

# URGENT ACTION

## DRAFT LAW TARGETING NGOS MUST BE STOPPED

**A draft law targeting Hungarian NGOs receiving funding from abroad on the grounds that they represent “foreign interests” is expected to be voted by the National Assembly on 12-15 June. If passed, the law would be the latest step in the crackdown on civil society in Hungary. It would become a tool to discredit and intimidate NGOs and undermine their capacity to protect human rights and provide valuable services to Hungarian people.**

The draft “Law on the Transparency of Organisations Funded from Abroad” (T/14967), submitted to the National Assembly on 7 April by members of the governing Fidesz party, would force **Hungarian NGOs** receiving more than 7.200.000 HUF (approx. € 24,000) per year from abroad to register as “civic organisations receiving foreign funding” and to put this label on all their publications. This includes funding from all international sources not managed by a central Hungarian budgetary institution. Organisations which fail to comply with the new requirements would face sanctions that could go up to dissolution.

The draft is currently under discussion in the Hungarian National Assembly and the vote is expected to take place during the 12-15 June plenary seating.

This proposal is the latest step in the crackdown on civil society in the country. By forcing NGOs to label themselves as “foreign funded”, the Hungarian government is seeking to discredit their work and turn people against them. The rationale of the proposal suggests that NGOs funded from abroad may serve “foreign interests” and their funding can contribute to “endangering the sovereignty and national security of Hungary”. Existing legislation in Hungary already ensures transparency and accountability for NGOs and the effect of this law will only be to stigmatize, discredit and intimidate NGOs. It will also undermine the capacity of NGOs to promote and defend human rights and provide valuable services to people in Hungary by significantly increasing their administrative burdens. The government has staunchly attacked several NGOs, human rights defenders, watchdogs and environmental activists.

### **Please write immediately in Hungarian, English or your own language:**

- Calling on the Fidesz party leadership to withdraw the draft law on NGOs;
- Calling on them to ensure that NGOs can seek, receive and use funding from foreign and international sources without undue impediments;
- Urging the Hungarian authorities to stop the stigmatization and intimidation of civil society organizations and human rights defenders.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 JULY 2017 TO:**

#### Prime Minister

Viktor Orbán  
1357 Budapest, Pf. 6.  
Hungary  
Fax: +36 1 795 0381  
Email: orbanviktor@orbanviktor.hu or  
miniszterelnok@mk.gov.hu  
**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

#### **And copies to:**

Vice-chair of the Fidesz party  
parliamentary group  
Dr Gergely Gulyás  
Fidesz Központi Hivatal  
1062 Budapest, Lendvay utca 28.  
Hungary  
Email: gergely.gulyas@parlament.hu

#### **And copies to:**

Government spokesperson  
Zoltán Kovács  
1357 Budapest, Pf. 6.  
Hungary  
Fax: +36 1 795 0381  
Email: kormanyoszovivo@mk.gov.hu or  
intcomm@mk.gov.hu

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** HIS EXCELLENCY MR KRISTÓF SZALAY-BOBROVNICZKY, Embassy of Hungary, 35 Eaton Place. London, SW1X 8BY, 020 7201 3440, Fax 020 7823 1348, mission.lon@mfa.gov.hu, [www.facebook.com/hungarianembassyLondon](http://www.facebook.com/hungarianembassyLondon), tweet at the Ambassador: @AmbSzabadhegy Salutation: Your Excellency

**Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Existing legislation in Hungary already ensures transparency and accountability for NGOs. The draft law would further shrink the space for civil society and would particularly restrict the work of those working to promote and defend human rights and provide valuable services to society. The Law CLXXV of 2011 on the right to association, the public benefit status, and the operation and support of civil society organizations, (Sections 20, 29-30) prescribes detailed reporting requirements for civil society organisations.

A European Parliament (EP) resolution of 17 May 2017 on the situation in Hungary (2017/2656(RSP)) asked that the Hungarian government withdraw the draft law. The resolution stresses that the European Union (EU) – which Hungary joined in 2004 – is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Following the EP resolution, which also noted with concern that the current situation in Hungary represents a clear risk of a serious breach of the founding values of the EU, members of the Hungarian government declined to withdraw or to amend the proposal.

The draft law has been received with concern by independent experts on the rights to freedom of assembly and expression and human rights defenders, including the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Special Rapporteurs. The draft law is currently being reviewed by the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, which will deliver its opinion in June.

International law and standards guarantee the right to freedom of association, which includes the right to form and join formal or informal groups to take collective action, a critical element of the work of human rights defenders. States have an obligation to provide the legal framework for the establishment of associations, must abstain from unduly obstructing the exercise of this right. The right to solicit, receive and utilize resources, including from international sources, is an essential element of the right to association and it is also enshrined in UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

For information on recent attacks on NGOs, see Amnesty International's 2015 report:  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur27/0001/2015/en/>

Further information on UA: 119/17 Index: EUR 27/6366/2017 Issue Date: 26 May 2017