

HUNGARY: Scandalous New Law on Religion - Most Oppressive in OSCE Region

Draft Religion Law Would Constitute the Most Oppressive Religion Law in the OSCE Region



Christian Newswire (21.06.2011) / HRWF (22.06.2011) -<http://www.hrwf.net> -**Legislation recently proposed in Hungary contains provisions designed to create the most oppressive religion law and the most burdensome registration system in the entire OSCE region. Over a hundred religious organizations will be retroactively stripped of their status as religious communities and "de-registered" as religious organizations if these provisions become law.**

On 10 June 2011, four Christian Democrat (KDNP) Members of the Parliament submitted a proposed draft law regarding "The Right to Freedom of Conscience and Religion and on the Status of Churches, Religions and Religious Communities". Only four days after the Bill was introduced in Parliament, the Committee on Human Rights, Minority, Civil and Religious Affairs approved the proposed religious legislation and voted to send the draft law to the Parliamentary Assembly for discussion and passage.

"Passage of this legislation would represent a serious setback for religious freedom in Hungary," said Joseph K. Grieboski, Founder and Chairman of THE INSTITUTE. "In my opinion, the legislation contravenes international human rights standards and Hungary's political commitments to the OSCE, European Union, Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights, and the United Nations as it clearly discriminates against minority religious groups."

The draft law's tier system of state recognition is completely inconsistent with fundamental human rights as it contravenes the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The draft law includes retroactive provisions that violate the Rule of Law and the right to religious freedom. These provisions would "de-register" targeted minority faiths that have been registered as religions in Hungary since the adoption of the 1990 Religion Law, while allowing favored religious organizations to maintain their registered religious status.

Religious organizations that have been "de-registered" may not use the name "Church" and will also lose their status as a religious organization if they are not "re-registered" through

burdensome Court proceedings.

In addition, "re-registration" can only occur if a minority religious community meets onerous duration and population levels designed to suppress minority religious freedom in complete contravention of European Human Rights Court's and OSCE's standards.

The Bill also includes a narrow definition of "religious activities" that do not comport with the broad definition of religion mandated under international human rights norms that Hungary is obliged to follow.

In addition to the egregious human rights defects in the legislation, the questionable method and manner in which the draft law is being rushed through the Parliament merits sending the legislation back to the Committee on Human Rights, Minority, Civil and Religious Affairs for further study. This is especially appropriate, as passage of the draft law by the Committee did not follow standard Parliamentary procedures. The draft law is being rushed through the Committee with such great speed that it has not received thoughtful consideration, the opportunity for amendments, or debate on its merits.

THE INSTITUTE on Religion and Public Policy

urges the Hungary Parliament to refrain from enacting the draft legislation and by doing so ensure Hungary complies with international human rights and religious freedom standards.

The full report of THE INSTITUTE on Religion and Public Policy can be found under:

http://religionandpolicy.org/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6921&Itemid=327

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