



PERMANENT MISSION OF HUNGARY
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Intervention by
H.E. Ambassador Katalin Bogyay
Permanent Representative
on the occasion of the side event

Peace, Reconciliation and Justice:
The Future of Religious and Ethnic Minorities Victimized by Da'esh

Organized by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the UN, the NGO
Committee on Freedom of Religion and Belief and Roads of Success

2 November 2017

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of the Holy See, the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion and Belief and Roads of Success for organizing this crucial event, and I am especially grateful for the courage and strength of the survivor Ekhlas Bajoo who told us her story today.

The Hungarian Government is firmly committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities, with special regard to national, religious and ethnic minorities.

We are deeply shocked and saddened by the unthinkable horrors that thousands of victims, including those belonging to minorities, have to endure every day in the hands of Da'esh. These attacks do not only threaten lives today, but the existence and future of entire communities, and the fate of a whole region.

We are convinced that the **protection of freedom of religion and belief, and also of cultural heritage** are pillars of diversity, which is key for preserving the multi-ethnic, multi-confessional character of the Middle East. Destruction of cultural heritage also means damaging the collective identity and social fabric of communities.

What can we, Member States do, in this regard?

First, we have to ensure accountability for perpetrators, and Hungary actively supports national and international efforts in this regard.

We are proud that last year, Hungary became a member of the **International Humanitarian Fact-finding Commission (IHFFC)**, established in 1991, represented by Ms. Réka Varga, head of the Public International Law Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, since 2016.

As member of the **Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group** at the UN, Hungary is committed to support all initiatives aimed at preventing or ending genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, including the adoption of a Code of Conduct in the Security Council.

Hungary offers a voluntary contribution of 50.000 Euros for the establishment of **International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)** to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

Hungary supports the implementation of **Security Council Resolution 2379 (2017)**, establishing a mechanism for investigating violations of international law by ISIL in Iraq and Syria, determining whether these violations constitute acts of genocide or other serious international crimes, identifying perpetrators and measures to ensure their accountability.

Second, we have to rebuild the lives of survivors: their homes, schools, hospitals, sacred places to put their lives back on track.

In the framework of “**Hungary Helps**”, an overarching humanitarian and development program, Hungary, its citizens and the private sector supports those struck by humanitarian emergencies, driven by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

The program is coordinated by an **Ambassador-at-Large**, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Human Capacities, where there is a separate **Undersecretariat of State** for Assistance for Persecuted Christians.

Hungary Helps provides “**smart help**”: responsible, long-term and sustainable solutions. Aid is allocated as close to the persons and communities in need as possible, in order to preserve their dignity and resilience, foster reconstruction and a new start, and save them from the scourge of internal displacement, forced migration and human trafficking. The Hungary Helps program is allocated an overall **37,2 million dollars** for the forthcoming years.

Hungarian humanitarian and reconstruction projects include the rebuilding of **houses** of Internally Displaced Persons in Telsqof, Iraq, enabling 1300 persons to return to their homes (aid: 2,17 million dollars); funding for full **medical supply** of the Saint Joseph Hospital in Erbil (542,6 thousand dollars); **humanitarian activities** of the Syrian Catholic and Orthodox church (aided by 1,16 million dollars); reconstruction of medieval **churches** is underway in Lebanon to serve the religious communities and promote their cultural heritage; building a **school** in Erbil, funded by the Hungarian Catholic Church and the Government (748 thousand dollars), education starting this October. And finally, Hungary provided for the **rehabilitation** of Egyptian Coptic survivors of the terrorist attack of 11 December 2016.

Third, we have to give hope and future through education to the youth living in conflict areas.

The **Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme** of Hungary gives funding for a full cycle of higher education of students coming from 54 countries, including visa, enrollment fee, residence or housing stipend, monthly stipend, and healthcare package. The allocated funds for the scholarship amount to 52 thousand dollars for 2017, and 63.5 thousand dollars for 2018. For the academic year 2016-2017, we had 2984 students participating; for 2017-2018, we foresee 6484 students studying altogether.

The number of students accepted from academic years 2016/2017 to 2017/2018 has considerably increased: 255 to 654 from Jordan, 30 to 120 from Egypt, 71 to 115 from Iraq, 27 to 49 from Kurdistan Regional Government, 32 to 61 from Yemen, 21 to 36 from Lebanon, 75 to 124 from Palestine, 63 to 292 from Syria, 101 to 151 Nigeria, 64 to 259 from Pakistan. In addition, we have launched an additional scholarship for 87 Christian youth in September.

Hungary also fosters **international dialogue** on this issue. We have to foster **intercultural and interreligious dialogue**, to go beyond tolerance, and achieve mutual acceptance, respect and celebrate together our cultural diversity. We have to work with **moderate religious leaders** to combat extremism, and help communities in reconciliation and healing. The Fez process, and the elaboration of the “Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes”, are important compasses in this regard. An **international consultation** on persecution of Christian minorities took

place on 11-13 October in Budapest, with participation of religious leaders, high-level government officials, and national and international organisations.

The protection of minorities against violence and the promotion of their human rights and fundamental freedoms should be at the heart of the international community's action during conflict as well as post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation, recognizing that religious diversity, tolerance and mutual understanding are key to sustainable peace and stability.

Thank you for your attention.