

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Hungary: Authorities must protect the 2015 Budapest Pride march

Amnesty International has today written to the Hungarian police calling on them to ensure the safety of all participants in the Budapest Pride march, due to take place on Saturday 11 July. In the week before the annual celebration of LGBTI rights, at least two far-right groups announced on the media that they aim to stop the march.

Fears over safety of the participants of Pride marches in Budapest are an ongoing concern. In the past years, Hungarian NGOs reported cases of attacks during or immediately after the march by anti-LGBTI groups which were not prevented by the police.

Amnesty International documented cases of attacks against participants who were on their way to or leaving the Pride marches in 2013 and 2014. In some of these cases, police allegedly failed to promptly intervene or arrest the perpetrators.

In 2013, a group of anti-Pride protesters verbally assaulted, punched and kicked three men after they left the Pride march. Although they reported the assault immediately to the police and asked to be escorted from the site of the attack to the train station, the police refused to provide them protection and reportedly said: "If you are scared, why are you here?" The investigation into the case started only after the assaulted men reported the case to the media, even though the police was present in the area where the incident happened.

When M. was on his way to attend the Pride march in 2014, he was attacked by a group of about 30 men in hoodies. "I got grabbed by a shoulder, turned around and then hit in the face with a fist... My friend was kicked in the back." Police officers were present in the area designated for the march but did not intervene, even though, according to M., they saw the attack. M. later reported the case to the police but the investigation was terminated because the perpetrators were not identified.

Amnesty International reminds the Hungarian authorities that they have an obligation under domestic legislation and international human rights law to ensure protection of the Pride march participants' rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. This involves also protection before and after the Pride march, as a number of incidents of harassment and violence against the participants occur immediately prior to or after the event.

As recently as one week before this year's Pride march, a rainbow puppet together with a pink triangle, was found hanging on a post in one of the city's parks. The pink triangle was pinned on gay prisoners in concentration camps during WWII.

Attacks targeting persons because of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity amount to hate crimes. They are a form of discrimination and a criminal manifestation of it. As they represent a particular affront to human dignity and are likely to have a long-lasting negative effect on victims and their communities, they must be promptly, independently, impartially and thoroughly investigated and those responsible brought to justice.

Authorities do not only have the responsibility to effectively investigate hate crimes when they occur but also to prevent them. In the context of the Budapest Pride march, authorities, and in particular the Budapest police, must put in place adequate security measures to ensure that violent attacks against LGBTI participants and organizers are, whenever possible, prevented. Amnesty International Hungary and other NGOs will closely monitor the Pride march, record and report the actions taken by the police or lack thereof.

Amnesty International also calls on the authorities to ensure close cooperation with Pride organizers ahead of the event and ensure all officers on duty are clearly instructed to intervene to prevent violent disruption by counter protestors, including through close monitoring of groups who have already announced their intention to carry out such disruption.

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