

Belgrade, 19.9.2009

This morning organisers Beograd Pride held their final press conference before tomorrow's pride parade. Except pride will not be held, due to high security risks and a lack of cooperation on the part of state and police to secure the event. Serbian police have cancelled permission for the pride to be held in its planned location in the centre of the city.

This is after months of planning by the organising team, and repeated assurances from government at all levels, the minister for minorities, and the Serbian premier and president, that the pride will be secured and protected.

A full security study was commissioned more than three months ago by pride organisers and executed by the university defence department constructing a detailed strategy for all logistical possibilities to carry out pride safely with full instructions for how police would secure pride participants entrance to the parade, their safety during the event and their ability to leave the event unmolested.

This security study also made detailed recommendations for preventative measures that could be taken by police in the months leading up to pride to minimise the risk of violence. Police did not undertake these measures and despite months of meetings with pride organisers and daily meetings in the past two weeks have failed to act on security measures, instead choosing the tactic of pressurising organisers to cancel the event.

In the last 48 hours the police in meetings with pride organisers refused all cooperation for the securing of the pride, applying further pressure to organisers to cancel. Police refused to take responsibility for maintaining public order during the event. Instead telling the pride organisers that they would be held responsible for any public damage caused by the hooligans and fascist groups who have been organising a violent response to pride. In the past week the logistical plans of fascist groups for their violence towards pride participants have been published in Serbian media, these plans include calls for the lynching and beating LGBT people attending the pride. Serbia has laws against hate speech but at no point has there been any move on the part of authorities to prosecute, instead the official line has been that this is *a debate, an exchange of opinions*

Public statements in support of pride have been made at the level of European parliament as this is an important step forward for human rights in Serbia and would signal an end to the rule of right wing violence over the rights of minority groups and an entry of Serbian society into a new era of more open equality.

Police have offering an alternative venue on the edge of town, though how this event might be better secured than the location formerly agreed upon is not known. Today pride organisers have officially requested that police take action against fascist and right wing organisations who have issued hate speech against LGBT groups and pride in the press.

Pride organisers continue to meet today to discuss possible courses of action to demonstrate against this failure by Serbian state and police to

defend our most basic human rights, the right to safely walk the streets.
We want to ask you for your support and action.

Zena na delu