



# The American Hungarian Federation

*Serving the Community since 1906 - Fidelissimus ad Mortem*

## **The American Hungarian Federation Urges Minority Rights be Fully and Unequivocally Respected**

*AHF Issues Statement on Minority Rights in Central and Eastern Europe, September 13, 2016*

The vexing issue of minority rights and intolerance in Europe is front page news again. The most recent incident involves reports that the Living Memorial erected in Hungary by survivors and descendants of survivors of the Holocaust was vandalized last Friday by a small fringe group. Considering the unacceptability of such dastardly deeds no matter how few the perpetrators, the American Hungarian Federation (AHF) herein reiterates its long-held views on the sensitive and vitally important topic of minority rights and calls for more education.

Throughout its more than 100 year old existence, AHF has decried and vigorously opposed manifestations of xenophobia, discrimination, racism and hate directed at national, ethnic and religious minorities, including but not limited to expressions of anti-Semitism and hate speech directed against any minority group. Sadly the rights of Hungarian minorities have been largely ignored.

AHF is inspired by and concurs with Elie Wiesel's observation that, "[w]herever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must — at that moment — become the center of the universe."

AHF has been and is deeply concerned by the discrimination and intolerance (and at times violence) confronting the Hungarian minorities in their age-old homelands in the states bordering Hungary. The minorities are denied a range of rights, including cultural or territorial autonomy, and are forced to live in a stifling *status quo* that threatens their cultural existence, if not their very survival. They are denied even internal self-determination that would enable them to exercise a degree of local self-rule and preserve their unique culture and identity within existing borders.

Significantly, the Hungarians of Serbia, Slovakia, Romania, and Ukraine have all demanded autonomy by peaceful and democratic means. Autonomy would ensure democracy to beleaguered Hungarians, fulfill promises made to them a century ago, and strengthen the democratic process by serving as a model of how majorities and minorities can work together to redress past wrongs. These states, however, ignore the minorities' legitimate demands and most disturbingly and inexplicably the international community silently stands on the sidelines, refusing to address the grievances of the Hungarian minorities.

It is imperative that Western standards apply with equal force and effect to all minorities, including Hungarian minorities, to ensure that their rights and ability to preserve their culture and human dignity are guaranteed and fully respected. AHF further urges that programs be sponsored to educate the general public of the pernicious and unacceptable consequences of discrimination, intolerance and hate-mongering (whether official or private acts) and that the rule of law is the foundation of democracy.

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Chairman of the Board