

Stefan Füle

Commissioner for Enlargement and European
Neighbourhood Policy
European Commission
200 Rue de la Loi
B-1049 Brussels

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

Brussels, 12 May 2014

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Dear Mr. Füle,

BELGRADE PRIDE AT RISK AGAIN, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL FEARS

Amnesty International fears that the Serbian authorities will ban the 2014 Pride. The 2011, 2012 and 2013 Pride marches were cancelled, after the Serbian authorities had claimed that the police did not have the capacity to ensure adequate security conditions in the face of "serious security threats". There has been no investigation into these threats, and to date no significant prosecutions have taken place following the bans. In September 2013, Amnesty International wrote to you to express our concern that the 2013 Pride would be banned. This year, we urge you again to do your utmost to support Belgrade Pride.

Another ban this year would not only be in violation of Serbia's international obligations, but also at odds with the Copenhagen Criteria, which require that a candidate country can guarantee human rights, and respect for and the protection of minorities. Further, under Chapter 23 of the EU *acquis*, Serbia is obliged to guarantee the fundamental rights set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EU), which prohibits discrimination on several grounds including sexual orientation (Art.21). As Serbia has opened the accession chapters on the judiciary and the rule of law, it is imperative that the authorities abide by their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly for all its citizens, without discrimination.

A ruling of the Serbian Constitutional Court in 2013 established that the 2011 ban on the Pride was unconstitutional. The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality in Serbia, following a complaint by one of the organising groups, Labris, issued an opinion on 27 March 2014, which found that the statement made by the then Prime Minister Ivica Dačić to media on 23 September 2013 on the Pride march, discriminated against LGBTI people. The Commissioner called on the Prime Minister to meet the organisation concerned and to refrain from making similar derogatory statements in the future.

We note that the EU Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, calls the EU to "Publicly support, including, as appropriate, participation in, the exercise of freedom of assembly and expression (e.g., public events, "pride marches") in third countries."

Amnesty International welcomes the recent statement by the head of the EU Delegation to Serbia, Michael Davenport, offering support to Serbia's LGBTI community and its efforts to hold 2014 Pride march and announcing that he will personally take part in the Pride Week. In light of the above, we ask you to support this year's Belgrade Pride march, by writing to Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić and by raising this issue in bilateral meetings with the Prime Minister and other members of the Serbian government. We also call on you to coordinate with EU member states and supportive governments to jointly express support for the event, through statements and participation in the 2014 Belgrade Pride.

We thank you in advance and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Ivana McGowan
Director of Programmes
Amnesty International European Institutions Office