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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Statement on the human rights implications of the ban on Budapest Pride 2025 and related legislative developments in Hungary

GENEVA, 26 June 2025

We express grave concern at the decision of the Hungarian authorities to ban the 2025 Budapest Pride march, and the broader pattern of legislative and administrative actions that have led to the effective criminalization of peaceful LGBT assemblies in Hungary. This ban constitutes a violation of multiple human rights and an affront to the dignity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and other gender-diverse (LGBT) persons in the country. It imposes far-reaching restrictions on the recognition and realization of a wide range of rights for all Hungarians. The failure to respect and ensure the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the right to peaceful assembly and association, severely undermines the foundations of democracy, rule of law, and pluralism – hallmarks of an open and inclusive society – and is often indicative of broader patterns of repression.

In March 2025, the Hungarian Parliament adopted sweeping amendments to the Assembly Act, explicitly targeting public LGBT events under the guise of "child protection." These changes, enacted through an accelerated procedure with no meaningful public consultation, prohibit any assembly deemed to "violate" or promote content diverging from "sex at birth," as defined by Hungary's Child Protection Act. This was followed in April by a constitutional amendment that elevated so-called "child protection" above all other rights – except the right to life – and codified a ban on Pride events into the Fundamental Law. Taken together, these measures created a legal basis for the authorities to ban LGBT assemblies, where they may subsequently deploy facial recognition surveillance against participants and organizers, in direct contradiction to Hungary's obligations under international human rights law.

Despite these restrictions, Pride organizers and the Municipality of Budapest attempted to proceed with the 30th annual Budapest Pride, a peaceful celebration marking three decades of LGBT visibility and solidarity in Central Europe. In response to repeated police bans, Mayor Gergely Karácsony sought to reframe the march as part of a city-sponsored commemoration, "Budapest Freedom Day," celebrating the 1991 withdrawal of Soviet troops. As a municipal event, it would not have required police authorization under domestic law. However, on 19 June, Hungarian police issued a final decision banning the event regardless of its municipal character, citing the March 2025 legislation. This move underscores the extent to which new legal measures have undermined institutional checks and balances, effectively allowing national authorities to override local governance and suppress dissenting or minority expressions in public space.

In a joint communication issued on 9 April 2025 (to which the Government of Hungary replied on 11 April), five United Nations Special Procedures mandate holders

expressed deep concern over these legislative developments and their potential impact on the rights of LGBT persons, human rights defenders and those advocating for the rights of LGBT persons in Hungary. They emphasized that the amendments to the Assembly Act, the Fundamental Law, and related legal provisions appear to contravene Hungary's international obligations by imposing unlawful, content-based restrictions on peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. The communication underscored that justifying such restrictions through the lens of child protection is discriminatory and lacks a legitimate basis under international human rights law. It further warned that the use of biometric facial recognition to monitor and penalize peaceful participants creates a chilling effect and may constitute a violation of the right to privacy. The mandate holders urged Hungary to repeal the restrictive laws and ensure that all individuals – regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity – can exercise their fundamental rights without fear of retaliation or discrimination.

While LGBT organizers faced surveillance threats, potential fines, and even criminal charges, a far-right nationalist group was permitted to register a counter-assembly along the intended Pride route, with no reported restrictions or comparable scrutiny. This stark contrast in treatment reflects a pattern of discriminatory policing and selective enforcement, which cannot be reconciled with the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and content neutrality that underpin the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.

The Human Rights Committee, the European Court of Human Rights, and multiple UN Special Procedures have affirmed that restrictions on assembly must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory. The use of broad and vague justifications, such as "public morals" or the protection of children from diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, does not meet these thresholds. In fact, such measures serve to stigmatize and marginalize already vulnerable groups, foster a climate of fear, and erode democratic pluralism. The experts underscore the obligations of States to operate on the basis of content neutrality when engaging with the right to peaceful assembly and that "any information gathering, including through surveillance" must be in strict conformity with the right to privacy and never aimed at intimidation.

The use of biometric surveillance technologies – such as Hungary's "Dragonfly" camera network – to identify and sanction participants in peaceful protests raises serious concerns under the right to privacy and further compounds the chilling effect on civil society. The European Commission has already indicated that such surveillance practices may contravene both the EU General Data Protection Regulation and the forthcoming Artificial Intelligence Act.

We are further alarmed by the broader legislative trend, including proposed amendments to the Equal Treatment Act that would remove gender identity as a protected ground, thereby stripping legal protection from transgender persons in critical domains such as education, employment, and access to services.

In light of these developments, we call on the Hungarian authorities to:

- Repeal the 2025 amendments to the Assembly Act and the Fundamental Law that unjustly restrict the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly;
- Guarantee that municipal authorities may organize peaceful public events without undue interference;
- Ensure that surveillance technologies, particularly facial recognition, are not deployed in a manner that violates privacy, deters participation, or targets individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity;
- Uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination in all law enforcement and administrative actions, including the regulation of public assemblies;
- Ensure that human rights defenders and those advocating for the rights of LGBT persons can carry out their legitimate work in a safe and enabling environment without fear of attacks, harassment or other intimidation.

The events surrounding Budapest Pride 2025 represent a deeply troubling departure from Hungary's human rights obligations. Peaceful assembly is not a privilege granted at the discretion of the State – it is a fundamental right, especially important for those whose identities, lives, and equal dignity are contested in the public sphere. We urge the Hungarian government to reverse course and affirm its commitment to the human rights of all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

ENDS

Graeme Reid, Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

Gina Romero, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Irene Khan, Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Laura Nyirinkindi (Chair), Claudia Flores (Vice-Chair), Dorothy Estrada Tanck, Ivana Krstić, and Haina Lu, Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.

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UN Human Rights, country page – https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/hungary

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