

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/ death threats

**SERBIA
(Kosovo)**

K.Z. (m, full name known to Amnesty International), LGBT activist

A man known as K.Z., the head of a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights organization in Kosovo, has received a death threat linked to his work. Though K.Z. has reported this threat to the police, he has not received any protection, and his life may be in danger.

On 24 May, K.Z., leader of LGBT rights organization, the Centre for Social Emancipation (QESh), received a death threat via email from an unidentified person calling himself "Sharp Knife". The email said the sender would "fuck your mother, burn you with all your belongings, and will make you carry your intestines with your own hands". It also said that K.Z.'s family should prepare his funeral within two weeks, and that K.Z. would "end up in hell" as a result of his work for LGBT rights.

On the day he received the threat, K.Z reported it to the police, who initially refused to investigate it. The officer in charge of the police station at the time said that such threats are not considered serious and that K.Z. should initiate a private lawsuit. Despite the fact that his life was threatened, he was interviewed in a public area of the police station, and at least seven different police officers and several members of the public passed through the area during the interview. Eventually police agreed to investigate the threat but refused to provide K.Z with protection.

According to reports, the leaders of the Centre for Social Emancipation have received five previous death threats in recent months.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Centre for Social Emancipation is the first and probably the only LGBT organization in Kosovo. Due to fears for the safety of its activists, the location of its office is not publicised. One of the organization's projects is an Albanian-language website giving information on LGBT issues and hosting a web forum for people to discuss different issues.

LGBT people as well as other minorities are at constant risk in Kosovo. Amnesty International has documented a number of cases of LGBT people who have fled Kosovo after receiving similar threats or being physically assaulted. In 2006 the organization in its submission to the UN Human Rights Committee raised the case of two gay men who were assaulted because of their sexuality. The men reported the attack to a police officer, who informed them, incorrectly, that homosexuality was illegal in Kosovo, and refused to investigate the incident. Despite complaints to the police commissioner of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the officer concerned was merely transferred to another region. One of the assaulted men has since been granted refugee status elsewhere; the other committed suicide in 2007. In Kosovo, intimidation of minority groups is common and homosexuality remains a taboo, even though discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was prohibited by law in 2004.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language.

- expressing concern for the safety of K.Z., head of the Centre for Social Emancipation (QESh);
- calling on the authorities to take immediate measures to ensure the safety of K.Z. in accordance with his own wishes;
- expressing concern at the failure of the police to protect K.Z.;

- calling for a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation into the death threat against K.Z., and into the conduct of the police to whom K.Z. reported the threat, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- reminding the Chief of Police that the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals;
- additionally reminding the Chief of Police that it is his duty to ensure that all officers under his command are informed of their duty to protect the life of all individuals, irrespective of the political, sexual or other affiliation, as set out in the European Convention of Human Rights, and that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is prohibited under Kosovo Assembly Law No. 2004/3 on Anti-Discrimination;
- urging the authorities to take immediate measures to end the intimidation of LGBT people.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Kosovo Police Service
Colonel Sheremet Ahmeti
UNMIK Police Headquarters
38000 Priština
Fax: +381 38 504 604 ext 2201
Salutation: Dear Colonel Ahmeti

COPIES TO:

Minister of Interior
Bljerim Kuci
Government Building 9th Floor
Mother Theresa Street
38000 Priština
Kosovo

Human Rights Coordinator of the Government in Kosovo

Habit Hajredini
Mother Theresa Street
Room N-319
38000 Priština
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UNMIK Police Commissioner

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PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 July 2007.