



URGENT APPEAL FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION

ON 8th JUNE 2006

IN FRONT OF PORTUGUESE REPRESENTATIONS

GISBERRA: Transsexual murdered in Portugal. Ensuing cover up of a hate crime.

Dear TransGenders, dear Communities, dear Friends,

February 2006, Gisberta Salce Júnior, a Brazilian transsexual living in extreme social exclusion in the Portuguese city of Oporto, was tortured and anally raped with sticks over a period of three days and then thrown into a pit and left to die in an abandoned construction site.

A group of twelve to fourteen adolescent boys between the age of 12 and 16 admitted to committing this crime. The youths were living in a "minor protection" institution run by the Catholic church.

Gisberta had been in very poor health. She was HIV Positive, and had tuberculosis. She lived on the streets, and engaged in sex work to earn some money.

This crime was given misleading coverage in the Portuguese media. The judiciary defined it down and the political establishment ignored it. This mistreatment ranged from trying to dehumanise Gisberta. The press refused to publish her photo, by echoing the church hierarchy's insinuation that she had harassed the boys, by neglecting to mention that she was transsexual and by ignoring the public statements of the LGBT organisations.

Recent developments raise the likelihood that not even the oldest boy, who's age would allow to be held legally responsible for his actions, will have to face trial for murder. In fact the case is being addressed by justice as a case of simple aggression. In Portugal, everything possible is being done to forget this horrible crime - without consequences, actions or legal changes.

Gisberta Salce Júnior's accumulation of social exclusion and degradation clearly lays bare the marginalisation of transsexuals in Portugal. Her case is a very clear demonstration of the high level of aggression and transphobic attitudes in Portuguese society. Any public debate is stifled in Portugal before it even starts - and cannot be restarted without international pressure.

Therefore, the European TransGender Network in cooperation with Portuguese organisations sends out this appeal for international action on 8 June in front of Portuguese embassies and consulates

in order to express support for the efforts of Portuguese activists and encourage the Portuguese government to acknowledge that a very serious hate-crime took place and to take responsibility.



European TransGender Network
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We call for:

- * a fundamental reform of the “minor protection” system in Portugal (*)
- * a social policy of assistance for marginalized groups - including immigrants, persons with HIV, homeless persons, drug users and sex workers - instead of a politics of exclusion.
- * the explicit inclusion of “gender identity” in anti discrimination legislation and protection in hate crimes that are motivated by transphobia to penal legislation.
- * initiatives to promote awareness for the situation of transgendered persons and to work against transphobic and homophobic attitudes in school, on the work place, in police forces and in the general population.
- * full gender recognition including the right to free choice of first names and a “gender recognition” law similar to the British “Gender Recognition Act of 2004”.
- * less patronising medical treatment of transsexuals, including free access to medical treatment and free choice of medical practitioners, financial support for surgery and treatments abroad, to promote correct medical formation for this area in the Portuguese health system.

The TGEUnet urges all concerned activists and organizations in Europe and around the world to plan for actions on this date and to inform us what is to be undertaken to the following contacts: jo@transgender.at and svitorino@gmail.com.

A documentary - “Gisberta | Liberdade” - has been filmed by TGEUnet and Portuguese activists. Release date is May 26. This film on DVD will be available on request from the above contacts to support international discussion and mobilization for June 8.

Love and power

European TransGender Network Steering Committee

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(*) The so-called “minor protection” system pushes half of the “protected minors” to church institutions, mixes children in need of protection from domestic violence with youth institutionalised for penal reasons and establishes a system of overcrowded “warehouses” of children and youth that provide no education and no protection but social exclusion.

A change of this system would need real state investment to install a system of effective protection, care and education as well as specific formation for judges that assume the “minor” courts, which is today inexistent.



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