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Belgrade Pride: Serbian authorities bow to extremists once again

The Serbian authorities' decision to ban the 2013 Belgrade Pride for the third year in a row is a clear breach of the country's own law and constitution, said Amnesty International. The decision was announced only hours before the march was due to take place.

“By once again banning the 2013 Belgrade Pride, Serbia's government is effectively going against its international obligations to guarantee basic rights of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly to all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in Serbia,” said Jezerca Tigani, Amnesty International's deputy Director of the Europe and Central Asia Programme. “The Serbian LGBTI community has been let down once again by their government.”

The Security Coordination Bureau announced the ban late on Friday. Prime Minister Ivica Dacic – who is also Minister of Interior - cited alleged serious security concerns, including the safety of citizens and participants and preservation of public peace as reasons for cancelling the parade.

“It is the government's job – its obligation - to ensure that peaceful gatherings such as the Belgrade Pride can go ahead without unlawful interference. Sadly, it appears that this government lacks the courage to guarantee such rights,” added Jezerca Tigani.

“The banning of the 2013 Belgrade Pride is another victory for hatred, violence and discrimination, and suggests complete contempt for the European Union, who have repeatedly called on Serbia to ensure the Pride goes ahead this year.”

Earlier in the day, an Amnesty International delegation in Belgrade observed that preparations for the Pride were well under way, with police deployed around the route of the Pride and security fencing being put in place.

They also witnessed a demonstration organised by the right wing “family party” Dveri in one of the city's main squares. Later ultra-nationalists, bearing both religious and homophobic banners, blocked one of Belgrade's main streets, bringing trams into standstill in one of Belgrade's main shopping streets.

Amnesty International calls on the authorities to provide a detailed analysis of the security threats cited by the Prime Minister. They must also conduct a thorough and prompt investigation into any such threats.