

PRESIDENT OF MONTENEGRO
Mr. Filip Vujanovic

Podgorica, 28 October 2009

Respected Mr. Vujanovic,

We would like to draw your attention to the results of a recent public opinion poll that shows a high level of homophobia in Montenegro.

The enclosed research undertaken by the Human Rights Action shows that 71% of the citizens of Montenegro believe that homosexuality is an illness, 58% expect state bodies to suppress homosexuality, and 67% think that the Serbian Orthodox Church is rightfully against homosexuality. These figures are of concern.

On the other hand, 89% agree that „everyone should have the right to one’s sexual orientation unless endangering others“, 60% believe that homosexuals are like everyone else, while 39% would stop voting for a political party that would start talking about the rights of homosexuals. These figures suggest that there is hope that education could improve the culture of human rights and provide for the right to privacy and dignified life of people who belong to sexual minorities in our state.

In accordance with worldwide statistical data where sexual minorities account for 5-10% of the population, it may be estimated that 30,000 to 62,000 people belong to sexual minorities in Montenegro. Endangered by prejudice and psychological and physical violence, they hide their sexual orientation. The lack of filed claims of violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation does not mean that such cases do not exist, but that they are not being reported out of fear, according to our research. The European Commission in its 2009 Progress Report for Montenegro also emphasizes that persons belonging to the LGBT (*lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender*) population are marginalized and discriminated in Montenegrin society.

Noting that you as the President traditionally enjoy immense citizens’ trust, bearing in mind that the Constitution of Montenegro is devoted to the promotion of human rights of all people, as well as the fact that Montenegro together with 65 other states accepted the statement within the auspices of the UN for the protection of sexual minorities from violence and other forms of discrimination, as well as that the World Health Organisation removed homosexuality from the list of illnesses twenty years ago,

We call upon you to use the power of your authority to explain to the citizens that their children and other citizens of homosexual orientation are not ill and deserve the very same respect as any other citizen. We ask you to emphasize the importance of respecting

human and intellectual qualities of all citizens, and condemn uncivilized and illegal judgements of a person's privacy.

We are certain that your speaking out could assist in improving the current situation and that your voice and message would be more effective than an expensive public awareness campaign.

For any further information You may require, we remain at Your disposal.

Respectfully,

Anti-discrimination center EKVISTA

ANIMA – center for women studies and peace education

Center for Civic Education

Center for monitoring - CEMI

Forum Youth and Informal Education

Human Rights Action

International Forum „Montenegro“

Juventas

League of Women Voters

Shelter for Women and Children Victims of Violence

SOS telephone for children and women victims of violence – Niksic

Women's Action

Youth Initiative for Human Rights

Aleksandar Zekovic, researcher of human rights violations