



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech continues to be a serious issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). A conference in the summer was held by the NGO Sarajevo Open Centre (SOC) to identify key policy and legal measures needed.

Hate speech towards LGBTIQ persons significantly increased prior to and during the second Pride March in Sarajevo on August 14.

A member of the BiH Presidency Milorad Dodik made anti-LGBTI statements at the Fourth Demographic Forum in Budapest.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The Canton of Tuzla appointed a staff person in the Prosecutor's Office in charge of overseeing anti-LGBTI hate crimes.

CSOs documented four cases of domestic and family violence against LGBTI people in 2020 and two in 2021.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In March, SOC held the conference "Between the Sexes and Reality: The Rights of Intersex Children in the Healthcare System of Bosnia and Herzegovina". The panellists and participants explored ways to raise awareness and to provide inclusive health services and care without medically unnecessary surgical procedures.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The draft national LGBTI Action Plan, completed in late 2020, is yet to be adopted at the federal level. Republika Srpska and Brčko District governments endorsed it, but no developments have taken place since. Civil society has urged the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees to inform them about next steps. The draft Action Plan was prepared by state and civil society representatives, and covers protection from discrimination and violence, the right to private and family life of same-sex partners, asylum, and other key areas. No further developments took place before the end of the year.

In May, the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina joined SOC in holding a roundtable about gaps between laws and reality for LGBTI people, bringing together key stakeholders.

FAMILY

The first Intersectoral Working Group on same-sex partnership and the rights of same-sex couples managed to resume its work this year and held a number of meetings. The Working Group, of which Sarajevo Open Centre is an observer, is in the process of analysing existing provisions and outlining any necessary additional provisions and legislation. The next steps would involve the creation of an official Working Group for drafting the law itself, but this process is currently stalled.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

This year's Sarajevo Pride was held on 14 August. The march was joined by hundreds of people and went safely, despite a counter-demonstration. In the previous two years, the organisers had to self-fund protective fences and private security services to protect the participants. This year, the Ministry of Interior ordered the local municipalities to cover these costs, which was celebrated by the organisers as a victory.

HEALTH

SOC has carried out a number of activities this year to provide mental health support to LGBTI people. SOC conducted training on peer-to-peer counselling and held several workshops for social workers and mental health professionals in several cities to improve the quality of service provision across the country.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The report "Community (self)organizing of transgender movement in Western Balkans region" was published in March and features a chapter on the state of the trans movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The Sarajevo Open Centre and Tuzla Open Centre announced at the beginning of the year that the annual Merlinka international queer film festival would no longer be held, and instead will be replaced by a new summer festival called Kvirhana. The three-day cultural and educational festival was successfully held, without incidents, but with heavy police presence.



In early December, the media publicised a case of extortion of a young BiH politician, Mr Ivan Begic, based on his sexual orientation. Mr Begic worked as a counsellor at the Assembly of the City of Banja Luka. An intimate video of him was leaked to the public and it was considered a political scandal. It culminated in the resignation of Mr Begic, both from his political party and as counsellor mandate. Sarajevo Open Center sent a letter of support to Mr Begic. They also contacted the political party that Mr Begic belonged to and sent criminal charges on extortion based on sexual orientation to the Prosecutor Office in Banja Luka. Sarajevo Open Centre has not received an answer from the political party nor the Prosecutor's Office so far.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Sarajevo Open Centre trained police officers in the Sarajevo and Tuzla cantons on freedom of assembly and LGBTI rights. SOC continued advocating for LGBTI rights to be a mandatory part of police training.



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