



The American Hungarian Federation

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AHF Statement for Immediate Release

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UDMR Joins Coalition Government in Romania: AHF Calls for Quick Resolution to Pressing Problems

On Monday, March 03, 2014, Prime Minister Victor Ponta of Romania's Social Democratic Party (USD) announced that the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) would be joining the governing coalition. In the agreement between the two parties, USD promised to help solve the problem of minority cultural rights and bring resolution to the conflict over re-establishment of Hungarian-language education at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Târgu Mureș. The UDMR will hold the Culture and Environment ministries, a vice-president seat, and 14 state secretary positions.

The American Hungarian Federation (Federation), representing a cross-section of the Hungarian American community, strongly supports cultural diversity, democratic development and human and minority rights for all people. Romania, which was awarded large parts of Hungary after WWI, including Transylvania, is home to a substantial Hungarian minority. After the fall of the brutal Ceausescu regime, the ethnic Hungarian community, which played a pivotal role in sparking the uprising that toppled Ceausescu, expected dramatic improvements and an end to government-sponsored repression and discrimination. They understandably expected to realize their democratically asserted aspirations for autonomy, preserve their language and cultural identity, and recover previously confiscated church and communal properties.

Unfortunately, many of these just demands have not been met, despite decades of legal wrangling. For example, while Bucharest lavishly funds the Orthodox Church that is engaged in a church building spree in areas with large Hungarian populations, it has returned only a tiny fraction of the more than 2000 religious and communal properties illegally seized from their rightful Hungarian owners during the Communist era and has unjustly prosecuted former state secretary Attila Marko, Silviu Vlim and Tamas Marosan in connection with the restitution to the Hungarian Reformed Diocese of Transylvania of the Szekely Miko Evangelical Reformed College. Finally, despite agreements to respect the historic multi-cultural institution, Romanian officials expelled Hungarian professors Peter Hantz and Lehel Kovacs from the Babes-Bolyai University for placing parallel Hungarian inscriptions below Romanian language signs.

We sincerely hope that the new coalition government will effectively resolve issues that impede reconciliation, work toward building a tolerant society, respect the rights of its Hungarian and other minorities and the rule of law, and convert promises into deeds. This would promote genuine democracy in Romania and defuse tensions caused by discrimination and intolerance.

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