Bulgarian Organisations Bilitis and Rainbow Hub Attacked

article, protection from violence and hate, hate crime, trans activists

TGEU is devastated to hear of the attack on the LGBTI community centre, Rainbow Hub, in Sofia, Bulgaria, during a trans event organised by the Bilitis Foundation over the weekend.

Bilitis has reported that a group of members of the Bulgarian National Union, including Boyan Rasate, presidential candidate, broke into the Rainbow Hub on 30 October and damaged the property. One person was hit and physically injured in the attack. Boyan Rasate has been arrested and charged with hooliganism with extreme audacity; hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression are not recognised currently in Bulgaria.

According to representatives of Bilitis, the Bulgarian National Union has attacked the Rainbow Hub before in the run-up to an election. A national election is due in Bulgaria on 14 November.

This attack is yet another act of violence against trans and LGB people amid a rise in hate crime and hate speech around the world. It comes at the same time as an extremely disappointing statement this week by the Bulgarian Constitutional Court that does not recognise gender independent of “biological sex”.

TGEU calls on the Bulgarian authorities to fully and properly investigate this attack as a hate crime with a clear bias motive. We call on the Bulgarian authorities to ensure the safety of the victims of the attack and to act appropriately to prevent further violent incidents targeting trans and gender-diverse people.

We remind the Bulgarian government that, as a Member State of the European Union, it has an obligation to protect trans people from gender-based violence and to support trans victims of crime.

This horrible event further demonstrates the urgent need for EU-level legislation to tackle hate crime and protect its victims. With a common approach to criminalisation of hate crime and hate speech, by adding these to the list of EU crimes, we can ensure consistent and appropriate protection of victims of such acts across the EU, including in Bulgaria.

Since the attack, 11 foreign ministries, including seven EU Member States have publicly condemned the attack and shown their support for Bilitis and Rainbow Hub.

TGEU is in solidarity with Bilitis at this difficult time.

How can you support the LGBTI community in Bulgaria?

Below you will find some ways to support our community in Bulgaria:

- Condemn the attack on social media.
- Ask your government to write to their colleagues in Bulgaria and demand proper investigation of the crime, justice to be served, and to stress the need for inclusion of SOGIESC based hate crimes in the Criminal Code. This statement from 24 June is a useful reference, especially if you live in one of the 16 EU states

who signed it.
- Sign and share this All Out petition.

Sign petition
