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Bosnia and Herzegovina: Authorities must tackle homophobic and transphobic hate crimes

Amnesty International is calling on the relevant authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to promptly, effectively and thoroughly investigate the violent attack perpetrated with an alleged homophobic motive which recently occurred in Sarajevo.

On March 24 shortly after midnight, a group of seven people –including five human rights defenders of the LGBTIQQA association “Okvir” – was followed, besieged and attacked by an unknown group of 10-15 men shouting homophobic, sexist and xenophobic insults. Allegedly one activist of the LGBTIQQA association “Okvir” sustained heavy blows to her back while other three activists sustained heavy blows to the head and other minor injuries. The attack took place within the zone of the State Presidency building in Sarajevo, where there are closed circuit television cameras (CCTV).

The police arrived to record the violent incident only after the attackers had already run away. When the victims of the attack went to the police station Centar the day after to provide their testimonies, they found out that the case was not registered yet.

Amnesty International calls on the relevant authorities to promptly and effectively investigate the violent attack by using all available means including, if necessary, accessing video-recording of the State Presidency building CCTV cameras. Amnesty International calls on authorities to undertake a thorough investigation by duly taking into account the alleged motive based on sex, gender and sexual orientation.

Such an alleged motive, if confirmed during the investigation, should be duly taken into account in the prosecution phase and be adequately reflected in the sentence. Violent attacks against individuals on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity are in fact a serious form of discrimination.

Amnesty International regrets that criminal code of Bosnia and Herzegovina does not include sexual orientation and gender identity as specific grounds for investigation and prosecution of hate crime.

Amnesty International calls on the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take appropriate steps to enhance the protection of LGBTI people from violence, including by introducing sexual orientation and gender identity as motives of hate crime in the relevant legislation.

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