



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Serbia's Cancellation of Pride Parade

As delivered by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Christopher Midura
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 15, 2012

The United States notes with concern and disappointment the Serbian Government's decision last week to cancel the long-planned Pride Parade, scheduled for Saturday, October 5. We echo the statements given already by our Embassy in Belgrade, by Secretary General Jagland of the Council of Europe, and by others, who have lamented this restriction of the rights of Serbian citizens.

One of the fundamental commitments of free societies is that they guarantee their citizens the right to hold peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and freedom of expression. This cancellation, for the second year in a row, represents not a victory for Serbia, as Prime Minister Dacic has suggested, but a setback for fundamental freedoms.

We remain confident that Serbian authorities can provide adequate security for such an event. Instead of confronting those who threatened violence against those expected to participate in the parade, the Serbian Government appears to have acquiesced to those who would threaten and belittle Serbians who believe in equal rights for all citizens.

We are also troubled that the cancellation came on the heels of requests by the Serbian Orthodox Church to stop the Pride Parade – calling it a “parade of shame” that would supposedly cast a “moral shadow” on Serbia. The cancellation of this year's Pride Parade calls into question the commitment of the Serbian Government to protect the human rights of all persons, including LGBT persons, in exercising the rights to hold peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and freedom of expression.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.