

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Amnesty International supports the Belgrade Pride**

Amnesty International today sends its support to the Belgrade Pride, due to take place this Sunday 2 October, and to all those organising and participating in the Pride.

Amnesty International welcomes the commitment made by the Serbian government to ensuring that the right to freedom of expression and association will not be denied by threats and intimidation from right wing groups

Amnesty International considers that holding the Pride this year is an extremely important step forward for Serbia. Despite the events of last year, when more than 5,000 members of right wing and nationalist groups attempted to attack the Pride, caused more than a million euros of damage and injuring 100 police officers, the government has not bowed to threats, but has taken measures to uphold the human rights of Serbian citizens.

Leader of the nationalist organization Obraz, Mladen Obradovic, who is currently appealing against 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 has 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 the Ministry of Interior to ban the Pride. Dveri are also organizing a protest – in the form of a “Family March” one day before the Pride. Threats in the form of graffiti and posters calling for violence against members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community have also appeared in Belgrade.

Amnesty International urges all those who threaten the Pride to recognize the rights of all citizens of Serbia, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. These include not only the right to freely walk through the streets of Belgrade during the Pride, but at any time – without fear of threat or attack. They also include the rights, enshrined in Serbian law to non-discrimination, and not to be subject to hate speech or other forms of threat or attack.

Amnesty International urges the authorities to ensure that any persons reasonably suspected of a criminal offence in relation to threats or attacks against the Pride should be immediately subject to a prompt, impartial and investigation – and if there are reasonable grounds – to be promptly subject to prosecution.

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