



## **AHF Statement**

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### **THE AMERICAN HUNGARIAN FEDERATION CONDEMNS LATEST MINORITY RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY ROMANIA: SANCTIONS AGAINST HUNGARIAN PROFESSORS AT BABES-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY FOR PROMOTING BILINGUALISM**

The American Hungarian Federation, founded in 1906 as an umbrella organization representing a cross-section of the Hungarian American community, has supported democracy, human and minority rights and the rule of law in Central and Eastern Europe. The situation of the Hungarian community\* living in Romania has been and is of concern to the Federation.

Although Romania joined NATO and will be accepted into the EU, the irrefutable record demonstrates that its laws and practices fail to conform to European and Western standards relating to human and minority rights. A few examples of Romania's less than exemplary record will suffice. More than a decade after the collapse of Communism, Romania has yet to fulfill its promises to its ethnic Hungarians. While Bucharest lavishly funds the Orthodox Church that is engaged in a church building spree, it has returned to the rightful Hungarian owners only a tiny fraction of the more than 2000 religious and communal properties illegally seized from them during the Communist era. Romania daily flouts the constitutional guarantee relating to the right to an education in the mother tongue. Romania has even failed to restore the independent Hungarian state university in Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár or adopt a Law on National Minorities. It virtually treats the legitimate request for autonomy of the Szekelyland as an act of treason.

An egregious violation of human rights occurred last month when two Hungarian professors – Peter Hantz and Lehel Kovacs – were expelled from Babes-Bolyai University for placing parallel Hungarian inscriptions below Romanian language signs at the so-called multicultural institution. It should be noted that although university officials had decided to allow the placement of bilingual signs by January 10, 2006, they stonewalled until Professor Hantz sought to implement the university's decision.

Romania should be publicly and privately encouraged to build a tolerant society by respecting the rights of its Hungarian and other minorities and the rule of law, thereby converting promises into deeds. This would promote genuine democracy in Romania and defuse tensions caused by discrimination and intolerance. The first step in this long-awaited process would be for Babes-Bolyai University to immediately reinstate the two professors, place the bilingual signs at the institution and establish autonomous Hungarian faculties at the University.

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\*According to the latest official Romanian census, Romania's population is 22 million, out of which 1.5 million are ethnic Hungarians or 7.1% of the population. In Transylvania, ethnic Hungarians make up 20 percent of the population, and in some counties, the majority.