

To the attention of:

Ministers of European Affairs of EU member states

26 May 2025

Open letter to EU Ministers: EU must take concrete action against Hungary's continued defiance of human rights and rule of law

Dear Minister,

On 27 May, the EU General Affairs Council (GAC) is set to hold yet another hearing on the situation in Hungary under Article 7.1 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). Since the last hearing in June 2024, the Hungarian authorities have doubled down in their blatant defiance of the values the EU is founded on, further eroding human rights and the rule of law.

The crackdown on civil society organisations and independent media has intensified, adding to the serious ongoing concerns linked to the Defence of National Sovereignty Law, over which the Commission has launched an infringement procedure. On 15 March, Prime Minister Orbán announced an upcoming “spring cleaning” of “stink bugs” referring to opposition politicians, judges, journalists, civil society organisations and political activists, in a speech forming part of the authorities’ wider effort to stigmatise and threaten those critical of the government. On 13 May, a ruling party deputy introduced **a new bill entitled [Transparency of Public Life](#), labelled “Operation Starve and Strangle” by civil society organisations**. If adopted, this bill would enable the authorities to target, defund and dissolve any organisation it designates as “a threat to Hungarian sovereignty”, providing the government with the final tools to effectively eviscerate remaining independent voices in Hungary. If passed, this bill risks forcing many civil society organisations and independent media into exile or closure, thereby decimating the last remaining watchdogs and crucial sources of information and evidence-gathering in the country, on which we and you rely. Among other things, this reaffirms the urgent need for a protection mechanism for human rights defenders and civil society organisations within the EU.

In addition, the Hungarian authorities continued their harassment of LGBTI persons and stigmatization of the Hungarian LGBTI community. On 18 March, the Hungarian Parliament passed a **package of amendments banning LGBTI-related assemblies, including Pride marches, and introducing penalties for their organisers**. The amendment package, which builds on the 2021 ‘anti-LGBTIQ+ propaganda’ law, which is currently being challenged in an infringement procedure before the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) with the support of 16 EU Member States and the European Parliament, was fast-tracked through Parliament in just one day, with no consultation or debate. It marks a significant erosion of the rights to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, privacy and other fundamental freedoms in Hungary.

On 3 April, Prime Minister Orbán **welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is subject to an ICC arrest warrant, in clear breach of Hungary’s obligations as State Party to the Rome Statute. He also announced that Hungary would withdraw from the International Criminal Court (ICC)** - a decision approved by the parliament on 20 May that represents an attempt to undermine the ICC and its work and an affront to victims of serious crimes. The EU and its member states have long been strong advocates for the ICC and have made [legally binding commitments](#) to promote the universality and integrity of the Rome Statute, the ICC’s founding treaty. Most recently, Commissioner McGrath, [speaking](#) on behalf of High Representative Kallas, reiterated that ratification of the Rome Statute is one of the criteria for accession to the EU.

These are but the latest examples of Hungary's assault on human rights and rule of law, in blatant disregard of the multitude of rulings and recommendations from European and UN bodies. Hungary is still functioning under a "state of danger", and serious concerns regarding judicial independence remain.

In light of the serious threat to human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles that the situation in Hungary represents, and nearly seven years after the triggering of the Article 7 procedure without sign of progress, **the undersigned organisations call on your leadership to take the Article 7.1 TEU procedure against Hungary forward, by holding a vote to determine a clear risk of a serious breach of Article 2 TEU values by Hungary.**

Within the Article 7.1 TEU procedure, we urge you to **set out clear, concrete and timebound recommendations to the Hungarian authorities**, to be addressed within six months at most. These recommendations should include the full implementation of all CJEU judgments and repealing all legislation which undermines the rule of law. **Should the authorities fail to implement these recommendations within the designated timeline, this would validate the existence of a serious and persistent breach of Article 2 TEU values, and we would thus call on you to initiate a vote under Article 7.2 TEU.**

In addition to these steps, we urge you to use the upcoming Article 7.1 TEU hearing and all other bilateral and multilateral fora to:

- Condemn the **"Transparency of Public Life" Bill**, and call on the Hungarian parliament to withdraw it. Support the European Commission to urgently request the CJEU to grant interim measures in the ongoing infringement procedure on the Law on the Defence of National Sovereignty (Case C-829/24). The Sovereignty Protection Office is crucial to the new bill and therefore this is an immediate and effective way to halt the progress and impact of the bill. We urge you to support the European Commission in opening a new infringement procedure requesting interim measures to suspend the application of the law. Anything less than a clear, united and unequivocal signal from the EU and its member states at this time would greenlight this new attack on dissent in Hungary, and risk setting a dangerous precedent.
- Urge the European Commission to request an interim measure to the CJEU against the **'Pride Ban' law**, either through the ongoing 'Propaganda Law' infringement procedure, or by opening a fresh infringement procedure against the new amendments package.
- Remind the Hungarian authorities of their obligations under international law and of their commitments to the **International Criminal Court** as an EU member state.

In the annex below, you will find further documentation on the developments covered in this letter.

We stand ready to provide any further information you may require.

Yours sincerely,

Amnesty International
Human Rights Watch
Civil Liberties Union for Europe
FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights)
ILGA-Europe
International Commission of Jurists

Annex:

- “300+ CSOs Call For Immediate Interim Measures Against Hungary’s “Transparency of Public Life” Bill”, Civil Liberties Union for Europe, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), International Commission of Jurists, etc, 22 May 2025, <https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/open-letter-hungary-sovereignty/45438>
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- “Operation Starve and Strangle: Hungary’s proposed “Transparency” Law threatens core European democratic values and attacks independent civil society and media organisations”, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 15 May 2025, <https://helsinki.hu/en/operation-starve-and-strangle-2025/>
- “Hungary: Foreign funding bill poses most serious threat to independent media in years”, International Press Institute, 16 May 2025, <https://ipi.media/hungary-foreign-funding-bill-poses-most-serious-threat-to-independent-media-in-years/>
- “Hungary’s new biometric surveillance laws violate the AI Act”, European Digital Rights (EDRi), Civil Liberties Union for Europe, Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, European Center for Non-Profit Law, 6 May 2025, <https://edri.org/our-work/hungarys-new-biometric-surveillance-laws-violate-the-ai-act/>
- “Hungary’s new biometric surveillance laws violate the AI Act: Legal Analysis”, Liberties, 28 April 2025, <https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/hungary-biometric-surveillance/45392>
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- “Hungary: Withdrawal from ICC does not absolve Hungary of its legal obligation to arrest fugitive Benjamin Netanyahu”, Amnesty International, 3 April 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/hungary-withdrawal-from-icc-does-not-absolve-hungary-of-its-legal-obligation-to-arrest-fugitive-benjamin-netanyahu/>

- [“Hungary: Arrest, Don’t Welcome ICC Fugitive Netanyahu. Orban’s Refusal to Bar or Arrest Israeli Leader Would Be Assault on Rule of Law”, 1 April 2025,](https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/01/hungary-arrest-dont-welcome-icc-fugitive-netanyahu)
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/01/hungary-arrest-dont-welcome-icc-fugitive-netanyahu>
- “Legislating Fear: Banning Pride is the latest assault on fundamental rights in Hungary”, Amnesty International, Háttér Society, Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 21 March 2025
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- We Stand with Transparency International Hungary and Átlátszó: EU Needs to Urgently Protect Civic Space in Hungary, FIDH and 11 other NGOs, 27 June 2024,
<https://www.fidh.org/en/region/europe-central-asia/hungary/hungary-joint-statement-in-solidarity-with-transparency-international>
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