

Press Release: Police Protects Participants at LGBT March in Romania
Date: June 11, 2007 Europe » Romania » Press Release
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For Immediate Release
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(June 11, 2007, New York) – The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) applauds the Romanian authorities for ensuring the security of over 250 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and their supporters at the annual pride march in the nation's capital of Bucharest on Saturday, June 9.

At the end of the weeklong LGBT festival, held for the third consecutive year, the Romanian LGBT community and their supporters held a "March for Diversity" (online photos at: <http://www.adevarul.ro/articole/galerie-foto-gay-fest-2007/315192>) in Bucharest. The organizer of the pride, the Romanian non-governmental organization ACCEPT used the event to renew its demand for state recognition of same-sex couples' equal rights and benefits, including marriage. As the march was in progress, an anti-gay group of people tried to aggressively interrupt the march, which forced the security forces to intervene. Police took into custody over 100 members of the anti-LGBT contingent. Media reports indicate that criminal charges were filed against five of the protestors for possession of homemade smoke bombs, while about 50 other were fined for disturbing the public order.

Similar to the previous year, an anti-gay rally was allowed to take place earlier in the day. The anti-LGBT gathering, "March for Normality," (online photos at: http://www.nouadreapta.org/actiuni_prezentare.php?id=155) was organized by Romania's neo-Fascist group "The New Right" (in Romanian "Noua Dreapta"). It attracted several priests from the predominant Christian Orthodox Church, which earlier publicly denounced the LGBT march. The participants carried neo-Fascist signs, including the stylized Celtic cross—the symbol of the New Right—and a portrait of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, leader of the anti-semitic, ultra-nationalist, and Fascist Iron Guard Movement (1927-41), which inspired the New Right's doctrine.

"IGLHRC commends the Romanian government for respecting the rights of LGBT people and their supporters to free association, assembly, and expression, and for protecting the participants against violence. This was a very positive experience in Eastern Europe," said Adrian Coman, IGLHRC program manager and former executive director of ACCEPT Romania. "At the same time, we deplore the fact that Romanian authorities tolerated the display of neo-Fascist symbols, which are banned in Romania and in most European countries because of the Nazi and Fascist, and their modern reincarnations' atrocities. Everyone's rights to assembly and expression need to be observed, but the exercise of these rights should not purposely instigate violence and intolerance, such as was done through the display of these hateful symbols."

Romanita Iordache, President of ACCEPT, also commented: "the authorization of the anti-LGBT march on the same day and on a very central location in Bucharest is regrettable. It only increased the tension in a context in which the authorities could easily anticipate the recourse to violence against the LGBT march."

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The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) is a leading human rights organization solely devoted to improving the rights of people around the world who are targeted for imprisonment, abuse or death because of their sexuality, gender identity or HIV/AIDS status. IGLHRC addresses human rights violations by partnering with and supporting activists in countries around the world, monitoring and documenting human rights abuses, engaging offending governments, and educating international human rights officials. A non-profit, non-governmental organization, IGLHRC is based in New York, with offices in San Francisco and Buenos Aires. Visit <http://www.iglhrc.org> for more information.