Deadliest Rise in Anti-LGBTI Violence in Over a Decade, our annual Report Shows

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> 12 years into annually reporting on the human rights situation of LGBTI people, Europe's leading LGBTI equality organisation finds that pervasive hate speech across the region has led to life or death consequences.

Launched today in Brussels, ILGA-Europe's Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTI People in Europe and Central Asia finds that 2022 was the most violent year for LGBTI people across the region in the past decade, both through planned, ferocious attacks and through suicides in the wake of rising and widespread hate speech from politicians, religious leaders, right-wing organisations and media pundits.

This is the 12th edition of ILGA-Europe's report, which has charted the growing phenomenon of anti-LGBTI speech, as antipathy for LGBTI people has been driven and then exploited for political gain. It finds that as a result, attacks on LGBTI people with a conscious and deliberate will to kill and injure have increased to unprecedented levels, including two terror attacks outside LGBTI bars in Norway and Slovakia, which combined killed four people and maimed 22. There are reports of more murders and many suicides of LGBTI people across Europe, and not only in countries that are seen to be more regressive.

According to ILGA-Europe's Executive Director, Evelyne Paradis: "At ILGA-Europe, we have been saying for years now that hate speech in all its forms translates into actual physical violence. This year, we have seen that violence become increasingly planned and deadly, leaving LGBTI people feeling unsafe in countries across Europe. We have seen proof that anti-LGBTI hate speech is not just the words of marginal leaders or would-be autocrats, but a real problem with dire consequences for people and communities. This phenomenon is not only in countries where hate speech is rife, but also in countries where it is widely believed that LGBTI people are progressively accepted."

The report finds that while hate speech and its consequences have reached critical levels, national and local courts are reacting and prosecutions are on the rise in several countries. But according to Paradis, reaction is not enough.

"While we are getting better at dealing with outcomes, the focus has to be on stopping hate speech in all its forms. Across Europe, many politicians have reacted with horror to the killings of LGBTI people this year, and while clear expressions of solidarity are always needed, it does not address the foundation of the problem, which is the proliferation of using hatred against LGBTI people for political gain. Our leaders need to find ways to proactively fight the rise of hate speech, rather than finding themselves in the position of reacting to its consequences."

It is not all bad news. There has been much progress reported in several countries, with the Review consistently finding that it is activists and their communities who are driving positive social change and managing to push legal protection forward, despite organised opposition.

According to Katrin Hugendubel, Advocacy Director with ILGA-Europe: "LGBTI activists are the central

players in countries where progress has been made, as we've seen in Spain and Finland, where huge effort went into successfully keeping self-determined legal gender recognition on the right political track, despite fierce opposition. This is true of every issue that affects LGBTI communities across the region, showing that LGBTI people and organisations remain empowered and continue to make change happen."

The 12th ILGA-Europe Annual Review is available here, alongside all the previous Annual Reports, charting the phenomenon of rising anti-LGBTI hate speech in Europe and Central Asia, and its consequences.

According to Paradis: "These successive reports tell a story of cause and effect that is not going to go away or diminish until politicians and policy makers understand that they have to get ahead of the problem. In the current climate, progressive leaders must find effective ways to tackle hate speech in all its forms, instead of finding themselves on the back foot, expressing sympathy for the families of the needlessly murdered, or those who have taken their own lives, while hatred continues to be fostered and exploited."

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