

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: EUR 27/001/2014
18 February 2014

Hungary: Political parties and their candidates must put human rights at the heart of the election campaign

As the official launch of the legislative elections in Hungary takes place today, Amnesty International called on all parties and their candidates to ensure that they put human rights at the centre of their election pledges during their campaign ahead of polling day on 6 April 2014.

Amnesty International believes that elections present an opportunity for the political parties and their candidates to demonstrate their commitment to human rights and to strengthen the compliance with the international standards that Hungary voluntarily adopted. Amnesty International called on all parties to ensure that hate speech has no place in the election campaign.

Hungary's human rights record during the last decade has led to criticism from international human rights monitoring bodies, as well as the UN Human Rights Council and the European Court of Human Rights on issues such as hate crimes and school segregation of Roma¹, unfair limitations to the right to freedom of expression, assembly and media and the criminalisation of homelessness.

Over the years, Amnesty International documented serious human rights violations in a number of areas such as hate crimes (in particular racist violence), calling on Hungary to bring its laws on hate crimes in line with international human rights standards by defining bias motivation in law and extending it to all types of crimes, as it currently only covers assaults (violence against a member of a community). Amnesty International's research on hate crimes perpetrated against Roma in Hungary has highlighted that legislative gaps, lack of specific guidelines on investigation of hate crimes, lack of training and, in some instances failures of the police to thoroughly investigate the alleged racist motivation associated with common crimes. Furthermore, in the past Amnesty International documented several instances where the police failed to protect Romani individuals and members of other groups from threats and violence from extremist and paramilitary groups².

In 2011 and 2013, Amnesty International also criticised Hungarian new constitution and its subsequent amendment which introduced provisions weakening the protection from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity; restrictions to women's access to safe and legal abortion; restrictive definition of family (excluding non-married couples and/or same-sex couples); provisions allowing for life imprisonment without parole as well as provisions allowing criminalization of homelessness.

Five-point human rights agenda

Ahead of the parliamentary elections, Amnesty International released its Five-point human rights agenda for political parties and their candidates during the electoral campaign and once they are elected to parliament to introduce new legislation and policies.

¹ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/governments-urged-end-segregation-roma-schools-after-european-court-rules-against-hungary-2013->

² <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/hungary-must-protect-roma-communities-attack-2012-08-15>

1. Ensure an election campaign free of speech aimed at inciting hatred towards any community.
2. Ensure hate crimes are prevented and when they occur effectively and promptly investigated and perpetrators brought to justice in fair trials.
3. Amend the Hungarian constitution to ensure an inclusive definition of family and access of women and girls to safe and legal abortion.
4. Repeal the legal provisions allowing for criminalization of homelessness.
5. Introduce measures to enforce the existing legislation and prevent violence against women, including rape.

This will be the first parliamentary elections since the new constitution and the reduction of seats in Parliament from 386 to 199 under the terms of the new election law both of which came into force in January 2012. Amnesty International looks forward to engaging on the Five-point human rights agenda with all the candidates during the electoral campaign, as well as with the new parliament and government after the elections.

End/