



I G L H R C

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
80 Maiden Lane, Suite 1505, New York, NY 10038
Website: www.iglhrc.org



rue de la Charité 17
Brussels B-1210
Belgium
Website: www.ilga-europe.org

His Excellency, Stjepan Mesic, the President of the Republic of Croatia

His Excellency, Ivo Sanader, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia

cc: His Excellency, Ivica Kirin, Minister of Interior
Her Excellency, Gordana Lukaè-Koritnik, Ombudswoman for Gender Equality
Hi Excellency, Vincent Degert, Ambassador, Delegation of the European Commission to Croatia

July 18, 2007

Your Excellencies,

We are writing to alert you to a pattern of threats and violence that has occurred in the wake of the recent march organized by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in Croatia. This recent pattern is only a part of a larger context of violence against the LGBT community in Croatia, documented by national organizations. In the interest of assuring all people in Croatia that their human rights will be protected and defended by the state, we ask that you publicly denounce homophobic violence and threats and we request that the relevant government bodies order a thorough investigation of such homophobic violence and threats in Croatia.

Since 2002, the LGBT community in Croatia, together with its supporters, has organized annual events that include a public march in Zagreb. Similar “gay pride” events are organized by LGBT people in many parts of the world as a means to claim their space in civil society and to draw attention to human rights violations often faced by this community. This exercise of free speech, assembly, and association has become a core vehicle for social change for LGBT people. Unfortunately, as in Zagreb last week, the public nature of the events can result in continuing violence and threats. While the police tried to ensure protection during the march, they failed to address complaints of violence and threats that occurred during and after the event. It is the state’s obligation to ensure that LGBT people and their supporters are protected both at the march and from continuing assaults as a result of their free expression.

The sixth annual Zagreb Pride, which took place on July 7, 2007, seems to have unleashed a rash of homophobic incidents that have continued in the week afterward. LGBT NGOs in Croatia documented and made public at least thirty such attacks on people who were recognized from the march. They include:

- Harassment at the police station: On July 7, 2007, Mitja Blažič, chairman of the Slovenian Association for the Integration of Homosexuality (DIH-Slovenia), reported a homophobic attack to the Police Station 1 in Zagreb at Strossmayerjev trg 3. He was told to wait in a room with people who openly expressed hostility toward him because of his sexual orientation.

Police officers refused to record the facts as Mitja Blažič stated them and warned him and his friends not to express same-sex affection at the police station (though a heterosexual couple sitting among the homophobic group in the waiting room was not prevented from openly expressing affection).

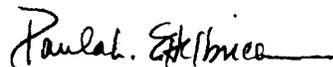
- Physical violence and threats: On July 7, two groups of people were attacked in Zagreb; one group included Viktor Zahtila, Hrvoje Fuček, and Dalibor Stanić from the NGO Iskorak, and the other included Italian Senator Gianpaolo Silvestri, as well as Franko Dota, Marko Jurčić, and Ivan Rudić from the Zagreb Pride Organizing Committee. On July 10, Franko Dota was physically assaulted and received death threats by text message to his cell phone. During the night of July 11-12, Viktor Zahtila, a member of the NGO Iskorak, was physically assaulted in the center of Zagreb.

We are also concerned by a report that, on July 7, a group of up to 60 people wearing fascist symbols and singing “Kill Fags” went unchallenged by the police in Zagreb.

We ask not only that the relevant Croatian government bodies order an investigation into the incidents documented, but also that the police adopt policies for continued monitoring of and response to homophobic attacks that are likely to follow public, legal gatherings of LGBT people.

As an accession country to the European Union, Croatia is explicitly obligated to protect LGBT people under the EU Parliament resolutions against homophobia and the Copenhagen political criteria on the respect for human rights and protection of minorities. Beyond the formal legislative developments, Croatia should also embrace the values of the European Union, which include respect for human diversity as reflected by different sexual orientations and gender identities. Croatia has similar obligations also as member of the Council of Europe and following recent decisions of the European Court for Human Rights, including the Court’s judgment in *Bączkowski and Others v. Poland*.

We call upon you as Croatia’s highest government officials to use your leadership in order to firmly condemn homophobia and the hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



Paula Ettlbrick
Executive Director
IGLHRC



Patricia Prendiville
Executive Director
ILGA-Europe

IGLHRC works to secure the full enjoyment of the human rights of all people and communities subject to discrimination or abuse on the basis of sexual orientation or expression, gender identity or expression, and/or HIV status. A US-based nonprofit, nongovernmental organization, IGLHRC effects this mission through advocacy, documentation, coalition building, public education, and technical assistance.

ILGA-Europe is the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association, a nongovernmental umbrella organization which represents over 220 member organizations at the European level. ILGA-Europe works towards a world in which the human rights of all people are respected and everyone can live in equality and free from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.