



The American Hungarian Federation

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His Excellency Knut Vollebaek
High Commissioner on National Minorities
Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe

September 28, 2011

Dear High Commissioner:

In our February 15, 2010 letter, we turned to you to express our concern about the continuing intolerance in Slovakia toward its Hungarian minority as manifested by the discriminatory language law. I reiterated that concern to you personally on March 11 during your trip to Washington, D.C. and then in my March 22 follow-up letter. Both letters are attached hereto for easy reference.

We appealed to you directly because your office has jurisdiction to address matters relating to anti-minority policies and practices and because Western, including European, responses to Slovakia's anti-Hungarian measures had been tepid at best.

You can imagine our surprise when we read reports in the electronic media asserting that you had allegedly labeled Hungary's support for Slovakia's Hungarian minority "malicious and foolish," even though it was Slovakia that enacted an ill-advised, discriminatory and provocative law -- a law that violates both the spirit and letter of Western norms as well as Slovakia's express promises to respect minority rights. We doubt that you would consider the party -- Hungary -- "malicious" and "foolish" for championing the rights of Hungarians when it was unilateral Slovak violations of human and minority rights that precipitated incredulity and restrained protest by Hungary.

We respectfully urge that in order to clear up the confusion caused by the media reports, you issue a clarification of your views and a statement of unequivocal support for the rights of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. Unfortunately, Slovakia once again has given cause for such admonition.

The President of Slovakia recently falsely labeled Janos Esterhazy, the only member of Slovakia's parliament to vote against the deportation of Jews in 1942, a follower of Hitler and fascism and opposed the unveiling of a sculpture in Esterhazy's memory in Kosice (Kassa). Esterhazy died in a Czechoslovak prison in 1957. Although Russia has done so, Slovakia still refuses to exonerate him, despite the efforts of Simon Wiesenthal and others.

It has been reported that Slovakia has deprived more than 100 Slovak Hungarians of their citizenship for applying for dual citizenship. Extending dual citizenship is a practice widely accepted in Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe. Slovakia's unduly restrictive citizenship law is the most recent and inexplicable expression of intolerance toward its Hungarian minority. As such, it must not be ignored, and it would be beneficial for the European community to raise its voice.

An emerging issue involving another Hungarian community is the discriminatory compensation law just passed by Serbia that appears to exclude ethnic Hungarians of Vojvodina from compensation on the objectionable principle of collective guilt -- a violation of the rule of law.

As these practices should not be ignored, we appreciate your attention to them and look forward to your efforts to further democracy, including tolerance and minority rights, in this region.
Sincerely,

Frank Koszorus, Jr.
President and Chairman Foreign Affairs Committee