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# amnesty international

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EXTERNAL

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## *Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Lesbian and Gay Rights are Human Rights*

*Amnesty International condemns the authorities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) for the failure of the Belgrade police to protect the participants in Serbia's first Gay Pride Celebration from assault by right-wing and homophobic individuals and organizations.*

*The Gay Pride Celebration Day took place in the capital, Belgrade, on 30 June 2001, but was marred by violence from members of a counter-demonstration who threatened and assaulted participants in the march. Amnesty International is extremely concerned at reports from several sources that the police initially stood by while the assaults took place, and that the police only responded at all when they themselves came under attack.*

*Amnesty International is further concerned that the police were heard to question why they should protect participants on the march from attack. The organization reminds the Serbian police of their duty to protect the rights to freedom of expression, association and of peaceful assembly, irrespective of the political, sexual or other affiliation of the participants, as set out in the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms to which the FRY is a signatory.*

**INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED KINGDOM**

The organization is further concerned by remarks made by Boško Buha, Belgrade's chief of police, and by Serbian Prime minister Zoran Djindjić, both of whom said that Serbia was not ready to tolerate homosexuality.

Amnesty International recommends that the police and judicial authorities in Serbia should in future act with due diligence to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) people against violence from the wider community. The authorities should also make clear that such violence is a criminal offence and will not be tolerated. Specific directives and training should be given to law enforcement officials on their duty to protect the human rights of all individuals, regardless of their sexuality, and on how to identify and investigate homophobic crimes.

The organization also urges the Serbian authorities to ensure that incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence against LGBT people should be prohibited, in accordance with the international standards prohibiting advocacy of hatred, and anti-discrimination standards.

## **Background**

At around 3.00 pm on 30 June 2001, just as the Gay Pride Celebration was about to start, a crowd of around 1,000 - mainly men - appeared in the Trg Republike (Republic Square) in Belgrade. People in this counter-demonstration reportedly waved national and Radical Party flags, and carried placards bearing homophobic slogans, some inciting violence against lesbians and gay men. Organizations alleged to be present at the counter-demonstration includes the Parent's Forum, members of the *Obraz* movement, representatives of the Serbian orthodox church, football supporters and skinheads thought to be members of the group "Krv i\_asta" (Blood and Honour).

Members of the counter-demonstration allegedly ran forward shouting homophobic slogans and attacked some of the young men attending the gay pride demonstration. Other demonstrators, members of the public - including a 70-year old woman -, journalists and the police were attacked with fists, bottles, eggs, stones and clubs. A police officer was reportedly hit on the head with a rock. Only when a group of around 100 men ran towards the march near the army centre building did the police attempt to block them by firing into the air.

*A meeting and press conference - planned by the organizers of the Gay Pride Celebration - failed to take place after the building in which they were to be held came under attack, and several gay men and lesbians attempting to reach the meeting were assaulted and threatened. A total of 40 civilians and 8 police officers were reportedly injured.*

*See Amnesty International's report on the torture of LGBT people, Crimes of Hate, Conspiracy of Silence. Torture and ill-treatment based on sexual identity (AI Index ACT 40/016/2001).*