



Speech at Europride 2009 by Mihaela Copot, Amnesty Moldova



Greetings for Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgenders from all over Europe and even the world, also their friends and families, who gathered here today to celebrate this Europride event! This is a great pleasure and honor for me to be here today as a representative of Eastern region of Europe.

We are a large family and community in Europe and all over the world, and being here today makes me feel belonging to a larger family, and this is a great feeling!

And because we are a family, we send a message of love to the world. We are here to share our stories of love that goes beyond any barriers and beyond any borders.

Every time we walk in Pride parades we proclaim this love and we claim its right to freedom and dignity.

Unfortunately there are still countries in the world, where people like us are being subject of harassment, persecution, violence, arrests, punishments and detention, death penalty.

There are still countries in Europe where people can't walk their walk, and can't celebrate their love. Our sisters and brothers in Moldova, Russia, Lithuania and other countries can't manifest peacefully for their rights since it's too dangerous and have no legal protection.

This is the 4th Pride March I am attending in my life, but none of them happened in my home country, Moldova. There are years since gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender community in Moldova is striving to have a peaceful manifestation in support of its basic human rights, and its been repeatedly and illegally denied by Moldovan authorities.



Excesses in Chisinau: LGBT-Bus, surrounded by angry, homophobic crowd, May 11th, 2008. © GenderDoc-M www.gay.md

Last year in Chisinau I witnessed and documented together with Amnesty International and other Human Rights organizations how about 50 activists from all over the world including Moldova, tried to hold a peaceful assembly in support of an antidiscrimination law, despite the illegal ban of the manifestation.

What happened then was that the bus with the activists was surrounded by a crowd of 300 angry counter demonstrators, representing radical religious, paramilitary and neo-Nazi groups. They have blocked and kept hostage the bus with the people inside for about 45 minutes. During this time they were banging in the windows, tried to destroy the engine and



used a lighter next to it. After talking away and destroying the banners of the manifestants, the crowds let them go away.

All this time the police was nearby and didn't do anything to protect peaceful manifestants and ensure their rights to a peaceful assembly.

What was left from "all different – all legal" at May 11th 2008.. © GenderDoc-M

That is why when it comes to Pride celebrations I have mixed feelings: on one hand I am happy to join these great events because they are sending important signals to the rest of world, And this is the case of this EuroPride in Zurich.

On the other hand every time when I stand in a pride event somewhere in Europe I feel so said an bitter for my own country and my own gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community back home, because they can't live this amassing and empowering experience themselves.

But this is exactly why I am here today: to tell you our story, and to call for your support. As a Human Rights activist and member of Amnesty International I walk in Pride events in the capitals of Eastern Europe like Bucharest or Riga in sigh of solidarity and support for our community and for our common rights and freedoms. I am also doing it because I can't do this in my own country.

That's why I am calling you today to keep waling with pride within Pride Marches.

I am calling you to walk for those who can't do it themselves, in their own countries.

But most of all, I am calling you to walk WITH US, on the streets of Eastern Europe, in solidarity for our Human Rights and for our love and dignity.

Walk with us on the streets of Bucharest, Riga, Moscow, Chisinau and many others, where the number of the countermanifestants and police is larger than the manifestation itself. Where you are threatened by violent and loud crowds and hostile environment.

Make a stand for Human Rights in this region, be solidar with us: its only together that we can do it!