



PERMANENT MISSION OF HUNGARY  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
NEW YORK

**Preserving Pluralism and Diversity in the Nineveh Region**

*30 November 2017*

**Intervention by  
H.E. Ambassador Katalin Bogyay  
Permanent Representative**

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of the Holy See, the Knights of Columbus and the Nineveh Reconstruction Committee for organizing this crucial event, and I am especially grateful for the presence and inspiring remarks by Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda and Father Salar Kajo, who travelled all the way from Iraq to give their message.

Hungary is firmly committed to the promotion and protection of minorities, including religious minorities, with special regard to Christians, as well as to the accountability of any criminal offences against them. We are deeply concerned by the persecution of Christians in the Middle East, and are convinced that the protection of ethnic and religious pluralism, is crucial for the long-term stability and security of the region.

Hungary has been actively supporting persecuted minorities. The Government established a **Deputy State Secretariat** for the Aid of Persecuted Christians last year, and launched the “**Hungary Helps**” Initiative, which covers all humanitarian aid and international development efforts by Hungary, the private sector and citizens, coordinated by an **Ambassador-at-Large**. The Initiative aims to deliver all help needed directly to those in need, thereby enabling communities to safely return, remain and reintegrate in their homeland, which is a prerequisite for renewed religious pluralism, long-standing survival and peaceful co-existence of different ethnic and religious groups.

Hungary provided 93 000 USD humanitarian aid to **Iraqi internally displaced persons** and the authorities of Kurdistan already in 2014.

In 2016, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade provided 124 323 USD to the **Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA)**, which opened a representative office in Erbil. The office will provide long-term presence and assistance for Syrian refugees and IDPs of Iraq. HIA works closely together with the ACT Alliance and the Church of Kald, and takes part in the preparation of EU-funded MADAD project (that aims to strengthen the resilience of the host communities, refugees and internally displaced persons). HIA will implement a **two-year program** of 1 776 000 USD that includes **humanitarian** assistance to IDPs and Syrian refugees (a minimum of 2000 individuals) for 24 months; the opening of a **Returnee Support Center** near Mosul for 24 months; the implementation of **humanitarian and rehabilitation programs** for a minimum of 2000 beneficiaries.

This May, the Government signed **two Aid Instruments** with His Excellency Archbishop Bashar Matti Warda (*present here*) and His Beatitude, Louis I Rafael Sako, Chaldean Catholic Patriarch of Babylon and Head of the Chaldean Catholic Church. One is for the **reconstruction of 200 houses** of Internally Displaced Persons in the Iraqi city of Telskof, enabling 1300 persons to return to their homes (worth 2 million USD). (Our Deputy State Secretary visited the region earlier in November to personally follow the reconstruction efforts.). Moreover, Government will be supplying **six-month medicine** for the Saint Joseph’s Hospital in Erbil (worth 500,000 USD). Besides, Hungary provides further support to **charity organizations**, co-finances building a school in Erbil hand in hand with the Hungarian Catholic Church (748 thousand dollars), and supports the **education** of the children of persecuted Christian families.

Our activities extend to crisis-affected communities of **Lebanon** as well. This summer, Hungary also committed to provide a further financial 1,2 million USD aid to the **humanitarian activities** of the Syriac Catholic and Orthodox Churches in Lebanon. Our projects include support to a **kindergarten** (of Saint Severus’s Syriac Orthodox educational institute), a **shelter** (Saint Paul’s House), an **orphanage** (run by Ephraimite nuns in Charfet),

a **school** (Angels of Peace School in Erbil, ensuring tuition to displaced Iraqi Christian children), a **church** (joint church reconstruction programme of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Budapest and the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik), and so on. Our Deputy State Secretary for the Aid of Persecuted Christians, Tristan Azbej, has visited Lebanon to follow the implementation of these projects. He is meeting His Beatitude Ignatius Youssef III Younan, Patriarch of Antioch for the Syriac Catholic Church, H.B. Bechara Boutros al-Rahi, Maronite patriarch of Beyrouth as well as Mor Justinos Boulos Safar, Patriarchal Vicar of Zahleh and Beqaa.

Besides the short-term humanitarian relief and emergency aid, it is necessary to put greater emphasis on **education and creating jobs**, in order to strengthen the resilience of crisis-affected people and their communities. The **Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme** of Hungary gives funding for a full cycle of higher education of students coming from 54 countries. The number of students increased from almost 3000 to more than 6000 during this academic year. Hungary currently receives 49 students from the Kurdistan Regional Government, **115 from the rest of Iraq**, 292 from Syria, 654 from Jordan, and we have launched an additional scholarship for 87 Christian youth in September.

Finally, we believe that religious and ethnic pluralism must be based on **intercultural and interreligious dialogue**, working with **moderate religious leaders** to establish mutual respect of cultural diversity. Hungary is active in raising awareness among the wider European audience on this issue by giving voice to persecuted Christians and facilitating international exchange on the matter, in the framework of an **International Conference** in Budapest on Christian persecution. The first conference took place on 11-13 October in Budapest, and this will become an annual tradition.

Thank you for your attention.