

## LITHUANIA'S CHIEF PROSECUTOR REQUESTS CANCELTION OF PERMIT FOR GAY PARADE (UPDATES)

VILNIUS, May 04, BNS - Lithuania's Prosecutor General Raimondas Petrauskas has asked a court to cancel the permit for the Baltic Pride Parade scheduled to take place in Vilnius this Saturday for what he said were possible disturbances.

Meanwhile, organizers of the parade maintain that such move is unacceptable in a Constitutional country.

"I appealed to the court after receipt of information about possible disturbances. The information is confidential, and I would like to refrain from further comment, however, the data we have in our possession suggests there is a possibility of certain disturbances, which we would not want," the acting head of the Prosecutor General's Office told BNS on Tuesday.

In his words, potential threats to public order is the only reason behind his appeal to court.

"Naturally, we are a European country, and European laws are in effect in our country, we are definitely not against gender equality, however, it is important to weigh such aspects, and the information we have is alarming. The rally is some type of a red cloth for a bull," said Petrauskas.

The acting prosecutor general said the request to cancel the sanction was aimed at protecting its participants.

"Participants of the rally could be target of violence, we can't have a police officer for each of them. The event would be protected in its specific location, however, nobody can forecast a crowd's actions," he added.

Asked whether he had information about a planned riot, Petrauskas said he could not "state this specifically."

"I cannot state this specifically that this could happen again. I am not against the rally, let it take place, it will sooner or later, we will have to live with it, get used to it and accept it, however, with a rather poor economic level and high unemployment numbers in the country, it is very easy to provoke disturbances," said the acting head of the Prosecutor General's Office.

Arturas Rudomanskis of the Tolerant Youth Association, the organizer of the rally, told BNS that it was the state's duty to guarantee safety of participants.

"All I can do is regret that this is happening in a Constitutional state. The European Court of Human Rights has stressed in its practice that the state has to guarantee protection. The question is - if there were protests against the US president or the queen of England - would they be asked not to come?" said Rudomanskis.

The Vilnius County Administrative Court confirmed having received Petrauskas' request to cancel the sanction issued by the Vilnius municipality's administrative director to organize the parade For Equality.

"The appeal to the court reads that the Prosecutor General's Office is in possession of data about protests and various types of provocations planned by radical and destructive groups prior to the May 8 Baltic Pride 2010," said the court.

According to the appeal, there are reasons to think that the state will not be able to properly perform its duty of providing relevant protection to participants of the parade.

Prosecutors believe the rally could lead to damage to health of participating persons, stressing that, in such case, it is necessary to refuse issuing of the certificate on agreed location, time and form of the gathering.

Stanislovas Buskevicius, vice-mayor of Lithuania's second-largest city Kaunas, has approached a court with an analogous request.

The Vilnius court intends to hand down rulings in these claims this week after receipt of additional documents from the Vilnius administration.

The gay parade, which is organized for the first time in Lithuania, has drawn a controversial response - a number of protest actions were held against the parade and a group of parliamentarians have appealed to the Prosecutor General's Office for protection of public interest.

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