



# The American Hungarian Federation

*Serving the Community since 1906 - Fidelissimus ad Mortem*

August 20, 2012

His Excellency Adrian Cosmin Vierita  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania  
1607 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20008

*Via facsimile*

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

The American Hungarian Federation (the "Federation") is deeply concerned that the prosecution of former state secretary Attila Marko, Silviu Vlim and Tamas Marosan in connection with the restitution to the Reformed Diocese of Transylvania of the Szekely Miko Evangelical Reformed College ("MEC") in Sfantu-Gheorghe, Romania was not justified. It only serves to further stall, and in this instance reverse, the lawful restitution of church properties and discriminate against Romania's Hungarian minority. The Federation hopes that this matter will be fairly and thoroughly reviewed, the sentences and punishments reversed and the property restored to MEC, thereby ensuring that Romania complies with applicable restitution laws, due process requirements and Western standards and norms.

We are concerned that twenty-two years after the collapse of Communism, restitution of Hungarian communal properties, including churches, has been proceeding at a slow pace so that a significant number of the affected properties have yet to be returned to their rightful owners. We understand from our Jewish friends that their community faces similar difficulties. The slow restitution process prompted Tom Lantos, the late Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, to sponsor H. Res. 191 (2005), which was adopted by the Congress and urged Romania to "provide equitable, prompt, fair restitution to all religious communities for property confiscated by the former Communist government."

Despite this unequivocal expression of congressional opinion and Romania's pledges to its Hungarian minority to respect minority rights and abide by the rule of law when it was accepted into the European Union and NATO, Romania's restitution process has not improved. Romania should re-dedicate itself to these promises and solemn undertakings.

What a better time to start than with the MEC case. The college was built by contributions and owned and operated since 1859 by the Reformed Church until it was illegally nationalized in 1948. In May 2002, the property was duly restituted to the Reformed Church. Thereafter and inexplicably the authorities sued for the nullification of the restitution (thereby seeking to re-nationalize the church property).

Despite the unassailable evidence that MEC belonged to the Reformed Church, on June 29, 2012, the three individual defendants received three year prison sentences (Vlim's sentence was suspended), the Reformed Church was ordered to pay 1M lei, and the property was re-nationalized. The Hungarian community justifiably views this case not only as a property restitution case but also as a proceeding directed against the community and a manifestation of intolerance and discrimination. Bigotry and intolerance is an affront to all democratic-minded individuals and violate Western values and norms.

In conclusion, we urge fair and expeditious restitution in this and other cases as well as justice for the defendants. We would be most grateful for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely

Frank Koszorus, Jr.  
President

