



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Serbia's Cancellation of the Belgrade Pride Parade

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 10, 2013

The United States notes with concern and deep disappointment that the Serbian Government cancelled the Belgrade Pride Parade for the third year in a row. We echo the statements given by our Embassy in Belgrade, by Secretary General Jagland of the Council of Europe, by EU Commissioner for Enlargement Stefan Füle, and by many others, who have lamented the Serbian government's choice to not stand up for those seeking to exercise their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.

One of the basic commitments of governments is to guarantee individuals the fundamental freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression. One of the ways to measure or assess a government's success at protecting these rights is how it protects them for members of groups that "may be unpopular." We are disappointed that the Serbian Government acquiesced to those who threatened violence.

We commend the Belgrade police for the work they did to identify security threats and prepare for the Parade. The extent of those preparations gives us further confidence that Serbian authorities have the ability to provide adequate security for the Pride Parade. We acknowledge and support President Tomislav Nikolić's call for preparations to begin now to ensure that next year's Pride Parade can be held successfully; we urge the Serbian Government to heed this call and commit now to hold the parade in 2014.

Serbia must uphold its international obligation to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. As the 2015 OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Serbia bears a particular responsibility to set the highest standard possible in implementing all of its OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.