

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Rt Hon David Miliband MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles St
London
SW1A 2AH

April 6th 2009

Dear Secretary of State,

You may recall that I wrote to you last year about how the Foreign and Commonwealth Office could best offer support to LGBT communities in countries where gay Pride marches were taking place, in particular places where there was a recent history of LGBT discrimination and oppression.

This year, 40 years after the Stonewall riots that gave birth to the Pride parades, the season in Central and Eastern Europe opens with a parade on May 9th in the Moldovan capital, Chisinau.

In 2008 Moldova Pride was called off as a result of both verbal and physical threats against participants gathered for the Parade, threats which the Moldovan police standing by made no attempt to address (see enclosed European Parliamentary question). The FCO expressed concern about this at the time and reiterated its commitment to promoting tolerance and equality, as well as to closely monitoring progress on LGBT rights in Central and Eastern Europe.

As you will know, Moldova is party to various international human rights instruments, including the UN ICCPR, (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), Articles 18-22 of which have particular pertinence to LGBT people and their families. Moldova has been a member of the Council of Europe since July 1995 and is, therefore, bound by the European Convention on Human Rights, which includes Article 11, guaranteeing the right of all Moldovan citizens the freedom of assembly. In addition to existing international treaty obligations, the Government of the Republic of Moldova has made clear its desire for greater European integration and in this context has voiced a commitment to upholding European principles, such as the right to freedom of expression.

The 2009 Moldova PRIDE Parade is, therefore, an important and highly visible indicator of whether the Moldovan Government is both living up to its existing treaty obligations and is genuinely committed to promoting equality and the right to peacefully protest. The international community has a valuable role to play in supporting the Moldova as it embraces LGBT rights and in ensuring that this happens.

Riga Pride was prevented from taking place in 2006 but successfully went ahead in subsequent years thanks to effective policing and pressure from the international community, including Britain. Moreover, I note that the FCO's LGBT toolkit is now being used to great effect in promoting best practice in Riga and that British embassies have lent considerable support in the past to Pride Organising Committees, including in Sofia, for example. I also understand that British embassy officials in Moldova are already planning support for Pride 2009. In fact, one of

my constituents from Brighton will be in Moldova for Pride and has been invited to meet with the new ambassador, Keith Shannon.

So, a month before the 2009 Moldova Pride, I hope that the FCO will back up the work being done on the ground in Moldova and be actively involved in ensuring that this year's Parade passes off peacefully. In particular, I call on the FCO to bring the example of Riga to the attention of the Moldovan government and to remind the authorities of their obligations under international law and European Convention on Human Rights. Given that the Council of Europe has a presence in Chisinau, I would also encourage working with them to ensure that the Moldovan government is fully aware that the international community, including the EU, will be keeping a watchful eye on events leading up to, during and after Pride on May 9th 2009.

As ever, I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Lucas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.

cc: Ambassador Keith Shannon
Caroline Flint, MP - Minister for Europe