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Montenegro: Violence at Budva Pride

Amnesty International deplores the violent attacks that took place yesterday, 24 July, during a Pride march in the seaside town of Budva in Montenegro.

According to participants, around 200 counter-demonstrators, some of them chanting “Death to gays”, threw stones, bottles and other missiles at police, who were protecting people taking part in the “Seaside Pride”, the first Pride March to be organized in Montenegro.

Around 22 counter-demonstrators were arrested. Amnesty International welcomes the statement by the Minister of Interior that action would be taken against those responsible for the attack on the march, and calls on him to ensure that impartial, thorough and prompt investigations are conducted into the attacks, and perpetrators brought to justice.

The Budva Municipal Assembly had rejected calls for an emergency meeting to ban the parade, after around 2,000 residents had petitioned the authorities. The initiators of the petition then decided to hold their own counter-protest at the same time as the planned march. Following the meeting between the Pride organizers and the Ministry of Interior, police agreed to guarantee the safety of the participants, and a large police presence was present.

The day before the march, on 23 July, the NGO Human Rights Action had called for an investigation of those responsible for incitement to hatred and violence against the organizers and participants of the Pride, including those responsible for displaying obituary notices, which bore a photograph of Zdravko Cimbalević, President of LGBT Forum Progress and one of the organizers of Budva Pride, and which condemned all LGBT organizations and their supporters in Montenegro.

A Pride march organized by Queer Montenegro is due to be held in the capital Podgorica in October. Amnesty International urges the Prime Minister and government of Montenegro to condemn publicly the attack on the Budva Pride and take all possible measures to ensure the safety and security of the organizers and participants in the forthcoming Pride in October.

The Montenegrin authorities are obliged under international and domestic law to guarantee the rights to freedom of assembly, expression and association to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) community and their supporters, without discrimination. This obligation entails providing adequate police protection to LGBTI Pride events, and effectively investigating and prosecuting homophobic and transphobic attacks.

Amnesty International therefore urges the government without delay and in consultation with LGBTI organizations, to introduce legislation prohibiting hate crimes, specifically including hate crimes based on real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity of the victim, as well as ethnicity, race, gender and other grounds for discrimination recognized in international standards. Plans to criminalize hate crimes were included in a LGBT strategy agreed by the government

earlier this year: the current Criminal Code of Montenegro does not include a definition of hate crime.

Public Document

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