

ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT MUST PROTECT HUNGARIAN MINORITY

Hon. David Kilgour, JD.
Public Demonstration
Romanian Embassy
Rideau Street
Ottawa
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Dr Kovacs, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to speak to so many of you this afternoon about an issue of justice for all in Romania.

The European media reported a few hours ago that large crowds are protesting on streets in Budapest and Romania over the treatment of 1.2 million ethnic Hungarians in Romania. They quite understandably want to maintain their cultural identity and participate fully in economic growth.

All of us here today and across Canada know how important it is to protect linguistic, cultural and religious minorities. Our national history contains too many instances of the contrary, but in recent decades most of us have come to embrace the better practices of our national family life. One of these, of course, is “respect all”.

I understand that today there are only three counties in all of Transylvania which still have a Hungarian-origin majority of residents. The latest problem emerged with a legislative plan underway to incorporate the three into larger Romanian regions so that Hungarian-origin persons become a minority. Are these three mere coincidences or an attempt to assimilate a centuries-old and important minority community –the largest minority in Europe-- at this time?

All of us here know about the late dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his attempts to remove the Hungarian culture from Romanian soil. Entire Hungarian villages were ploughed under on his orders in the 1980s, which caused Rev. Laszlo Tokes to lead protests which led ultimately to the toppling and execution of Ceausescu on Dec. 25, 1989.

The government in Bucharest should not be following the practices of an individual who was one of the worst tyrants in Europe's long history.

Most recently, there is also the disturbing case of Tünde Lakó Péterfi in Târgu-Mureş/Marosvásárhely (Oct. 8, 2013) –a major city half Hungarian, half Romanian-- who sought to encourage the use of bilingual Romanian-Hungarian sales signs in a market. She was fined the equivalent of \$500 for this essentially Canadian-like act of good bilingual will.

In short, like no doubt most other Canadians- if aware of the facts-all of us here today and in many capitals around the world want justice and fair treatment for all citizens of Romania, Hungary, Canada or anywhere else.

Thank you.