Reports say police seek charges against Budapest Mayor for organising Pride

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> Emerging reports deepen concerns over misuse of the Assembly Act and shrinking democratic space in Hungary.

ILGA-Europe are deeply concerned by emerging reports that the Hungarian police have recommended pressing charges against Gergely Karácsony, the Mayor of Budapest, in connection with this year's Pride march. This news comes just one day after ILGA-Europe briefed journalists in Brussels on the shrinking space for peaceful assembly in Hungary.

An estimated 300,000 people marched at Budapest Pride on June 28, despite warnings of potential legal repercussions by Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, whose government passed the Assembly Act earlier this year banning the event. Karácsony declared Pride a municipal event, freeing organisers from the need to obtain police permission to go ahead.

If charged and convicted, Karácsony could face up to a year in prison for organising and encouraging participation in a banned march.

Reacting to the news, Karácsony said: "The system has reached a breaking point where it can no longer tolerate the fact that there are still free people in Hungary and there are still free local governments in Hungary, so I am actually proud of this indictment. I am proud that I took every political risk for the sake of my city's freedom, and I stand proudly before the court to defend my own freedom and the freedom of my city."

If reports are confirmed, this would mean that both a local Pride organiser and the mayor of Hungary's capital city are expecting charges simply for enabling LGBTI communities to gather safely and visibly in public.

The future of Hungary in the European Union

At yesterday's ILGA-Europe press briefing, Géza Buzás-Hábel, organiser of Pécs Pride, spoke about why he refused to accept the police ban. His words feel even more urgent in light of today's reports: "If we accept the ban, we accept oppression. We stop fighting for equality. This is not only about the LGBTI community. It is about the future of Hungary in the European Union."

He also reflected on how easily the authorities can turn their attention to anyone. "People understand that what is happening to me can happen to anyone the government decides it does not like."

This latest reported investigation reinforces concerns that the Hungarian government is using the Assembly Act to silence dissenting voices and restrict democratic participation, particularly ahead of next spring's national elections. Targeting both a Pride organiser and an elected mayor raises questions about the government's willingness to uphold basic European values.

Commenting on this latest report, ILGA-Europe's Advocacy Director, Katrin Hugendubel said: "ILGA-Europe calls on EU institutions to urgently assess these developments and take all necessary steps to ensure that the right to peaceful assembly is protected in Hungary for everyone, including LGBTI communities and those who stand with them.

Hungary is 37th out of 49 countries on ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map, tracking laws protecting LGBTI people, with 23% points – 9 points less compared to the previous year.