated in the parallel public action "For Traditional Values". The men attacked Olena Shevchenko and Anastasiia Gerasymenko from behind, pushed them to the ground, took their posters, and fled from the scene. Law enforcement officers were present during the attack and even detained one of the attackers. However, they refused to take a statement from women human rights defenders after the incident. As a result, Olena Shevchenko and Anastasiia Gerasymenko had to go to the Main Directorate of the National Police in Ivano-Frankivsk Region to file their complaint.

When Olena Shevchenko and Anastasiia Gerasymenko attempted to report the attack to the police, they waited over five hours simply to file a complaint. During this time, the officers did not allow them to use the bathroom. The women human rights defenders reported that the police officers made a number of attempts to discourage them from filing a complaint. Furthermore, law enforcement officers refused to acknowledge the possible discriminatory nature of the attack or consider it a hate crime. The officers refused to provide a copy of the complaint and the registration

number assigned to it, violating the code of conduct. The text of the complaint that was filed by one of the law enforcement officers contained several factual mistakes, including the wrong date of birth of Olena Shevchenko and calling Anastasiia Gerasymenko “Antoina.”

Olena Shevchenko has been targeted in relation to her human rights work before. On 14 April 2022, while unloading humanitarian aid from the Women’s March organisation in Lviv, an unknown individual approached Olena Shevchenko and [used tear gas against her](#). The National Police failed to investigate this case and remained unresponsive to the request of Olena Shevchenko’s lawyer. As of May 2026, there have been no developments in that case. Front Line Defenders notes the lack of investigative efforts regarding hate crimes against human rights defenders working on LGBTIQ issues in Ukraine.

Front Line Defenders is gravely concerned by the pattern of systemic attacks on LGBTIQ rights defenders in Ukraine over the last years, and the failure to bring those responsible to justice. The organisation condemns the attack against women human rights defenders Olena Shevchenko and Anastasiia Gerasymenko, which appears to be a reprisal for their peaceful and legitimate human rights work to protect and promote women’s and LGBTIQ rights in Ukraine. Front Line Defenders remains concerned over the remaining lack of efforts by the National Police of Ukraine to investigate cases of attacks against human rights defenders working on LGBTIQ rights issues. The targeting of LGBTIQ rights defenders and organisations and the lack of accountability for such crimes has a chilling effect on civil society.

Front Line Defenders calls upon the authorities in Ukraine to:

1. Publicly condemn the attack against women human rights defenders Olena Shevchenko and Anastasiia Gerasymenko;
2. Ensure that all necessary measures are taken to guarantee Olena Shevchenko and Anastasiia Gerasymenko’s access to medical and legal support as needed, and safeguard their physical and psychological integrity;
3. Carry out an immediate, thorough, and impartial investigation into the attack against Olena Shevchenko and Anastasiia Gerasymenko, and to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice in accordance with international law;
4. Ensure that LGBTIQ rights defenders and women’s rights defenders are recognised as an integral part of civil society and receive all the necessary protection;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Ukraine can carry out their activities without fear of reprisals and free from restrictions, in accordance with Ukraine’s international human rights obligations.

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