

# **Justitia Pax Veritas' complaint to the Swedish Broadcasting Commission**

**Programme:** P1-morning show

**Channel or station:** Swedish Radio, P1

**Date of broadcast:** 2012-10-01

**Time of broadcast:** 06:49

*Explain why you would like the programme or feature to be reviewed:*

The radio morning programme of P1 on the 1st of October was about this year's Pride Parade in Belgrade and was guested by Stina Magnusson Buur from the organisation 'Kvinna till Kvinna' (Woman to Woman) and Robert Hårdh, secretary-general at the organisation 'Civil Rights Defenders'. It was evident from the programme that both organisations were involved in the then on-going Pride Parade as well as that they have been politically active in Serbia for a long time.

During the approximately 10 minutes long programme a number of very counter-factual, very selective theories and grossly derogatory judgements were passed on the Serbian people and there was a remarkable agreement on these in the studio.

Robert Hårdh chose to explain that homophobia in Serbia is due to the war being over which means that people not any longer have the opportunity of killing other ethnicities. Instead the Serbs, according to Hårdh, now without punishment devote themselves to violating oppressed minorities. This, to say the least, sensational theory was not in any way countered by the other participants in the programme. Hårdh also argued that the Serbian church is a "negative force" and went on to connect the church's stance in the LGBT matter to its alleged role during the civil war in ex-Yugoslavia.

The whole programme was characterised by a palpable eagerness to market LGBT activists from organisations such as those of Hårdh and Magnusson Buur at the price of offending many people with gross generalizations and mock explanations (according to information by the Swedish embassy in Belgrade over 100 000 people with Serbian descent live in Sweden). It is redundant to point out how contra productive such a stance is in the circumstance.

In an objective – factual and impartial – radio programme it would have been possible to hear alternative explanations for the existing homophobia and above all aversion to organisations driving LGBT issues in Serbia. Nowhere in the programme was the widespread poverty and harsh living conditions that people face in today's Serbia mentioned. As if this does not affect the general tolerance towards any kind of deviation. The passed war is mentioned, however only in connection to the claim that Serbs do not any longer have the opportunity of killing other ethnicities. Nowhere is it mentioned that the people of Serbia suffered greatly due to the civil war in ex-Yugoslavia, and that the country has long been subject to isolation, sanctions, bombings and 'economic reforms' which have created poverty in a once relatively prosperous society. As if this is irrelevant to the context, particularly when speaking about LGBT activists.

In an objective and impartial programme there would have been mentions of the existing and a much important distinction between the Serbian people's view on ordinary LGBT persons on the one hand and on their view on some LGBT activists on the other hand. This distinction is very present in the general debate in Serbia where it is not uncommonly pointed out that the most prominent LGBT activists are financed and supported by precisely those powers behind the sanctions, bombings,

neoliberal 'reforms' and various other demands directed at Serbia (such as giving up 15 % of its territory).

In the public debate in Serbia there have been LGBT persons that have distanced themselves from above mentioned LGBT activists. This is, however, never mentioned during the programme. While bringing up for example ignorance as a reason for homophobia, Robert Hårdh, himself spreads ignorance about the same people from whom he demands acceptance of others.

There are a number of, in the context, very relevant facts that were never mentioned and important questions that were never posed. It was for example claimed in the programme that the situation for LGBT persons in Serbia is the worst in the whole region. A factual and impartial journalist would have asked why there has not been any Pride Parades in Pristina, Sarajevo or Podgorica and how it is possible that no one is pressuring those in power in the mentioned areas to organise such parades. Does it have to do with the higher level of acceptance in regards to LGBT persons in for example Pristina or are there other explanatory models?

The explanatory models presented in the programme focused on the Serbian people's alleged characteristics – violent, intolerant and xenophobic (it appears from Hårdh's statement that Serbs are violent people who due to lack of war, where they can kill other ethnic groups, choose to oppress minorities. From statements by Magnusson Buur it appears that Serbs are suspicious towards anything foreign simply for being foreign) – and their centuries-old institutions (a majority of Serbs today are members of the Serbian orthodox church which Hårdh sweepingly characterises as a "negative force").

The radio programme in question is a text book example of spreading ignorance and shamefully dehumanising and delegitimising an ethnic group. It is thus grossly partial and grossly counterfactual and consequently in breach of the broadcasting permit.

***Complainant: Justitia Pax Veritas***