



To Members of the European Parliament

Ref. B1470
Brussels, 2 July 2013

EP report on the situation of fundamental rights in Hungary – vote in plenary

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

We write ahead of tomorrow's vote on the LIBE report on Hungary by Rui Tavares, to urge you to support the report as an important contribution to the ongoing discussions on the appropriate response by European institutions to developments in Hungary.

The report's assessment is well-grounded and authoritative. It is consistent with our own findings (see Human Rights Watch's May 2013 report, "Wrong Direction on Rights" and Amnesty International's March 2013 briefing, "Amnesty International's Concerns about the Fourth Amendment to Hungary's Fundamental Law"). It is also consistent with numerous other expert bodies and observers who have repeatedly raised the alarm about developments in Hungary and urged the Hungarian authorities to remedy concerns identified. These include, but are not limited to, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), the Venice Commission, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Adequate Housing and Poverty and Human Rights, and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

Regrettably, the Hungarian government's response has been to steadfastly reject legitimate concerns as unfounded, based on a misunderstanding, or motivated by political bias. What is more, instead of seeking to address concerns identified, the government proceeded to impose further constitutional changes in March 2013. These changes effectively reversed binding rulings by Hungary's Constitutional Court that upheld fundamental rights, by introducing into the constitution itself problematic laws the court had previously struck down, and ending the court's power to review the substance of constitutional amendments. Reacting to this move, PACE calls it "unacceptable and rais[ing] questions about the willingness of the current authorities to abide by European standards and norms." Notably, it concludes that developments in Hungary "have raised serious and sustained concerns about the extent to which the country is still complying with [its Council of Europe] obligations."

Hungary's downward slide on protecting the rule of law and human rights is extremely worrying, and must be stopped. Equally as important is sending a strong message that deflecting legitimate concerns as factually wrong or politically motivated, and refusing to take steps to address them, is not acceptable.

The Parliament has a crucial role to play in this regard, by adding its voice to those speaking out in defence of the rule of law and human rights in Hungary and by using all the tools available to help ensure the Hungarian government takes the steps needed to bring its laws into line with European and international standards.

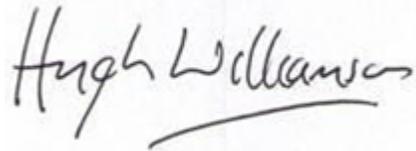
The Tavares report is essential to these efforts.

We hope we can count on your leadership and support on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicolas J. Beger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "N".

Dr. Nicolas J. Beger
Director European Institutions Office
Amnesty International

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hugh Williamson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "H".

Hugh Williamson
Director Europe and Central Asia Division
Human Rights Watch