# Pride march in Belgrade highlights LGBTQ+ rights issues amidst heavy security



The annual Pride march unfolded amidst tight security in the Serbian capital of Belgrade on Saturday, placing the spotlight on the ongoing struggle for LGBTQ+ rights in a country known for its conservative stance. The event saw significant participation from the LGBTQ+ community and allies, who marched through central Belgrade under the watchful eyes of a substantial police presence. The heightened security measures were deemed necessary due to potential threats from right-wing extremist groups.

Organisers of the march underscored the urgent need for the Serbian government to enhance protections and rights for the LGBTQ+ community, which frequently endures harassment and discrimination. The call to action included a specific demand for the enactment of legislation to permit same-sex partnerships, a significant gap in the current legal framework that activists argue needs to be addressed to move towards greater equality.

The tension around the event was palpable, especially following an incident two days prior where a young gay man was assaulted in Belgrade, with his rainbow flag forcibly taken from him. This incident has heightened concerns about the safety and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in Serbia.

The Pride march's significance is amplified by Serbia's ongoing bid to join the European Union (EU). Critics argue that Serbia's track record on democratic values, including human rights issues related to the LGBTQ+ community, needs substantial improvement for its EU aspirations to be realized.

Despite the challenges, the march proceeded without major incidents, thanks to the rigorous security measures in place. Participants, waving rainbow flags and carrying banners, called for an end to discriminatory practices and the recognition of their rights. They were met with a mixture of support and opposition from the public, reflecting the divided opinions on LGBTQ+ issues within the country.

The demonstrative security and the peaceful execution of the march mark a tentative step forward in the visibility and advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights in Serbia. As the country continues its European Union accession process, the pressure from both domestic activists and international observers on the Serbian government to align with broader EU human rights standards is likely to intensify.