

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Index: EUR 70/024/2011
19 October 2011

Authorities in Serbia must take measures to stop homophobic violence

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the assault on a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community that took place in Belgrade city centre, in Serbia, on 15 October 2011.

According to the information provided by the non-governmental organization Gay Straight Alliance, three attackers followed A. Ž. and her two friends from Zeleni Venac to the corner of Carice Milice and Maršala Birjuzova, where the assault took place. After verbally abusing her, one of them then assaulted the young lesbian woman, attacking her with a knife. A.Z, who was wearing symbols of the LGBT movement at the time of the attack, was seriously injured and subsequently taken to hospital. She suffered a deep cut to her right hand, severing two tendons. She was also kicked and punched. The assault occurred only two weeks after the cancellation of the 2011 Belgrade Pride by the Serbian authorities, in the face of threats from right wing groups – a decision that denied LGBT people their right to freedom of assembly and expression. This serious attack is a chilling reminder of the risk to the lives of the LGBT community from an increasing number of violent incidents targeting LGBT people in Serbia.

Amnesty International urges the authorities to ensure that the perpetrators involved in this incident are promptly brought to justice. The organization also urges the authorities condemn publicly all attacks, or threats against any member of the LGBT population; and, to conduct prompt, impartial and effective investigations into all attacks or threats against any members of the LGBT population; and ensure that all of the perpetrators are brought to justice.

There has been a protest today at noon in front of the Serbian government building titled “Enough”. The protest was supported by the Gay Lesbian Info Centre, Queeria Centre, Labris - Organization for Lesbian Human Rights, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM), the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Women in Black, Belgrade Centre for Human rights, Centre E8 and many others.

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