



KVINNA TILL KVINNA

ATT: Mr Carl Bildt, Minister for Foreign Affairs in Sweden, EU Presidency
Mr Olli Rehn, Enlargement Commissioner, The European Commission

CC: Mr Andreas Bengtsson, Dep. Director, Div of EU Affairs, Swedish Government Offices
Mr Lars Schmidt, Director, Div of EU Enlargement, The Swedish Foreign Ministry
Mr Ola Svenningsson, Dep. Director, Div of EU Enlargement, The Swedish Foreign Ministry

Mr David Cullen, DG Enlargement, The European Commission
Mr Manuel Muntenau, DG Enlargement, The European Commission
Mr Tom Gnocchi, Head of the Political and Information Section Delegation of the European Commission to the Republic of Serbia

Stockholm, 25 September 2009

RE: The political dialogue between the EU and the Serbian government in light of the human rights violations connected to the planned Pride event on 20 September

In light of the Serbian authorities' actions in connection to the Pride event that was to take place in Belgrade on 20 September, we would like to raise a few aspects of critical concern to Kvinna till Kvinna and our partners in Serbia.

Based on reports we have received from some of our long-standing partners in Serbia, it appears that anonymous public threats against LGBT activists and attacks on property of LGBT activist organizations that were to take part in the Pride event have taken place the past week.

Kvinna till Kvinna submitted input to the EU progress report on Serbia last Spring and took part in the consultations in June in Brussels through our staff member Ms. Anna Lidström. Among our expressed issues of concern was the long standing lack of judiciary measures against verbal and physical threats and attacks against women and LGBT human rights defenders in Serbia (p.2 in the enclosed report). At the national level, Serbia recently adopted an anti-discrimination law that is yet to be applied in practice.

By enforcing general restrictions to any public manifestations in Belgrade just before the Pride event was to take place, the Government of Serbia displayed an unacceptable and disproportionate failure to protect the freedom of expression and of assembly of its citizens. Serbian government representatives have publicly deplored the consequences of halting security measures; yet, the government has failed once again in acting preventively to secure the basic human rights of all Serbian citizens.

Several months before the meeting was to take place, the organisers of the Pride event in Belgrade had taken due care of informing and agreeing on protection up to the level of the Serbian President, the Prime Minister and the Minister for Minorities whom all assured that the meeting would be secured and protected (please see attached report from one of our partners). The halted protection measures and change of setting could therefore not be explained by a lack of preparation by the authorities.

In relation to the EU accession process, the Serbian government has failed in its obligations under the Copenhagen criteria for accession concerning stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.

We welcome the message conveyed to the Serbian government in the recent press release of the European Commission Delegation in Belgrade as well as the Swedish embassy's informal support to the Pride activists the past week. In light of the current political process of enlargement, the coming months are critical in terms of pressuring the Serbian government to a change of conduct in practice.

We urge Commissioner for Enlargement, Mr Olli Rehn, to ensure that the above raised concerns and the Serbian government's inadequate response to protect the freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly of all its citizens, including LGBT persons, are integrated into the upcoming status report and that the Commission raises these concerns in its regular contacts with Serbian government representatives as a high priority.

We strongly encourage the EU Member States, particularly the Swedish EU Presidency, to raise the Serbian government's failure to fulfil the above raised violations of the Copenhagen criteria as a hindrance to further accession at the GAERC meeting due to discuss the progress reports this Autumn. The Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Carl Bildt, is encouraged to firmly demand required political and security sector changes without discrimination on the basis of sex, gender or sexual orientation in his dialogue with the Serbian government.

We look forward to Your response.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lena Ag', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lena Ag
Secretary-General
The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation