

ILGA-Europe's written submission to the European Commission's 2013 Progress Report on Kosovo^{*1}

Brussels, May 17, 2013

Reporting period: October 2012-April 2013

A summary of key developments and trends

Rampant homophobia remains a serious threat for LGBTI people in Kosovo*. This was illustrated by violent attacks and threats directed at LGBTI activists. While anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds of sexual orientation is in place, the impact of the law remains very limited in the absence of any proactive policy to ensure its effective implementation.

Bias motivated violence

- In December 2012, the launch of the Kosovo 2.0 magazine on *Sex and sexuality*, which contained articles on LGBT activism and human rights work in the Western Balkans, was disrupted by mob violence. Two days after the incident, Pristina-based LGBT organisation Libertas was attacked by a group of violent extremists who beat up one member of the community. They entered inside the premises of the community centre, threw a tear gas canister creating havoc. Following these attacks death threats were continuously issued on the internet and by phone against individual human rights activists, including the uploading of a YouTube film showing digitally manipulated images of the editor in chief of Kosovo 2.0 and the leader of Kosova Women's Network, an openly lesbian women's rights advocate, with gun target sign on their heads. Police swiftly responded to both incidents. The Prime Minister of Kosovo condemned violent attacks and affirmed the constitutional rights of all citizens to freedom of expression and protection from discrimination, including on the ground of sexual orientation. He further called "to find the authors of these violent attacks and put them in front of justice".

Equality and non-discrimination

- While anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds of sexual orientation is in place, the impact of the law remains very limited in the absence of any proactive policy to ensure its effective implementation.

Public Opinion

- In December 2012, Libertas conducted a representative survey of public opinion about LGBT issues. The survey results revealed that high level of homophobia remains a serious threat for LGBT people in Kosovo. Disturbingly, 48 % of the respondents think that homosexuality is a disease, 62% believe that homosexuality is a threat to the society; 46% noted that they will never hang out with LGBT people, and more than half (51%) would punish LGBT people by law and limit their freedoms. Furthermore, 37% are of the opinion that human rights of LGBT people have originated in the west in order to destroy their

* under UNSCR 1244/99

families and tradition and 68 % believe that LGBT issues are debated in Kosovo because of the pressure from Western countries.

¹ This submission gives a snapshot of human rights situation of LGBTI people in the country and follows a structure and approach similar to ILGA-Europe's Annual Review 2013. It is based on continuous monitoring of the country situation, collection and analysis of first-hand information from LGBTI human rights defenders and country experts.