

**Ansprache des Bundesaußenministers  
Dr. Guido Westerwelle, MdB  
zur Eröffnungsveranstaltung der 8. Gay Games  
am 31. Juli im RheinEnergieStadion Köln**

It is a great honor for me to welcome you. First of all, I would like to welcome all our international guests here in the wonderful city of Cologne, here in Germany. We are delighted to have you here.

Whether you are straight or lesbian or gay, bisexual or transgender, you are all very welcome here in Cologne, here in Germany! Enjoy the hospitality of Germany and especially of the wonderful city of Cologne and of the Rhine Valley.

It is a great privilege for all of us and especially for me and my partner that we can meet tonight in the open and without fear. We will never forget the generations who have fought for our freedom.

Our thoughts tonight are with all those who are not privileged but oppressed. Our thoughts are with all gays and lesbians, bisexual and transgender people in the world who are still treated like criminals.

In more than 75 countries, there are laws stopping consenting adults from being with the man or the woman they love. In at least 7 countries, gays and lesbians must fear the death sentence. These countries use religion as a pretext to turn prejudice and hatred into law.

No religion can ever justify murder!

Killing and torturing minorities can not be justified by culture! This is not culture, this is exactly the opposite.

We will not go silent until these laws are repealed. We will continue our fight until no one has to be afraid to be openly gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, anywhere in the world.

Let me underline the clear message: We want no privileges, we want respect.

Wir fragen nicht nach Privilegien, wir fragen nach Respekt.

Let me add: In Germany, for example, gays and lesbians across all party lines have been elected to high public office.

It still takes a lot of courage to be out in the open. I hope that one day, we can all be who we are without the need to be brave.

I want to thank organizers, staff, and volunteers, who made these Games possible.

I wish you all fascinating Gay Games!

You are the role model for a society everybody can be part of. So let us all „Be part of it“.