

# Mayor's Office

City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
More London  
London SE1 2AA  
Switchboard: 020 7983 4000  
Minicom: 020 7983 4458  
Web: [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

## **Mayor of London statement of support – Riga Friendship Days & Pride 2007**

In the past year, there have been attacks on the rights of lesbians and gay men in Eastern Europe with violence at, and/or bans on, Gay Pride events in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Moldova and Romania. I have already, and continue, to condemn all these and assert the basic human and civil right of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and trans (LGBT) people to peacefully demonstrate.

I totally oppose the reactionary position of senior Latvian politicians, including the Prime Minister and the chairperson of the Latvian Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, who support banning Gay Pride marches. I also condemn the recent homophobic statements of religious leaders, including the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Church, and the threat of violence from nationalist and Nazi groupings.

I welcome the statement in March 2007 by the new Mayor of Riga, Janis Birks, that he is "ashamed" of the attacks on last year's Gay Pride march in Latvia in which demonstrators were abused, physically assaulted and had excrement, bottles and eggs thrown at them. In November 2006 the Latvian Constitutional Court ruled that the ban on the 2006 Riga Pride was illegal.

If homophobia and prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people remains strong, the positive impact of high profile Gay Pride marches is extremely important. I welcome the recent partnership between Mozaika and Pride London, which gives both sets of Pride organisers the opportunity to share expertise about their events as well as providing support to the organised lesbian and gay community in Riga.

The European Parliament is clear that member states must 'ensure that LGBT people are protected from homophobic hate speech and violence' and be treated with 'respect, dignity and protection'. To date Latvia has failed to do so. I urge Riga City Council and the Latvian Government to work with the police, to fulfil their national, European and international human rights obligations and ensure that all Riga Pride events, including the march, take place safely.

London is proud to host the annual Pride Parade and Rally and efforts by my administration reflect a positive and progressive attitude towards London's LGBT community through the provision of high profile cultural events, strategic policies, community engagement and challenges to discrimination. Above all we stand for a city where everybody can be themselves, where different communities come to understand and learn from one another and where there is no place for bigotry, homophobia, racism or any other form of discrimination.

I wish Mozaika all the best for this year's Riga Friendship Days and Pride events

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Livingstone". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**Ken Livingstone**  
Mayor of London