



MINISTRY OF EQUALITY

HM Government of Gibraltar

Statement by the Minister for Equality the Hon. Samantha Sacramento MP –

Pride Month

2021 - 492/2021

JUNE 28, 2021

Today, 28th June is the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots or Stonewall Uprising as it is also called, an event that happened in New York in 1969. Many people may already know the meaning of this historic event and what its eventual consequences were. However, I think it is still important to repeat this for the benefit of people who do not know, so that they can appreciate the importance of Pride Month in Gibraltar and why our Government has introduced different initiatives to commemorate it.

In the early hours of the 28th June in 1969, the New York Police Department raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay club in the Greenwich Village in New York. During this raid the Police roughly mistreated and removed patrons from the club. As a result, there were 6 days of violent clashes with the police. This event proved to be a catalyst for gay rights movements across the USA and in other places around the world. It is evident that LGBTQ+ people have suffered a great deal in the past and continue to be victimised today in many parts of the world.

This year, to mark the start of the Pride Month, HM Government flew LGBTQ+ Pride flags at different locations, including the land frontier and at No 6 Convent Place on the 1st June. The flags are again flying today to commemorate the Stonewall Riots. The Moorish Castle was also brightly lit up with the rainbow colours on the 1st of June and again will be lit up this evening. The symbols of four pedestrian crossings were changed to show LGBTQ+ symbols. Whilst it was planned to display these during the month of June, I now feel that it is necessary for these to remain for the time being, in order to raise more awareness and to help instil inclusive attitudes by all in our community. Attitudes still need to change, some reactions to the Pride month initiatives this year have made this very clear.

I am happy to see that the Pride initiatives this year have been very welcomed by the LGBTQ+ Community. Visibility is key and this is a solid step in the journey towards inclusion. However, some of the comments on social media, particularly in relation to the rainbow flags and the new pedestrian crossing symbols have been quite appalling and it has shown that a minority in Gibraltar are still very homophobic. The comments I have read have shown a blatant disregard for other Gibraltarians. This is precisely why we need a Pride Month. It has saddened me to see how some



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people cannot embrace, understand, accept or at least even tolerate other human beings because of their sexual orientation or their gender identity.

Attitudes are changing, I am certain of this, as evidence is all around for us to see. In the past members of the LGBTQ+ community would have had no choice but to live “in the closet” in hiding, in a form of survival mode, afraid of displaying any sort of sign that would indicate and make anyone think that they were gay. It was only until 1993 that legislative changes decriminalised homosexual activities in Gibraltar. Public signs of affection was something heterosexual couples could naturally do without any repercussions, but this was not the case for gay couples. Thankfully, we live in a very different world nowadays and it is very reassuring to see gay couples showing signs of affection in public - this definitely demonstrates that we are moving in the right direction. Further legislative changes by this Government have now allowed same sex couples to marry and also have children together, something which not so long ago seemed like a sheer impossibility. It is easier for the LGBTQ+ community to live their lives openly in Gibraltar, there can be no doubt that we are making progress, but we are not quite there yet.

I am thrilled to announce that today sees the launch of the first LGBTQ+ online survey for Gibraltar. Hearing directly from stakeholders is vital in a democratic society which upholds the key values of diversity and inclusion. I am very proud of this, not only because it will be the first time a Government has done this in Gibraltar, but because it will also give a voice to many people from the LGTBQ+ Community. The results of the survey will provide us with a better insight on the different issues that might affect the LGBTQ+ Community. Everybody from the LGBTQ+ Community is welcome to participate and can do this by directly accessing the following link: https://govgibraltar.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_a4R5XLjCJdXGO9g or by clicking on the link on the Department of Equality’s website: www.gibraltar.gov.gi/department-equality. The survey can also be accessed by scanning the QR code at the bottom of this page.

We have often spoken proudly of Gibraltar as a tolerant community. My hope, however, is that we move beyond tolerance and work towards building a truly inclusive society where no one is the same, but everyone is equal and equally valued. Where no one is the same but everyone can be authentically themselves.

The Pride rainbow flag has been flying proudly in my office throughout this month of June. I am glad that it, as many of our visible initiatives, have been conversation starters. That is how we create awareness and progress to education so that we can achieve proper inclusion. I look forward to receiving the results of the online survey and I encourage everyone in Gibraltar’s LGBTQ+ community to participate, this will be the first time that an analysis of this type has been carried out and will provide the Ministry for Equality with a benchmark which to develop our future policies and strategies.

As Gibraltar’s first Minister for Equality I am very proud to see how attitudes in our community are finally evolving and I see a Gibraltar where LGBTQ+ people have the same rights as everybody else, are shielded from violence, malice and criticism and can live their lives freely and openly to the full.



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