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Hungary/Corona crisis: Draft bill on modifying criminal code risks democratic standards

Quote Gwendoline Deblos-Corfield MEP

Today, the Hungarian Parliament will debate passing a motion that would allow the government to rule by decree until the end of the Corona virus crisis. Under the proposals, any law could be suspended or overridden as long as the emergency continues, and no elections including municipal, by-elections or referenda will be allowed until the government declares the emergency over.

Gwendoline Deblos-Corfield MEP, Greens/EFA Member of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and European Parliament rapporteur on the rule of law in Hungary, comments:

"Recent developments in Hungary are a dangerous turn away from democratic standards. This crisis must not be used as an excuse for destroying democratic checks and balances. All governments should remain accountable, and extraordinary powers must be applied in good faith, with democratic checks. Any emergency powers should be mandated for the purpose of dealing with the corona virus and for a limited time period only.

"Viktor Orbán must not be given a carte blanche to further empower himself and strip away Hungarian citizens' democratic rights under the auspices of tackling the Corona crisis. Other EU governments must play close attention to the situation in Hungary and ensure that European values are upheld across the Union, even in times of crisis."

More:

The bill will modify two articles of the Criminal Code; in particular, under new Article 337(2), 'persons who under extraordinary rule of law claim or spread a falsehood or claim or spread a distorted truth before the grand public that is suitable for obstructing or preventing successful protection commit a crime that is punishable by one to five years of prison'. The draft doesn't specify when the 'state of danger' ends. Since there is no sunset clause, the 'state of danger' will last until the Government declares the end, or until the Parliament revokes the authorisation by a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

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