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Human Rights First calls on governments to abide by commitments to respect the fundamental freedoms of assembly and association and to take adequate measures to ensure security and protection for all. Guaranteeing the right to freedom of assembly and association must be a priority for all participating States of the OSCE. However, many States have failed to fully ensure these fundamental freedoms, and a number of governments actively suppress them.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) individuals have been particularly affected by this suppression of rights and continue the uphill struggle for the right to freedom of assembly and association.

Gay pride parades offer an opportunity for many LGBTI individuals to exercise the right to freedom of expression. Historically, gay pride parades have come to symbolize the resistance to intolerance and bigotry that surround LGBTI people in their daily lives. Restricting these peaceful demonstrations is particularly damaging and unacceptable.

In the last decade, a number of participating States have improved their record by taking positive steps to advance the freedom of association and assembly of LGBTI individuals, yet there are still ample examples, particularly in eastern and southeastern Europe where official restrictions and private violence remain particular concerns. With defiance, the LGBTI community struggled through the 2001 attack on a march in Serbia, through the 2005 denial of Warsaw's *Parada Równości*, through the multiple bans on a gay parade in Moscow, to name a few prominent examples.

We commend those States that not only permit gay parades, but work to ensure the participants' safety and security. We call on other OSCE governments to follow suit. For Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the journey toward basic freedoms for LGBTI individuals must begin with the immediate decriminalization of homosexuality.

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