

# *transbalkanska solidarnost*

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## *transbalkan solidarity*

**Call to Action: Raise the *No One Is Illegal* rainbow flag  
June 29 - 30, 2020**

Transbalkan Solidarity and Trans Network Balkan invite you to participate in a 48-hour **flag-raising** protest campaign directed at the European Union's decision-making bodies and the EU-funded UN organizations, by raising the ***No One Is Illegal*** rainbow flag in support of LGBTIQ people on the move left without protection on the Balkan Route.

### **Why do we need to take action?**

It is well documented that LGBTIQ people are forced into exile due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics and the dangers they face. It is thus extremely surprising that their experiences from the perilous Balkan route are not documented and acted upon.

Thus with this campaign, we want to make visible:

- the plight of LGBTIQ people on the move on the Balkan route,
- complete lack of protection for LGBTIQ people,
- lack of support for LGBTIQ youth on the move, especially minors,
- refusal of those in charge of protection (UN institutions such as IOM and UNHCR and their partners such as DRC) to provide the protection that is in their mandate,
- EU's racist and anti-LGBTIQ border policies.

Due to the repressive European border regime and institutional racism deeply rooted in European history and the present, the dehumanization, illegalization, and criminalization of people on the move has become a widespread systemic practice conducted by governments along the Balkan Route and the European Union.

LGBTIQ people on the move are exposed to the same violence as any other person on the move along the Balkan route: to hate crimes, violent push-backs, police and private security violence. Moreover, LGBTIQ people are, due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, exposed to additional forms of violence (both psychological and physical) inside official camps committed by other people on the move. Those who live and sleep outside of camps, in the streets or abandoned houses, are further exposed, not only to the violence caused by xenophobia, islamophobia, and racism but also anti-LGBTIQ hatred.

Therefore, Transbalkan Solidarity and Trans Network Balkan demand from the European Union's decision-making bodies and the EU-funded UN organizations (namely IOM and UNHCR) and their partners (such as DRC) to:

- organize functional protection mechanisms and adequate shelters for LGBTIQ people all along the Balkan route!

- Stop the violence and open the borders!

### How to participate in the campaign?

- **Raise the *No One Is Illegal* rainbow flag** (photo attached) by sending it to

the European Commission at  
Migration and Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson (commissioner):  
[cab-johansson-contact@ec.europa.eu](mailto:cab-johansson-contact@ec.europa.eu)

UNHCR  
Refugee Status Determination Section  
[refworld@unhcr.org](mailto:refworld@unhcr.org)

IOM  
Director General, Antonio Vitorino:  
[avitorino@iom.int](mailto:avitorino@iom.int)

and

Western Balkans Coordinator and Representative, Peter Van der Auweraert:  
[pvanderauweraert@iom.int](mailto:pvanderauweraert@iom.int)

DRC  
Head of DRC, Claus Larsen:  
[claus.larsen@drc.ngo](mailto:claus.larsen@drc.ngo)

If you are concerned about your privacy, you can open a new secure, anonymous email address (e.g. at [www.protonmail.com](http://www.protonmail.com) or at [www.tutanota.com](http://www.tutanota.com)).

- **share the no one is illegal rainbow flag** (photo attached) **on your social media** with hashtags  
#raisetheflag, #LGBTIQpeopleonthemove, #protestcampaign, #transbalkansolidarity, #transnetworkbalkan, #europeancommission, #eu, #iom, #unhcr, #drc  
#balkanroutegovernments
- **distribute** this call to action among your comrades and in your community
- send the email and/or share a flag anytime during **June 29 - 30, 2020**

**Take action now! Raise the rainbow flag in solidarity with the LGBTIQ people on the move!**

Transbalkan Solidarity & Trans Network Balkan

Email: [reakcijananakovanjicekic@gmail.com](mailto:reakcijananakovanjicekic@gmail.com)

Web: <https://transbalkanskasolidarnost.home.blog/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/transbalkanskasolidarnost/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TSolidarnost>

Trans Network Balkan

Email: [info@transbalkan.org](mailto:info@transbalkan.org)

Web: <http://www.transbalkan.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/transbalkan>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/transmrezabalkan>

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## **Why are we organizing this protest campaign?**

We who are in the field and in direct contact with people on the move have been meeting and supporting LGBTIQ people for years. We are deeply concerned and worried about the lack of adequate protection mechanisms for them and demand from those responsible to, without further delay, put in place functional protection mechanisms and adequate shelters for LGBTIQ people on the move all along the Balkan route.

