

Dear Gergely, dear Viktoria, excellencies, friends,

It is a great honour to take part in this year's Freedom Celebration. Gergely, I do admire your creativity and courage in turning Budapest Pride into a *Celebration of Freedom Event*. Which of course a pride is.

Like you, Gergely, I consider guarding freedom my first and greatest responsibility towards the citizens.

Amsterdam has been a city of freedom throughout the centuries. To this day, protecting freedom, being a safe haven, are core values of the city. Being committed to protecting freedom and democracy, I am constantly under fire at home and abroad. The moment you are under fire for speaking out against attacks on the rule of law in your country, in order to protect the freedom of your citizens, you need the support of colleagues.

I am on your side. I am by your side.

Our cooperation is strong. We work together in Europe, creating awareness and gaining support for the crucial role cities play in protecting democracy and the rule of law. I am glad so many European politicians are present today. I consider them our allies. They will hear from us!

Dear Viktoria, my presence is also a show of support for the queer movement, in Budapest, and around the world. Their freedoms are under increasing pressure.

In my inaugural address as Mayor of Amsterdam, I promised the queer community and all those people who peacefully demand the right to be different, you will always find me on the side. Opposite the narrow-minded, the haters, the extremists. And alongside the freethinkers, the tolerant.

Living your life as you see fit is not easy. When you are scolded, threatened, beaten on the streets. Or rejected by your community and your family. For many people walking and being here this weekend, freedom is a daily struggle. Against intimidation, against intolerance, against the denial of your whole being.

To you, I want to say: you are not alone. There are many of us. The struggle for equal rights is international. The fight for freedom is international. We are together and we do not let go of each other.