

Territorial autonomy and equal rights for 300.000 Hungarians living in Voivodina (Serbia)

Please help and support 300 000 Hungarians in their peaceful struggle so that they and other national communities living in Voivodina (Serbia) could enjoy the benefits provided by the model of territorial autonomy operating so well in Europe like in South-Tirol (Italy), Finland, Belgium and some other countries in accordance with the rules of agreements of Council of Europe and of UN. This part of the former Yugoslavia should not become another bloody conflict-zone into which the international community has to intervene ! Please help before it will be not too late...

- Do you know Hungarians continue to live in the Northern part of Serbia following the unjust dictated peace Treaty of Trianon (1920) ?
- Do you know that the territory where they live (Voivodina) was for 1000 years part of the Hungarian Kingdom?
- Do you know that ninety years ago there were six hundred thousand Hungarians living in Voivodina now only 300 000 thousand ?
- Did you know that at end of World War II. 40 thousand innocent Hungarian and German citizens were killed by Serb communist partisans and the murderers were never brought to justice, the victims were not rehabilitated, not received any compensation and their memorials are regularly damaged?
- Do you know that the indigenous Hungarian community may not make use its right to self-determination and the rights of people belonging to Hungarian national community are continuously and systematically abused physically as well as psychologically?
- Did you know that Hungarians and members of non- Serbian national minorities are offended and insulted every day just because they are not Serbs?

The Serbian constitution guarantees equal treatment for people belonging to non-Serbian communities, Hungarians are have a much higher unemployment rate than Serbians.

There are a lot of difficulties around the use of minority languages. The state offices favour the use of Serbian language in the work of administrative and judicial organs.

In the Voivodina region of Serbia, oral or written use of minority languages suffer several practical obstacles. Governmental and local administrative offices increasingly tend to favour the Cyrillic (as opposed to Latin)script. Public administration bodies and law enforcement agencies have neither properly skilled employees nor technical equipment for the practical use of ethnic minority languages.

Voivodina's Hungarian community does not have its independent education system. Apart from two privately founded secondary schools, there are no ethnic minority schools, there are only mixed education institutions. The Hungarian community does not have an independent, government-funded university with Hungarian as the language of education, whereas the 600 thousand Swedish people living in Finland have three such universities. Serbian textbooks are full of lies and stereotypes related to Hungarians.

In its latest report, Freedom House, the US-based non-governmental organisation ranked Serbia 74th in terms of freedom of the press, thus rating the country's media as "partly free". The Hungarian media in Voivodina is in a difficult situation (not only financially). This especially applies to the printed press including most of the journalists working there, and to such an extent that it threatens freedom of the press as well as unbiased journalism.

Hungarians are discriminated against in terms of the political life and their participation in public affairs. The rate of Hungarians in the regional administration of Voivodina is only 6.48 per cent, which is 1.5 times lower than their rate in the population. There are no assigned representative seats for ethnic minorities either in the regional or in the federal parliament; therefore their representation in both institutions is far below their rate in the population.

The issue of the autonomy of ethnic minorities emerged again due to the Brussels agreement on the autonomy of Kosovo Serbs concluded between Prime Ministers Ivica Dačić of Serbia and Hashim Thaçi of Kosovo (on 19th April, 2013), and the prospective amendment of the act on the national councils of ethnic minorities. Based on the principle of equal treatment and the universal character of human rights, Voivodinan Hungarians are entitled to the same rights that Serbia demands for the Serbian community in Northern Kosovo, who happen to be outnumbered three times by Voivodinan Hungarians. There should not be so obvious double standards in issues of human rights...

Tihamér Lavró (Szabadka - Subotica): *"I was severely beaten up on account of being a Hungarian. Unfortunately, Hungarians are regularly beaten up, harassed and humiliated in Serbia. The assailants always receive mild punishments, while I had to stand before the court even for defending myself. During the Southern Slavic wars of the 90s, 40 per cent of Serbian refugees were settled in Voivodina, they are intolerant to the indigenous Hungarian population and upset the peace of the multi-ethnic area."*



Eszter Kotró (Topolya - Bačka Topola): *"I visited South Tirol a few years ago, and I was astounded to see the wealth and harmony characterizing the local Italian-Tirolian relations. The regional autonomy of the community in South Tirol sets an example for Europe, including Voivodinan Hungarians. I live in Ada by River Tisza, where Hungarians make up over 80 per cent of the population. If 300 thousand German speaking Tirolians in South-Tirol can have it, why cannot the same number of Hungarians have regional autonomy and a life worthy of human beings? We are entitled to real autonomy, too!"*



