

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Bulgaria: First Sofia Pride needs adequate protection

Amnesty International is concerned about the intimidation against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Bulgaria that is being shown in the run-up to the first Pride event to be held in the centre of the capital, Sofia, on 28 June. It has been organized by Gemini, a Bulgarian organization working for the rights of LGBT people.

Amnesty International is concerned about hostile statements by some far-right groups and others. Given that the Pride march is likely to be targeted by counter-demonstrators, the Pride participants will need to be adequately protected by law enforcement officials.

Amnesty International raises these concerns in the context of the decision on 26 June by Sofia's Mayor Boyko Borisov, who announced a change of the location of the parade in order, he said, to better meet security concerns around the safety of the marchers. The original route had been proposed two weeks in advance by Gemini, and had been officially approved by the Municipality of Sofia. Following the mayor's announcement, a new route was finally agreed between the organizers and the Mayor on 27 June.

Amnesty International welcomes these efforts and concerns by the mayor and police, and in this regard is calling on the relevant authorities to:

- Ensure that all individuals within their jurisdiction are able to effectively exercise their right to freedom of peaceful assembly without discrimination;

- Publicly condemn attacks, threats of attacks and other harassment of LGBT people, making clear that violent acts will not be tolerated and prosecuted as appropriate;

- Act with due diligence to provide effective protection to LGBT people who face threats to their lives and safety. Such measures should include, where necessary, special measures of protection;

- Ensure that police officers are provided with specific directives and training on their duty to protect the human rights of all individuals. This should include training specifically on the human rights of LGBT people and on how to identify and investigate homophobic crimes. Such training should stress that police misconduct and abuse against LGBT people will not be tolerated;

- Ensure that law enforcement officials act with due diligence to provide effective protection to LGBT individuals who face threats to their lives and safety.

Background

The right to equal protection of the law, and the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful demonstrations, are guaranteed under international human rights treaties to which Bulgaria is a party, such as the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.