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Macedonia: Government must protect LGBTI people from discrimination

The recent attack against a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) Support Centre in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, underscores the urgent need for protection in law against any forms of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, said Amnesty International today.

In the early hours of 24 October, the office of the newly established Support Centre for the LGBTI Community in the capital Skopje was stoned and several windows broken. According to the police, the attack was perpetrated during the night by three masked people. Fortunately the building was not occupied, and no one was injured.

Discrimination against LGBT people in Macedonia and the need for anti-discrimination laws to combat it are well-documented. For example, on 10 October 2012, the European Commission reported that “The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community continue to suffer from discrimination and stigmatisation”. The Commission also repeated their concerns that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation had still not been included into the Anti-Discrimination Law.

Two days later, on 12 October, the Minister for Social Affairs, responsible for ensuring protection from discrimination, rather than acknowledging the need to uphold the rights of LGBT people, took the opportunity at the UNICEF conference to state his opposition to equal marriage for LGBT people. He subsequently reiterated his position on a national TV station, and later on his personal Facebook page. President Gruevski too also criticized calls for marriage equality by linking it to falling birth rates.

The Macedonian authorities have so far failed to include protection from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in the Law on prevention and protection against discrimination which entered into force on 1 January 2011. Nor is there any provision in law for the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Amnesty International urges the Macedonian authorities to ensure that prompt, impartial and effective investigations are opened into any attacks on the lives or property of LGBTI individuals or organizations. Any alleged homophobic or transphobic hate motive should be thoroughly investigated and all those against whom sufficient admissible evidence of criminal wrongdoing exists should be brought to trial in fair proceedings.

The government should immediately take measures to amend anti-discrimination legislation so as to include sexual orientation and gender identity as specific grounds for discrimination. Further, in the absence of legislation prohibiting hate crime, the government should, without further delay and in consultation with LGBT organizations, introduce such legislation, specifically including hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as ethnicity, race, gender and other grounds recognized in international standards.

Finally, Amnesty International urges the President, the Minister and all other public officials and government representatives to condemn discrimination and violence against LGBTI people.

Public Document

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