## **The Balkan route**

For several years now we have been witnessing the hell of the Balkan route, continuously warning about violence sponsored by the EU, and the co-optation and participation of UN agencies such as IOM, UNHCR, and UNICEF in this crime against humanity. Due to the repressive European border regime and institutional racism deeply rooted in European history and the present, the dehumanization, illegalization, and criminalization of people on the move have become a widespread systemic practice conducted by governments along the Balkan Route and the European Union. As a consequence of these policies, the number of deaths along the Balkan route is constantly increasing. We have been warning about that.

## **Complete lack of protection for LGBTIQ people**

LGBTIQ people on the move are exposed to the same violence as any other person on the move along the Balkan route: to hate crimes, violent push-backs, police and private security violence. Moreover, LGBTIQ people are, due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, exposed to additional forms of violence (both psychological and physical) inside official camps committed by other people on the move. Those who live and sleep outside of camps, in the streets or abandoned houses, are further exposed, not only to the violence caused by xenophobia, islamophobia, and racism but also anti-LGBTIQ hatred.

We have approached UN organizations on numerous occasions. We have asked IOM, UNHCR, and their partners such as DRC, who are funded by the EU, to engage in the provision of protection of people on the move, as well as groups identified as vulnerable, asking for the establishment of safe spaces for the LGBTIQ people stuck in the Balkans. The issue has not only been raised by us activists but also by LGBTIQ people on the move, both inside and outside the camps. Until now, we have only received declarative statements from the aforementioned organizations that they are “aware” and “specifically sensitive” when these groups are in question. But people do not need sensitivity but concrete solutions and adequate measures.

Furthermore, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the organizations who are supposed to protect them, in January decided to expel one LGBTIQ group from the camp Usivak, under an already established shameful excuse of *disobedience* of house rules. The expulsion of the group was followed by a unanimous decision of all the organizations in the camp (including UN agencies) to dismantle the container that was reserved for the LGBTIQ population, leaving that extremely vulnerable population without any protection. While the specified container in Usivak was not

adequate protection it is really disappointing that all UN agencies in charge of protection in Usivak agreed to shut down even this small measure.

We also need to express our concerns about the lack of support for LGBTIQ youth on the move, especially minors. There are no specific programs across the Balkan route to support LGBTIQ people on the move, let alone LGBTIQ youth. There are no safe houses in which members of the LGBTIQ population can be placed, even the existing safe houses/places for vulnerable groups are not adequate in general, and are not safe for the LGBTIQ population.

### **Stop the violence and open the borders**

On 19 June 2020, the EU Parliament adopted the resolution on “Black Lives Matter”. This is an odd curiosity: the EU is using the events in the USA to declare itself anti-racist and anti-white supremacy, while failing to recognize its own colonial history and the present racism and violence, not in the least the violence we see as a result of the European border regime. The EU anti-racism is nothing but declarative, as there is neither the willingness to initiate the decolonizing process, and to deal with their own racist and inhumane policies and actions towards people on the move.

Since June is recognized as Pride Month across most of the globe, including in the EU, we are using this occasion to start the campaign **Raise the *No One Is Illegal* rainbow flag** and demand from the EU to stand by LGBTIQ people on the move. We demand from the EU, and the EU-sponsored UN organizations to live up to their principles and provide shelter and protection to LGBTIQ people on the move throughout the Balkan route.

We invite EU countries to spare the people these unnecessary perilous and life-threatening journeys and open the borders. Stop committing crimes against humanity now.