

Barcelona Pride parade dedicated to LGBTI refugees

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Thousands of people have taken to the streets of central Barcelona in force on Saturday afternoon for this year's Pride parade dedicated to LGBTI refugees.

Demonstrators marched up Avinguda Paral·lel towards Plaça Espanya accompanied by **sunshine, music, floats, and festive vibes** in the main event of this year's Pride Barcelona which was inaugurated on Thursday amidst controversy over some of the sponsoring entities.

This didn't stop the celebrations of all things rainbow though, as the carnivalesque atmosphere mixed with a sense of justice and freedom of expression filled the air.

The Catalan Gay and Lesbian Business Association (ACEGAL), behind Pride Barcelona, has said it wants to make the city a reference point in the Mediterranean for LGBTI rights.

Calls to boycott Barcelona Pride

The gender and sexual liberation rights group Crida LGBTI (*LGBTI Shout* in English) and the anti-capitalist CUP faction of the Catalan capital called for a boycott on Pride this year. They denounced that this year's edition "hides" an operation of "rose-washing" the images of companies like Airbnb, Merlin Properties, and B the Travel Brand.

Both groups accused the companies of having "**dubious ethical behaviours**" and of trying to clean their images by sponsoring Pride.

They added that Airbnb, "one of the engines of mass tourism" in the city and cause of the "loss of quality of life" for residents "withdrew" its sponsorship after the denouncement made by Crida LGBTI on social media. Pride Barcelona also said on Twitter that they had "decided not to collaborate with Airbnb" less than 24 hours after its sponsorship was announced.

“Tourists go home, refugees welcome”

Mass tourism in Barcelona has been the subject of debate in recent years, with many residents feeling as though they are being driven out of neighbourhoods by rising prices.

Signs starting appearing throughout the Catalan capital last year reading “Tourists go home, refugees welcome,” reflecting the general sentiment of the city, with its measures to curb the effects of tourism on a mass scale, and its campaigns to welcome refugees.

The CUP and Crida LGTBI also emphasized that Pride sponsor B the Travel Brand was responsible for organizing “**migrant deportation flights**” up until last year. The company’s sponsorship of Pride, therefore, is an “act of hypocrisy” according to both entities, as the parade is dedicated to refugees.

With regard to Merlin Properties, they said that it has been linked to evictions in Barcelona and throughout Spain as a whole and has participated in real estate operations that have “favoured speculation” and the generation “of a new real estate bubble.”