On the 16 of March, 2015, the European Action Week against Racism will begin. On the same day, an annual march honouring the veterans of Waffen SS Latvian Legion will happen in Riga. Those collaborators are celebrated as "heroes" by one of the ruling parties, the "National Alliance", whose MPs attend the march every year.

The government of Latvia has requested its ministers not to take part in the march. However, there are reasons to doubt the sincere character of this moderate step. The anti-fascists wishing to protest against the annual march are smeared as planning "provocations" by the police. Those marching are not. In the same time the organisers of an anti-fascist conference scheduled to happen on March 15 were suddenly refused the premises by the hotel on March, 13. The hotel admits contacts with the police.

Besides, a declaration on Latvian legionnaires in World War II, adopted in 1998 by Latvian Parliament, is still not revoked. This declaration, intentionally or not, minimises the Holocaust by inaccurately saying that "Germany also committed war crimes and genocide in Latvia, but they had a smaller impact on Latvian citizens" (than the Stalinist repressions of 1940-1941 supposedly having caused the volunteers from Latvia to join Waffen SS). It also requests the authorities to "prevent insults against the honour and dignity of Latvian soldiers".

Latvian Human Rights Committee invites the Latvian authorities:

- not to create obstacles to anti-fascist activities;

- to follow the recommendation of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, as expressed in its fourth report on Latvia in 2011 - "to condemn all attempts to commemorate persons who fought in the Waffen SS and collaborated with the Nazis", and to demand this stance from all coalition partners;

- to revoke the "Declaration on Latvian Legionnaires in World War II" and to apologise for its adoption.
Background information:

Links in English:

- The 1998 declaration and the attitude of the National Alliance to it (below)
- ECRI report on Latvia (fourth monitoring cycle). See Paras. 86-87
- The official position on the 16 of March by Latvian foreign ministry
- Security Police putting anti-fascists in quotation marks and claiming them to intend "provocations"
- Anti-fascist activists denying police allegations.

Links in Latvian and Russian:

- A recent article by secretary-general of the “National Alliance” glorifying the SS legionnaires as "heroes" (LV)
- Hotel refusal to rent premises (RU)