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August 13, 2008

Assistant Secretary David Kramer
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Assistant Secretary Kramer,

As non-governmental organizations in the United States working on international human rights issues, we are writing to request your support in advocating an inclusive human rights position – one that seeks to raise the problem of intolerance against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons – within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) upcoming Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw this September.

Continuing violence motivated by hatred and prejudice based on sexual orientation and gender identity, though often ignored, is an intimidating day-to-day reality for LGBT persons throughout the OSCE region. The intolerance that engenders such attacks has in recent years become more visible in the form of acts of harassment and violence. The State Department's own extensive reporting on human rights has included violations impacting LGBT communities. The 2007 Human Rights Report catalogued LGBT-related hate crimes – some coming in the course of gay pride events – in a number of OSCE countries, including Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine.

As you know, an important component of the OSCE's human rights mandate relates to tolerance and non-discrimination, with a focus on the problem of hate crimes, and we are pleased that the United States has played a leading role in supporting the organization's efforts to address these issues. Given the State Department's own eighteen-year record of reporting on human rights violations impacting LGBT communities in the annual Human Rights Report, we ask that the Department instruct the U.S. delegation to the upcoming HDIM to clearly state the United States' support for inclusive human rights protections that extend to individuals who are targeted for violence or denied other fundamental rights because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

This request merely emphasizes existing U.S. policy. The U.S. hate crime data collection program has been highlighted as a model by U.S. government delegation heads at repeated OSCE tolerance events. Since U.S. law provides for collection of disaggregated data on hate crimes based on sexual orientation, and since the State Department reports annually on rights violations targeting LGBT persons, it would be consistent with current U.S. policy for the State Department to instruct the U.S. delegation to address this issue at the HDIM. We ask the Department to instruct the U.S. delegation to highlight in the delegation's oral and written interventions specific human rights abuses, covering both government and non-government actions and including violent hate crimes, that are targeted against LGBT persons, and

to urge states to take measures to address them. These references could be taken directly from the State Department's own Human Rights Report and the FBI Hate Crime Data Collection Guidelines.

As a mechanism for promoting this broad human rights agenda, we would also encourage you to include a senior-level representative of the LGBT civil rights community here in the United States as a public member of the official U.S. delegation to the HDIM this September. We would be pleased to recommend qualified individuals who could represent these issues, as well as the tolerance and diversity of the United States. Finally, we hope you will convene a meeting in the run-up to the HDIM, at which NGOs, including those dealing with the rights of LGBT persons, would have an opportunity to share their concerns and recommendations with the U.S. HDIM delegation.

In recent weeks the State Department led a similar effort at the General Assembly of the Organization of American States. For the first time, a new consensus resolution in the General Assembly expresses concern for human rights violations against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities across the Americas, calling on the Permanent Council to take action. The U.S. Mission to the OAS played a leading role within the General Assembly in building consensus for the resolution, particularly among Caribbean states. We hope the State Department will show similar leadership in promoting an inclusive human rights mandate within the OSCE.

We look forward to hearing from you, and to working with you to clarify the broad commitment of the United States to human rights for all. We are also writing to Assistant Secretary Fried to seek support for this across the State Department. Please feel free to contact Mark Bromley, with the Council for Global Equality, at 202-607-6813 to coordinate a more detailed discussion of these issues with the various organizations submitting this request.

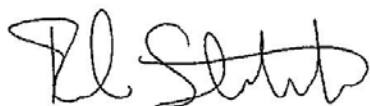
Sincerely,



Mark Bromley
Chair
Council for Global Equality



Sid Mohn
President
Heartland Alliance



Tad Stahnke
Director
Fighting Discrimination Program
Rights First



Scott Long
Director
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Human
Human Rights Watch



Paula Ettlbrick
Executive Director
International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission