



Sveavägen 59
Box 350, SE-101 26 Stockholm, Sweden

Riksförbundet för homosexuallas, bisexuallas, transpersoners och queeras rättigheter
The Swedish federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights
Member of The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association (ILGA)

Förbundskansli
+46 8 50 162 900
forbund@rfsl.se

RFSL Media och Info AB
+46 8 50 162 910

Fax
+46 8 50 162 999
Webb
www.rfsl.se

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RFSL contribution to ILGA Europe submission to the OSCE/ODIHR Hate Crime Report 2015

By Kina Sjöström, responsible for RFSL Crime Victim Support

The official statistics on reported hate crimes in Sweden are compiled by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottföresbyggande rådet – Brå). The latest statistics are from 2014 and later this year the statistics for 2015 will be available at www.bra.se

We have no reason to believe that the numbers will change much from year to year. According to the statistics for 2014, 10% of hate crimes reported to the police (640 reports) had a motive concerning sexual orientation. And 1% (70 reports) had a transphobic motive. According to the National Safety Survey (Nationella trygghetsundersökningen), also referred to by the National Council for Crime Prevention, the reported hate crimes constitute only a very small part of the actual crimes committed. For example, the survey estimates that 0.3 per cent of the population, around 25000 people, were victims of homophobic hate crime in 2013.

Incidents of hate crimes in 2015 registered by RFSL Crime Victim Support

RFSL Crime Victim Support is a national support service for LGBTQ people in Sweden. During 2015, 172 individuals contacted the support service, and a majority of these have experiences of homophobic, biphobic or transphobic hate crime. Of these, 39 LGBTQ-people were actively seeking support as a result of a recent hate crime. Out of these 39, 10 people were subjected to honour related crimes (which when it comes to LGBTQ people, is the same as hate crime). Another 14 people who sought support were at risk of being exposed to hate crime.

We do not know the gender identity or gender expression of all our clients so it's not possible to say how many identify as transgender. Out of those we know, we have identified 8 transgender people seeking support for recent hate crimes.

During 2015, many incidents were reported from LGBTQ people being harassed and abused at different refugee camps in Sweden because of their sexual orientation or gender expression. Some of these cases were reported to the police, others not. None of the cases that reached us in 2015 went to court.

We have selected 6 sample cases to describe in this report. It is of course not a list of all hate crimes that are reported to RFSL.

The source of information are in all cases the victims, and we have only included incidents that we find credible. Because of client confidentiality, we cannot describe the exact place, date or victims of the crimes. We have changed places and dates and other identifiable facts.

Case 1

Date, time and location of the incident: June 2015, small town in Sweden

Source of information: Interview with the victim

Victim(s) involved: Transgender person and their partner

Type of the crime(s): Threats and damage to property.

Bias motivation: LGBTQ

Perpetrator(s): Neighbour

Brief description of incident with bias indicators: One of the neighbours has been threatening and harassing them for some months. Calling them names such as "Perverts". One morning they discovered that someone had painted "Fuckin Faggots" on their front door.

Status of the case: Reported to the police. Investigation closed due to lack of evidence.

Response of local authorities:

Impact on the Victim(s) and the community: Fear of safety. Planning to move to another town.

Case 2

Date, time and location of the incident: March 2015, small town in Sweden

Source of information: Interview with the victim

Victim(s) involved: Transgender woman

Type of the crime(s): physical violence, sexual assault, robbery

Bias motivation: LGBTQ

Perpetrator(s): Unknown male

Brief description of incident with bias indicators: A transgender woman had a date with a man. The man took her to the seaside where the man started to be sexually very aggressive. When he realised she was transgender he physically abused her, beating and tried to choke her. She was also sexually assaulted. The man robbed her of her bag and some clothes and then left.

Status of the case: Reported to the police, the investigation was closed, they couldn't identify the perpetrator.

Response of local authorities: The police never interviewed the victim in person, only by phone. Even though the victim had the registration number of the car she was driven in, they never found the perpetrator.

Impact on the Victim(s) and the community: Fear of safety, moved to another city, lack of trust in people in general and of the police.

Case 3

Date, time and location of the incident: May 2015, Gothenburg, Sweden

Source of information: Interview with the victims

Victim(s) involved: Three lesbian women

Type of the crime(s): Physical abuse

Bias motivation: LGBTQ

Perpetrator(s): 3 unknown males

Brief description of incident with bias indicators: Three lesbian women were attacked outside a LGBT club in Gothenburg, being chased and beaten and kicked until other people intervened.

Status of the case: Reported to the police, investigation closed because of unknown perpetrators.

Response of local authorities: The police investigated thoroughly but couldn't identify the perpetrators.

Impact on the Victim(s) and the community: Bruises, severe wounds, sick leave for several months, fear of safety, fear of visiting the area where it happened, lack of trust in the police and other help services.

Case 4

Date, time and location of the incident: October 2015, small town in Sweden

Source of information: Interview with the victim

Victim(s) involved: Gay man

Type of the crime(s): Physical abuse, threats and harassment.

Bias motivation: LGBTQ

Perpetrator(s): Relative of his male partner

Brief description of incident with bias indicators: The victim's relationship was not approved by the partner's family. At a family gathering a relative hit the victim in the head with a thick stick. Earlier he had received threats and was being harassed by the same relative.

Status of the case: Reported to the police, investigation closed due to contradictory testimonies.

Response of local authorities: See above

Impact on the Victim(s) and the community: The victim ended his relationship with his male partner out of fear of more violence.

Case 5

Date, time and location of the incident: November 2015, Swedish countryside, at a refugee camp. The camp was supposedly LGBTQ-friendly and had training from RFSL (!!)

Source of information: Interview with the victim

Victim(s) involved: Gay man

Type of the crime(s): Threats, death threats, severe physical abuse on the head and body

Bias motivation: LGBTQ

Perpetrator(s): other refugees living at the camp.

Brief description of incident with bias indicators: The man was threatened and attacked physically because of being gay at the refugee camp where he lived. His experience is that neither the Migration board or the people in charge of the camp nor the police have taken the situation seriously. He has not been offered another place to stay for example. The physical abuse was reported to the police. He could not eat with the others in the canteen, nor could he go out of his room after dark. Later the victim decided to try to find somewhere else to live, and was homeless for a long period.

Status of the case: Unknown

Response of local authorities: Unknown

Impact on the Victim(s) and the community: Fear, homelessness, lack of trust in the Swedish system.

Case 6

Date, time and location of the incident: July 2015, Stockholm, Sweden

Source of information: Interview with one of the victims

Victim(s) involved: Participants in Pride parade, among others a gay man.

Type of the crime(s): Physical abuse, defamation

Bias motivation: LGBTQ

Perpetrator(s): male, one person

Brief description of incident with bias indicators: The perpetrator was attacking people walking in the pride parade hitting them with a bag, shouting "fucking faggots". Then he disappeared into the crowd.

Status of the case: Reported to the Pride organisation. We don't know if the incident was reported to the police.

Response of local authorities: Unknown

Impact on the Victim(s) and the community: More careful and afraid in public to show that he is gay. Angry and disappointed at his straight friends for not understanding.