

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

27 September 2010  
AI Index: EUR 70/014/2010

## **The Serbian government must take a stand against exclusion and intolerance**

The Serbian authorities must ensure that the 2010 Belgrade Pride, the first in nearly 10 years, goes ahead unobstructed, Amnesty International said today.

Activists from Serbian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organizations will march together with their families, friends and supporters from other organizations, Amnesty International included, on 10 October in central Belgrade.

Amnesty International is concerned that right wing groups may increasingly resort to threatening discourse in the public domain, leading up to the march. The organization has already learnt of attempts to intimidate individual gay rights activists.

The authorities in Serbia are obliged under international and domestic law to guarantee the rights to freedom to assembly, expression and association to the LGBT community and their supporters.

Threats that aim to destroy the rights of the LGBT people and which amount to incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence against Pride organizers and participants must be promptly and effectively investigated by the Serbian authorities.

The authorities are obliged to ensure the protection and safety of the Pride organizers and participants. The police have a duty to identify possible security threats from counter-demonstrators. Effective security measures must be put in place to protect participants, including an adequate police presence at and around the chosen venue.

Since 2001 the LGBT community in Serbia has been unable to hold a Pride Day parade due to serious threats from right-wing and religious organizations.

In 2001, the police failed to protect participants of the first Gay Pride Parade in Belgrade from attacks by members of a counter-demonstration who threatened and assaulted participants in the march.

Last year, the Belgrade Pride march, which was scheduled for September 2009, did not take place after the authorities at the last moment refused to provide security to the Pride participants on the agreed route through the city centre because of threats from right-wing groups.

Despite the requirements of the national law, the authorities have failed to bring to justice those responsible for issuing threats to the organizers and supporters of the 2009 Pride.

The Serbian Ant-Discrimination Law explicitly guarantees the rights to freedom of assembly, expression and association to the LGBT people. Threats that aim to destroy the rights of freedom of assembly and expression of others, and which amount to incitement to discrimination, hostility

or violence against Pride organizers and participants, violate international human rights law, and also appear to violate Serbian law, such as Article 387 of the Serbian Criminal Code, Racial and Other Discrimination.

The authorities must investigate, impartially and as a matter of priority, all threats against LGBT activists, including the most recent ones, as the date for the Belgrade Pride approaches. It must be made clear that discriminatory violence is a criminal offence and will not be tolerated.

Political leaders should state publicly and unequivocally that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons have the right to demonstrate and that anyone trying to violate these rights will be brought to justice.

Diversity and tolerance, equality before the law for all, no discrimination on sexual orientation and gender identity grounds, are all messages that LGBT rights activists will take to the streets on 10 October. They must be able to do so without fear of threats and verbal or physical abuse.

Belgrade Pride 2010 is organized by Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) and Queeria - center for the promotion of culture of nonviolence and equality (Queeria center), with the support and assistance of the Group for Support of Gay Men from Novi Sad and other LGBT activists.

The Pride march is scheduled to start at 10 am at Manjež Park.

**For more information and to arrange an interview, please contact:**

Lydia Aroyo, Europe and Central Asia Press Officer at Amnesty International +44 (0) 7771 796 350 or e-mail: [laroyo@amnesty.org](mailto:laroyo@amnesty.org)

Public Document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or email: [press@amnesty.org](mailto:press@amnesty.org)

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK  
[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)