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Hungary: Police must withdraw a video blaming sexual violence against women on their behaviour

The Hungarian police must withdraw an offensive ‘awareness raising’ video, which explicitly puts the blame for sexual violence and responsibility for its prevention on women and girls, Amnesty International said in a letter sent to the country’s Minister of Interior.

Hungary has clear obligations under international law to protect the rights of women and girls to live free from gender-based discrimination and violence. This includes also challenging and eliminating discriminatory gender stereotypes that result in harmful practices and undermine women’s rights.

Discriminatory beliefs and attitudes about women and girls are at the heart of gender-based violence and other violations of women and girls’ rights. Such attitudes are common in every society. They should not be treated simply as ‘facts of life’ but challenged and eliminated.

Unfortunately, the official police video is far from challenging those attitudes. On the contrary, it reinforces and strengthens them. It is particularly worrying that it was produced by an institution that is supposed to protect women and girls’ rights, including by investigating all allegations of sexual violence.

Amnesty International calls on the Hungarian Minister of Interior and the police to discontinue the use and promotion of the video, and issue an apology for its depiction of women. This would be in line with the 2013 UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommendations to Hungary to encourage women’s reporting of acts of domestic and sexual violence by removing the stigma from the survivors and raising awareness that such violence is a crime. The Hungarian authorities should also challenge discriminatory social attitudes towards women and girls through public awareness campaigns and educational programmes, developed in cooperation with women’s organizations. The state must also ensure that survivors of sexual and other gender-based violence can access justice and the full-range of support services. .

Hungarian authorities must take immediate measures to ensure the police operate in accordance with a professional code of ethics, including that complaints of sexual violence are handled in a gender-sensitive manner and that cases are thoroughly and promptly investigated and perpetrators are brought to justice.

Hungary should also ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) that entered into force in August 2014.

Background

The video titled ‘Selfie Klip’ was issued by the Hungarian Police on 22 November as part of a campaign

to prevent sexual violence. It features three young women getting dressed to go out, drink alcohol and flirt with men in a night club. One of them ends up being sexually assaulted. The video sends a clear message that the victim was at fault because of her clothes and behaviour and that she could have prevented the crime.

The video provoked a huge public outcry in Hungary, covered also by international media. Hungarian women's rights groups strongly reacted requesting that the police take down the video and issue an apology.

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