



The American Hungarian Federation

Serving the Community since 1906 - Fidelissimus ad Mortem

December 1, 2011

Honorable Christopher H. Smith
Chairman, U.S. Helsinki Commission
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
Co-Chairman, U.S. Helsinki Commission
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Co-Chairman:

The American Hungarian Federation ("Federation"), founded in 1906 and representing a broad cross-section of the Hungarian American community, supports democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. It also supports the U.S. Helsinki Commission's mission of monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Accords and advancing comprehensive security through promotion of human rights and democracy.

An indispensable element of sustainable security in the region involves the respect for minority rights. Today a persistent problem in many parts of the region is the mistreatment of the Roma, conspicuous anti-Semitism and discrimination against Hungarian minorities in states neighboring Hungary, including Slovakia. Intolerance and discrimination targeting any group based on ethnicity, nationality or religion is not acceptable.

The most recent anti-Hungarian incident involves Slovakia stripping Oliver Boldoghy of his Slovak citizenship after becoming a dual citizen. This decision is not only contrary to American and European practices, it violates the Slovak constitution, which provides that "no one must be deprived of the citizenship of the Slovak Republic against his will." This decision needs to be reversed.

It also must not be viewed in isolation, but from the perspective of a series of official actions that have created an inhospitable environment for Slovakia's Hungarian minority. These include, for example, gerrymandering administrative divisions; adopting a resolution proposed by extremist Jan Slota confirming the Benes decrees (which imposed collective guilt on Hungarians and continue to adversely affect them); adopting a discriminatory language law; and refusing to exonerate Janos Esterhazy, who as leader of the Hungarian Party in Tiso's Fascist Slovakia was the only Member of Parliament to vote against the deportation of Jews in 1942. (On November 3, 2011, the Anti-Defamation League presented the Jan Karski Courage to Care Award posthumously to Esterhazy.) A more detailed summary of these issues is attached.

In conclusion, we urge the Helsinki Commission to engage Slovakia to address these issues to ensure that its minorities are not threatened by the forced assimilation of their culture and identity and to encourage it to build a tolerant society by respecting the human and minority rights of its Hungarian and other minorities. This would promote genuine democracy, defuse tensions caused by discrimination and intolerance, and promote U.S. interests in a Europe that is whole, free, stable and secure.

Sincerely,

Frank Koszorus, Jr.
National President
Public Member of the U.S. Delegation of the 1989 Conference
on Security and Cooperation in Europe on the Human Dimension