

URGENT ACTION

PRIDE PARTICIPANTS THREATENED WITH VIOLENCE

The Serbian authorities have agreed that the Belgrade Pride will take place on 2 October. Amnesty International remains concerned that the rights of LGBT people to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly remain under threat from right-wing groups.

As the date for the Belgrade Pride approaches, various nationalist groups are calling for it to be banned and have publicly threatened Pride participants with violence. Even though the Minister of Interior has publicly stated that the pride will not be banned, he has expressed concerns about the security risks associated with the event.

Leader of nationalist organization Obraz, Mladen Obradovic, who is appealing his sentence for organizing violent counter-demonstrations during last year's Pride, announced that Obraz will organize a protest on the same day in Belgrade and called on the police to refuse orders to protect the Pride participants. Other nationalist organizations have also called on their supporters to go to Belgrade during the Pride. Nationalist organization Dveri held a joint press conference together with the Police Trade Union asking that the Ministry of Interior bans the Pride and asked that members of the LGBT community cancel the event. Dveri are also organizing a protest one day before the Pride. There have been threats in the form of graffiti and posters calling for violence against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in Belgrade.

Amnesty International welcomed the measures taken by the Ministry of Interior and the Belgrade police in particular, in guaranteeing the right to freedom of expression of the LGBT community during Belgrade Pride in 2010. However, taking into account the sentiment against the members of the LGBT community, Amnesty International calls on the authorities to ensure the same guarantees are put in place during this year's pride.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Ask the authorities to ensure that the rights to freedom of expression and assembly of LGBT rights activists are fully respected during the Pride, including through police protection for the participants and organizers;
- Ask them to publicly support the Pride, and condemn publicly all attacks on, or threats to, the organizers of, or participants in the Pride;
- Demand that they immediately conduct prompt, impartial and effective investigations into all attacks or threats against the Pride organizers or participants, or any other members of the LGBT population; and ensure that all of the perpetrators are brought to justice;

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 OCTOBER 2011 TO:

Minister of Interior
Ivica Dacic
Bulevar Mihajla Pupina 2
11 000, Belgrade, Serbia
Email: info@mup.gov.rs
Fax: +381 11 361 4929
Salutation: Dear Minister,

President of the Republic of Serbia
Boris Tadic
Andricev Venac 1
11 000, Belgrade, Serbia
Email: kontakt.predsednik@predsednik.rs
Fax: +381 11 362 0676
Salutation: Dear President,

Please send solidarity cards to:
Civil Rights Defenders
Kneza Milosa 83
11 000, Belgrade, Serbia
Email: international@parada.rs
Salutation: Dear Sir or Madam

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 253/11. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR70/016/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This is the fourth time that Pride has been planned in Belgrade. In 2010, police protected participants against violent counter-demonstrators and more than 100 people, mostly police, were injured. Damage to property was estimated at over €1 million. In 2009, the Pride march, scheduled for September did not take place after the authorities refused to provide security at the last moment following threats from far-right groups.

Amnesty International participated in the Belgrade Pride, in 2010 and is well aware of the tremendous problems faced during this Pride by the authorities, and in particular the Ministry of Interior, in addressing the extreme security challenges posed by the threats from and actions of right wing groups. Even with the deployment of 5,000 police, what should have been a celebratory event turned into some of the worst violence seen in Belgrade in recent years. Few of those responsible for the violence or for issuing threats to the organizers and supporters of the Pride have been brought to justice.

The Mayor of Jagodina, a city in central Serbia, whose party is part of the coalition government, has repeatedly called members of gay population “ill”, stated that homosexuality is contrary to Serbian religious and family values, and asked for the Pride not to take place. He also stated that the Pride organizers should be held responsible for any violence that takes place in Belgrade during the Pride which he called the “Parade of shame”.

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”.

Name: Organisers of Belgrade Pride

Gender m/f: Both

Further information on UA: 253/11 Index: EUR 70/019/2011 Issue Date: 28 September 2011

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