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## **LGBTi Rights - "Progress is reversible"**

### **EFA MEP Alyn Smith (Scotland) speaks out on LGBTi rights**

EFA MEP Alyn Smith (Scottish National Party) has spoken out in the European Parliament, in Strasbourg over the alarming situation of LGBTi rights and the EU guidelines to protect and uphold them, particularly in the aftermath of the revelations of LGBTi “purges” in Chechnya, Russia.

The debate took place on the occasion of the international day against homophobia, transphobia and biphobia.

Over a hundred perceived homosexual men are believed to be held in camps in Chechnya, Russia, facing torture and abuse, amidst a massive campaign of repression against LGBTi people there, which has left several dead.

The EU has adopted clear guidelines; it condemned the violence and instructed its delegation to assist civil society organisations and journalists struggling in Russia to protect LGBTi people.

SNP MEP Alyn Smith, speaking in the debate at the European Parliament, said:

*“Mr President, I am glad, colleagues, that we have been able to achieve such a degree of cross-party unity across this House on this really crucial issue. But remember, we have got the easy job.*

*“We have a massive debt of gratitude to civil society and the NGOs and journalists who brought this to our attention at all – people who are really struggling in their daily lives against shocking persecution. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group, vital NGOs who do vital work need further support; journalists at Novaya Gazeta; and indeed the brave citizens who are struggling on a daily basis.*

*“The situation in Chechnya is the subject of this motion, but it is an example of a growing trend, and it is something I have been reflecting on a great deal in the light of the Brexit vote in the UK. There is a trend in politics to create scapegoats – to ‘other’ – to store up hate, and it is a growing trend in politics – and progress is reversible. It is one thing that we must always be on our guard against.*

*“There are powerful forces who, with some success in many cases, are undermining and misrepresenting*

*human rights at a time when the EU must be the voice – the antidote – to promote those values and to be the voice for minorities within the wider world. We have a job to do, and many people are relying upon us. I endorse the motion and thank everyone for their support."*

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