

**Minister Juozas Bernatonis**  
Ministry of Justice  
Republic of Lithuania

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



**European Institutions Office**

Brussels 3 December 2013

Our ref.: B1476

Dear Minister Bernatonis,

### **COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON COMBATING HATE CRIME**

Ahead of the JHA meeting on Friday 6 December, Amnesty International calls on the Council to take a strong stance against hate crime by adopting conclusions that commit the EU to strengthening its action on combating hate crime. In particular, we call on the EU to address hate crime as part of an ambitious EU policy aimed at combating all forms of discrimination and intolerance.

This implies a commitment from the EU to pay equal attention to all grounds of discrimination when taking action against hate motivated violence. As recalled by Manfred Nowak, Vice-Chairman of the Management Board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, in his closing remarks at the 2013 Fundamental Rights Conference in Vilnius: “victims of hate crime suffer in the same way, whether they are attacked on the ground of their ethnic origin, religion, their colour, their gender, sexual orientation, their age or a disability”.

This also requires EU measures to ensure that any alleged hate motive behind the perpetration of a crime is unmasked and thoroughly taken into account at all stages including investigation and prosecution. Detailed recommendations by Amnesty International and Social Platform are outlined in a [letter](#) sent to FREMP members on 15 November.

Recent episodes of violence documented in EU member states point out the need for urgent action. Just yesterday, Amnesty International reported on a violent attack against two Syrian men in Sofia, Bulgaria (see [press release](#)). This episode is the seventh such assault on the city’s streets in a month. These frequent episodes of violence have spread fear amongst Sofia’s refugee and migrant communities and show the need for a stronger response from public authorities.

Amnesty International expects the EU to take all necessary steps to ensure that member states effectively prevent and prosecute all forms of hate motivated violence. We are hopeful that the Council conclusions adopted on Friday will pave the way for concrete action in response to such human rights violations.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nicolas J Beger  
Director