Árpád Horváth (Temerin): *"In 2004, my four friends and I were sentenced to 61 years in prison altogether for severely beating a Serbian drug dealer, even though the victim himself said that the conflict had no ethnic motive. Even war criminals did not receive such brutally long sentences in Serbia. We never killed anybody, yet we were tortured and pilloried. Two of us have been discharged (I served 8.5 years), but the other three are still suffering in prison. I have not heard of anybody receiving even faintly similar punishment for beating up Hungarians."*



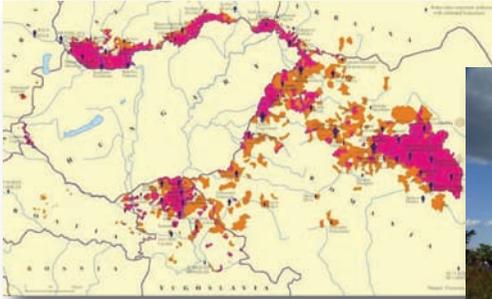
Magdolna Apatóczki (Ada; mother of one of the young men charged in staged proceedings)

"Seven young Hungarians (including my 19-year-old son) have been held in police custody for nearly a year on account of a fight in a pub, in the town of Temerin, Voivodina, where the Serbians, who outnumbered them, attacked and almost killed them. Their procedural rights were significantly violated, they were beaten up in custody and the court is seeking to pin the whole case on them, while charges were only pressed against one Serbian, but he is at large."

Several Hungarian parties and non-governmental organisations demand regional autonomy for Voivodinan Hungarians and to settle the matter of the Hungarian community in line with the European norms and practices. Serbia cannot be a member of the European Union unless they fulfil these demands!

The Brussels EU agreement between Serbia and Kosovo provides proper grounds! Please defend human rights and support our initiative!

The 300 000 Hungarians living in the "Southern Land" (Voivodina, Serbia) demand their rights and will not bear being deprived of them any longer!



The 1000-year-old meadow church of Aracs is a symbol of the Hungarian community

The rate of Hungarians in Voivodina (2002)

"Everyone has the right to a nationality and that no one should be arbitrarily deprived of a nationality or denied the right to change nationality."

Article 15, United Nations [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

"All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development"

Article 1, United Nations [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#) and [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(ICESCR\)](#).

"Autonomy, as applied in states respectful of the rule of law which guarantee their nationals fundamental rights and freedoms, should rather be seen as a "sub-state arrangement", which allows a minority group within a state to exercise its rights and preserve its cultural identity, while providing certain guarantees of the state's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity."The term "territorial autonomy" applies to an arrangement, usually adopted in a sovereign state, whereby the inhabitants of a certain region are given enlarged powers that reflect their specific geographical situation and protect and promote their cultural and religious traditions."

Article 10 and 11 of Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe's Resolution 1334 (2003) on Positive experiences of autonomous regions as a source of inspiration for conflict resolution in Europe

"The right to self-determination should first and foremost be implemented by way of the protection of minority rights as foreseen in the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157) and Assembly (2003) on positive experiences of autonomous regions as a source of inspiration for conflict resolution in Europe, as well as in other relevant instruments of international law."

"The Assembly therefore reiterates its invitation to those member states which have not yet done so to sign, ratify and implement the Framework Convention and to respect the basic principles set out in Assembly (2003) as soon as possible."

Article 7 and 8.1 of Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe's Resolution 1832 (2011) on „National sovereignty and statehood in contemporary international law: the need for clarification"

"We urge Serbia to implement all the measures for preventing and punishing discrimination and to step up its programs to promote the principles of tolerance, respect for others, reconciliation and intercultural and interreligious dialogue."

Paragraph 135 of Report (Doc. 12813) on „The honouring of obligations and commitments by Serbia” by the of Parliamentary Assembly’s Monitoring Committee (Council of Europe) adopted on 25 January 2012 by PACE

"The rule of law is a priority in our discussions with Serbia, and that, of course, covers the rights of minorities."



Mr Stefan FÜLE, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy (European Union) (Speech on 24 January 2013 in Strasbourg at winter session of Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe)

“I hope that Serbia will find a way to turn in a direction that leads it to the European Union but before it accesses the European Union, it must comply with all the obligations prescribed by the Council of Europe and the European Union. Territorial autonomy must be ensured for the Hungarian people and all the minorities which hanker after that. All kind of discrimination against minorities should cease. Illegal immigration should be stopped and there should be compensation in terms of the victims who were massacred by communists in the Second World War”



Mr Tamás GAUDI-NAGY, member Hungarian Parliament and the Hungarian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (Speech in debate on the Report Nr. 12818 „The honouring of obligations and commitments by Serbia” on 25 January 2012 in Strasbourg at Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe)

“Nevertheless, the protection of the rights of minorities and the fight against discrimination are still far from being won.”



Rappoteur Mr David HARUTYUNYAN, member of Armenian Parliament and the Armenian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (Speech in debate on the Report Nr. 12818 „The honouring of obligations and commitments by Serbia” 25 January 2012 Strasbourg Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe)

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