

Amnesty International

Public Statement

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Croatia: Protection of LGBT people must go beyond the Pride

Only a few days after Split Pride took place and police ensured for an adequate protection to Pride participants, Amnesty International raises concerns about the lack of adequate protection of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Split from hate crimes.

On Sunday 17 June, six young women were physically and verbally attacked by a group of men on the Bačvice beach in Split, because of their perceived sexual orientation. The women passed by a group of at least six men in front of a cafe. One of these men stood up and punched one of the women, Ž.Ž., in the back, shouting “Lesbian!”. The women tried to walk away, but the group of men followed them. Ž.Ž. was heavily beaten by at least three of the men. Another woman, I.M., was also heavily beaten.

The police arrived 15 minutes after they were called by I.M.. Meanwhile, all but one of the attackers left the scene. The only attacker who remained shouted to the girls in front of the police officers “We were beating you last year, we’ll beat you again!” and “You are sick”. The police officers not only did not arrest the attacker and let him walk away from the scene, but even laughed at his homophobic remarks and started to question the women about the incident. One of the victims protested against the police officers’ questioning them. One of the police officers reacted against her protest by pushing her on the floor.

When the victims were brought to the police station to file a complaint, they were questioned by the police officers about the incident. When one of the victims asked why she was pushed on the floor before, the same police officer who did it threatened to slap her in the face. One of the victims stated that the incident was a homophobic crime; in response, the police officers told her to shut up and threatened to beat her up.

This incident is in stark contrast with the appropriate behavior and protection provided by the Split police at the Split Pride on 9 June. Amnesty International is concerned that the local police is failing to protect victims of homophobic and transphobic hate crimes, as soon as the spotlight of events such as the Split Pride is turned off.

Amnesty International reminds the Split police that the protection of LGBT people from hate crimes is their duty all the year round and not only on the occasion of Pride parades. Therefore, the organization calls on the Split police to ensure a thorough and timely investigation of any alleged hate motive and prosecution of the attackers at Bačvice beach, as well as of the police officers who mistreated and threatened the victims of the attack.