

Far-right groups clash with police during Independence Day march in Warsaw

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12 November, 2020



During the annual Independence Day march in Warsaw, far-right supporters set fire to an apartment building displaying pro-choice and LGBTQ+ support.

Riots broke out throughout the Polish capital Warsaw, as thousands of far-right supporters took part in the annual Independence Day march.

On Wednesday, November 11, far-right supporters attended the annual Independence Day march despite nationwide lockdown restrictions. The event was promoted under an anti-LGBTQ+ slogan of ‘our civilisation, our rules’ and poster depicting a traditional Polish hussar warrior driving their sword into a rainbow star.

Speaking with VICE News, head of Poland’s anti-racist Never Again Association, Rafal Pankowski, stated, “We know this is an event which has always been organised by radical, far-right groups. But I think it’s the first time that the official message of the event is so openly, blatantly directed against a specific minority with these violent overtones.”

Despite authorities calling for the Independence Day march in Warsaw to be cancelled under lockdown restrictions, far-right supporters went ahead with the event. The rally quickly erupted into violence as attendees clashed with police officers.

Social media footage captured scenes of marchers hurling flares at an apartment building displaying banners supporting pro-choice and LGBTQ+ rights. Although a fire broke out, a Warsaw fire brigade spokesperson said nobody was hurt in the incident.

On Twitter, the police reported they had come under attack by groups of hooligans. Further footage showed rioters barging into buildings, lighting flares, and hurling projectiles at police and buildings.

Head of the far-right Independence Day March Association, Robert Bąkiewicz, accused authorities of provoking marchers. On Twitter, he wrote, “Today, Polish patriots were unfortunately gassed and battered by the police.”

Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski said that the cost of the damage caused by the Independence Day riots are still unknown. On Facebook, he wrote, “Clashes with the police, damage, trains held up, probably a (case of) arson, this is how the far-right, overindulged by the ruling team, is observing Independence Day.”

The far-right riots occurred on the same day a bill was submitted to Poland’s parliament requesting the banning of LGBTQ+ parades and any other public gatherings that “promote” non-heterosexual orientations and gender identities. The Archbishop of Szczecin, Andrzej Dzięga, said, “The purpose of the bill is to protect against LGBT propaganda[,]...gender ideology and practices that are contrary to nature. It is also a manifestation of respect for the homeland, spiritual and patriotic values...[and] maintenance of moral order.”

<https://gcn.ie/far-right-independence-day-warsaw/>