

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

18 October 2013
AI Index: EUR 66/003/2013

Montenegro: Government should take part in the Podgorica Pride

Amnesty International welcomes the measures that the government of Montenegro have taken to ensure the safety and security of the organizers and participants in Podgorica Pride due to take place on 20 October.

We note that expressions of support for the Pride have been made by the President of Montenegro, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, as well as by the Ombudsman's Institution.

However, in view of the violent attacks that took place at the Budva Pride, the organization urges the government to publicly support the Pride by participating in the march and rally. Amnesty International urges the Minister of Human and Minority Rights, invited to speak at the rally, and other ministers to take part in the Pride.

The participation by ministers and other government officials in the Podgorica Pride would send a strong message in support of the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly of LGBTI people in Montenegro. Further, their presence would help to protect the Pride and sending a clear signal to any counter-demonstrators.

If any attacks do occur, Amnesty International calls on the authorities to strongly condemn them, and ensure the perpetrators are brought to justice.

The organization is concerned that the violent attacks that took place during the first-ever Pride march in Montenegro in the seaside town of Budva on 24 July 2013, could occur again at the Podgorica Pride march. At Budva Pride, some 200 counter-demonstrators threw stones, bottles and other missiles at police. Around 32 counter-demonstrators were arrested and charged with public order offences.

Amnesty International welcomes the fact that since July the police have worked closely with Queer Montenegro, the Pride organizers, on the route of the Podgorica Pride march and security arrangements. An estimated 2,000 police officers are expected to be deployed.

Amnesty International finally urges the government without delay and in consultation with LGBTI organizations to introduce specific legislation prohibiting hate crime, including on the basis of 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.

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