

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 & Commonwealth Office
King Charles St
London
SW1A 2AH

May 23rd 2008

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Official British Support of PRIDE Parades in Central & Eastern Europe

Further to my letter of May 20th about this year's PRIDE march in Moldova, I am conscious that this is not the only PRIDE Parade under threat in central and eastern Europe. The British authorities in member states can help counter these threats by playing a positive role in promoting freedom of assembly and self expression, and I was particularly struck by the positive example of Riga PRIDE 2007.

I am sure you are aware that Riga PRIDE 2006 had to be abandoned because the Latvian police stood by while participants were intimidated and physically assaulted. As a result, at least one of my constituents travelled to Riga the following year to demonstrate solidarity with the Latvian LGBT community and in an effort to help focus international media spotlight on the conduct of Riga PRIDE. Some 250+ other western Europeans, including MEPs and members of the Swedish police who paraded in police uniform, also attended and Riga PRIDE 2007 went ahead *with* police protection, in total contrast to the previous year. Media reports in Latvia suggested that some 1,500 police were on duty protecting participants.

My constituent informs me that, ahead of the parade, the British Embassy in Riga invited PRIDE participants to afternoon tea with the Ambassador. This had a considerable impact on the morale of LGBT Latvians, especially as they expected to face violence and threatening behaviour during the Parade. By demonstrating support for PRIDE in such an unambiguous yet non confrontational way, the Ambassador sent a positive signal to the Latvian government and the wider Latvian public, as well as those on the parade. If British Embassies in other countries were to similarly indicate their commitment to LGBT rights, I am confident this would help protect PRIDE events and participants, as well as contribute to shifting attitudes in the host countries.

I would ask you, therefore, to consider promoting the following action:

- a) that prior to each PRIDE event, according to the schedule attached, the FCO contact each of the relevant governments in order to remind them of their responsibilities under Article 11 of the ECHR.
- b) that the British Embassy in each of the relevant countries fly the rainbow flag for the day and make an invitation to those in the PRIDE organising committee to a reception at the British Embassy.

- c) that should host authorities raise concerns about the conduct of PRIDE parades, the British Government and their representatives play a proactive role in seeking to have these addressed.

Such moves would enhance the UK's reputation as a defender of LGBT rights, as well as make a valuable contribution to the struggles of the LGBT community in central and eastern European member states as well as beyond.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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.