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Serbia: Prime Minister Dačić – time to support the Belgrade Pride

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the Serbian government's silence on this year's Belgrade Pride march, planned for 28 September. With only one month to go, the authorities have yet to give their permission for the Pride to go ahead, and the organizers have not received any guarantee that Pride march will not be banned again this year.

Amnesty International is calling on the Prime Minister to ensure that the government gives its full support to the planned march, in fulfillment of its obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly for all of its citizens, without discrimination, including on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Furthermore, Amnesty International calls on the Ministry of Interior to take all necessary measures to protect the Pride march and to ensure the cooperation of the relevant authorities with the organizers of the Belgrade Pride to enable the Pride march to take place in 2013 without obstruction or hindrance.

The organization also calls on the prime minister and government officials to publicly condemn all threats, harassment and violence directed towards the organizers of and participants in the Pride march, and ensure that law enforcement authorities conduct prompt, impartial and effective investigations into any attacks or threats made against LGBTI people in the lead up to the Pride march, ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice.

Despite international pressure, including from several EU member states, the 2011 and 2012 Pride marches were cancelled, after Prime Minister Dačić, also Minister of Interior, had claimed that the police did not have the capacity to ensure adequate security conditions in the face of "serious security threats". However, Amnesty International is not aware of any investigations into the threats made in 2012, or of any subsequent prosecutions.

Amnesty International acknowledges that Serbia has made some significant improvements in guaranteeing the right to non-discrimination against the LGBTI community over the past year, including by prohibiting hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity in the Criminal Code.

However, Amnesty International fears that the Serbian authorities may refuse permission for the planned Pride march or again ban it. This would not only be in violation of international standards to which Serbia is a state party, but would contradict the ruling of the Serbian Constitutional Court earlier this year, that in prohibiting the 2012 Belgrade Pride, the government acted unconstitutionally by denying the enjoyment of the right to freedom of assembly, freedom of assembly, effective legal remedy, and legal protection to LGBTI people.

Amnesty International acknowledges that Serbia, on the brink of EU accession talks, has many issues to address. But the government cannot ignore its human rights obligations: Serbia is required, under the Copenhagen criteria, to demonstrate that it can guarantee human rights, and respect for and the protection of minorities. Further, under Chapter 23 of the *acquis*, on which talks with the EU will open, Serbia is obliged to guarantee the fundamental rights set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which - under Article 21 -

prohibits any discrimination on several grounds including sexual orientation.

Public Document

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