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Banning of Belgrade Pride is a dark day for human rights in Serbia

The Serbian authorities' decision to ban Sunday's Belgrade Pride event is a "dark day for human rights", Amnesty International said.

The Serbian National Security Council today said the Pride march would not be held due to security threats from extremist right-wing groups, who had reportedly threatened violence and arson throughout the city if the event went ahead.

"The Serbian authorities, as they did in 2009, have bowed to pressure from right-wing groups who have failed to understand or respect the rights to freedom of expression set out in the Serbian constitution and law," said Sian Jones, Balkans Researcher at Amnesty International.

Amnesty International considers the banning of Pride to be a huge step back for human rights in Serbia, and a massive government concession to right-wing nationalist groups, in particular Dveri and Obraz, who have orchestrated opposition to the Pride.

"Again the government has put pressure on the organizers to cancel the Pride march, instead of supporting them by guaranteeing their rights. Instead of rainbow flags in Serbia, it is a dark day for human rights," said Sian Jones.

This is the fourth time that Pride has been planned in Belgrade. In 2010, police protected participants against more than 5,000 violent counter-demonstrators and damage to property was estimated at more than €1 million. In 2009, the Pride march did not take place after the authorities refused to provide security at the last moment following threats from far-right groups.

Belgrade's Mayor has refused to support the Pride, saying that the event is a risk for "property, members of gay population, the police and citizens of Belgrade".

Amnesty International considers that the prohibition of a Pride march violates the Serbian government's obligations to guarantee freedom of expression and assembly. Further, the organization fears that the prohibition of the Pride, in the context of threats from homophobic groups, gives a green light to those who seek to deny the rights of LGBT people, and undermines the right to non-discrimination.

"This is a huge step back for human rights in Serbia and a massive concession to right-wing nationalist groups, in particular Dveri and Obraz, who have orchestrated opposition to the Pride," said Sian Jones.

Read More

[Amnesty International supports the Belgrade Pride](#) (Public statement, 28 September 2011)

[Serbia: Belgrade pride must go ahead](#) (Urgent action, 26 August 2011)

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