

14 April 2011



Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán  
Minister of Interior, Sándor Pintér  
Minister of State for Social Inclusion, Zoltán Balog  
Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, Minority, Civic and Religious Affairs Chairman,  
Tamás Lukács  
Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Internal Security Chairman, Máté Kocsis  
Member of Parliament, Ágnes Osztolykán  
Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minorities, Ernő Kállai



Dear Excellencies,

The European Roma Rights Centre, Chance for Children Foundation, Amnesty International Hungary, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU-TASZ), the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and the Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities are writing to urge your prompt reaction to the patrols of Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület (Civil Guard Association for a Better Future) paramilitary organisation in Hajdúhadház, organised from 12 April 2011.

About 180 representatives of Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület began conducting patrols on 12 April 2011 around Hajdúhadház, where one quarter of the over 12,000 residents are Romani. Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület have reportedly been patrolling in groups of 8-10 persons, clad in black military clothing, intimidating the Romani residents and filming them in their homes and gardens. They announced their intention to stay for at least two weeks and reportedly plan several demonstrations. Their current activities appear to be similar to the intimidation and harassment that they inflicted on Roma in Gyöngyöspata from 1-16 March, unimpeded by the police.

The submitting organisations have previously expressed their concerns about Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület, which is effectively a paramilitary group, listing its aims as preventing crime, protecting citizens and safeguarding public safety.<sup>1</sup> Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület is linked to the Magyar Nemzeti Gárda (with the same aims and leadership as the banned Magyar Gárda) and the far-right political party Jobbik, whose inflammatory rhetoric about “Gypsy crime” contributes to inter-ethnic tension and risks provoking violence. A legal briefing prepared by HCLU-TASZ based on research in Gyöngyöspata outlines several provisions of the Hungarian criminal code that the Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület’s activities appear to have violated: (art. 174/B Violence Against a Member of a Community, art. 176/A Harassment and art. 271 Public Nuisance), while the inactivity of the police raises concerns under legal provisions related to abuse of authority and disciplinary responsibility.<sup>2</sup>

The Hungarian Constitution guarantees the right to liberty and personal security,<sup>3</sup> while Hungary is bound by the European Convention on Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to ensure that all citizens can exercise their rights to liberty, security of the person and private and family life.<sup>4</sup>

Recalling the 8 April statement of Minister of State for Social Inclusion Zoltán Balog that “Nobody can assume the role of keeping the peace or act as a substitute for the police”, the European Roma Rights Centre, Chance for Children Foundation, Amnesty International Hungary, the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and the Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities urge Hungarian authorities to swiftly condemn anti-Roma violence and intimidation by Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület. We also urge Hungarian competent authorities to instruct Hungarian police to swiftly intervene to prevent and investigate any actions in violation of Hungarian law.

Sincerely,

Robert Kushen, Executive Director  
European Roma Rights Centre

Erzsebet Mohacsi, President  
Chance for Children Foundation

Orsolya Jeney, Director  
Amnesty International Hungary

Balázs Dénes, Executive Director  
Hungarian Civil Liberties Union

András Kádár, Co-chair  
Hungarian Helsinki Committee

Erika Muhi, Director  
Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities

<sup>1</sup> Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület, available at: <http://www.szebbjovo-ert.com/index.php?q=content/Alapszabaly>

<sup>2</sup> HCLU-TASZ, Report and Legal Position on the Situation in Gyöngyöspata, available at: [http://tasz.hu/files/tasz/imce/gyongyospata-legal\\_position.pdf](http://tasz.hu/files/tasz/imce/gyongyospata-legal_position.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Hungarian Constitution, Article 55 (1).

<sup>4</sup> European Convention on Human Rights, Articles 5 and 8; Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 6 and 7; and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9 and 17.

CC: European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding  
European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, László Andor  
Head of the Roma Taskforce and European Commission Director-General for Justice, Françoise Le Bail  
President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek  
MEP, Livia Járóka  
MEP, Kinga Göncz  
MEP, Renate Weber  
Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg  
Council of Europe Secretary General, Thorbjørn Jagland  
Special representative for Roma Issues to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Jeroen Schokkenbroek  
OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Knut Vollebaek  
OSCE/ODIHR Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues, Andrzej Mirga  
European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights Director, Morten Kjærum  
European Commission against Racism and Intolerance Chair, Nils Muiznieks