

## Children's choice...

### – An alarming abuse

Csángó-Hungarian children of Klézse/Clej village must choose between religious confirmation and the Hungarian language. Two Roman Catholic priests in Klézse/Clej (Moldova, Romania) told children who were attending Hungarian classes that they were supposed to choose between these two options. The Hungarian Csángó Association of Moldova submitted letters of complaint to the Catholic Bishops in Iași and the National Council to Combat Discrimination.

Forty-six children are improving their modern Hungarian language skills in Klézse/Clej, as their mother tongue has preserved an archaic Hungarian dialect. The children were confronted with the two priests' declarations during the preparatory lessons for the confirmation of July this year. After that, several parents got alarmed and requested in writing to withdraw their children from the Hungarian classes held at the local school.

Revd Pascariu Augustin and Revd Hodea Cristian did not take on the interview in front of TV cameras. In addition they forbade shooting inside the church. They stated, however, that they consider the case a straightforward “provocation”, and it is not appropriate for local children to avow that Hungarian is their mother tongue.

Attila Hegyeli, educational executive of the Hungarian Csángó Association of Moldova declared that, unfortunately, this was not an isolated case. They were aware of four other cases, when at the Sunday worships Roman Catholic priests preached against “the Hungarian threat” and they did that in synchronization. In Diószeg, a vulgar anti-Hungarian campaign has been propagated by the local priest for more than a month. →



According to Attila Hegyeli they did not get the response of the National Council to Combat Discrimination yet, but they did not have any expectations to anticipate it soon, since their previous petition submitted in 2005 was answered exactly two years after. He added that a meeting had been scheduled between their Association and the Roman Catholic Bishop of Iași to discuss about this abuse. Interestingly, when they had arrived to the venue, the head of church was out of office and it was revealed to them that the bishop could not really deal with their complaint.



The executive declared that in the Csángó tradition the one who does not confirm his/her Catholic belief can not be considered “mature”. Confirmation thus for Csángós is a much more significant event than for other Hungarian-speaking Roman Catholics in the Carpathian-Basin. That is the reason why 80% of all children withdrew their applications from the Hungarian classes. He added: it was a miracle that there were still children who chose to continue the classes, for the very reason that the priest had set a deadline for the children to choose between their religious or linguistic identity.



In Attila Hegyeli’s opinion, the Roman Catholic priests are firmly convinced about the fact that the sooner the process of assimilation is accomplished in the Csángó-land the better would be for the children. Furthermore, if the Csángós turned into Romanians, they would have better chances in life. Fortunately, there are priests who think differently, since four religious services have been recently held in the Hungarian language in Pusztina/Pustina village nearby. (Source: [www.csango.ro](http://www.csango.ro))



“In the Moldavia region where the Roman Catholic Csango minority resided, the community continued to operate government-funded Hungarian-language school groups; 988 students in 14 localities received Hungarian language classes during the 2007-08 academic year. However, 66 students did not receive Hungarian-language classes following an intimidation campaign waged by the school and local authorities that made the parents withdraw the applications for such classes.”

US State Department,  
Annual Report on Human Rights, 2007



## Armed Forces against Church Members

There were approximately 70 policemen and armed anti-terrorist gunned squad members present around the Reformed Church of Gencs, Romania, on 6 May 2008. The uniformed detachment was conducted to the afore-mentioned place in order to look after the forced process of Gyula Bátori's, former local pastor, moving back to the manse. The pastor has been infamous for his scandals. The armed forces strove to execute the order, which was brought as a result of a mock trial that crushed the principle of religious autonomy protected by the Romanian constitution. The resolution decreed that Bátori, previously deprived of his clerical post, now has the right to enter the possession of the parish house, which is originally in the legal ownership of the religious denomination.

Bátori was found guilty of embezzlement, thus, the Reformed Church District deprived him of his service. The former member of the clergy, under the protectorship of the Romanian administration of justice and armed force, has been directing a discrediting campaign against the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District and Bishop László Tőkés, Member of the European Parliament, for several months.

The Gencs adherents of the Reformed congregation learnt yesterday that the authorities intended to forcefully move Bátori back to their property. They instantaneously let MEP László Tőkés' office and the higher authorities of the church know about these events.

They also announced that in the morning they would gather at the manse and withstand the illicit trespassing. Furthermore, their claim was that the addressees, with their presence, should offer their protection for the just cause of the community. →



Árpád Csomay *general director* and Edith Máthé *legal adviser* on behalf of the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District, *Dean Sándor Nagy* and several Reformed pastors from the neighbourhood on behalf of the Nagykároly Reformed Diocese and János Antal, church councillor and the head of MEP László Tőkés' central office joined the protesting Gencs congregation at the vicarage.

The power display on behalf of the armed forces as they arrived in a long row of cars at the scene after 9 o'clock a.m. was outrageous and saddening. Next the armed and masked commandos took their position at the gate of the vicarage facing the Gencs Reformed Congregation. Ioan Vasile Sabău, executive, showed the decree ordering Bátori to be moved back to the vicarage. Subsequently he announced that the armed forces conducted to the spot would resort to force if necessary. The officials of the Királyhágómellék Reformed Church District declared that the people present, on their own accord, would never let the former priest move back. They brought as argument that, in matters of legal circumstances, there was neither any notice nor decree concerning the eviction of Attila Szomor, the current pastor at Gencs. The executive, thereupon, left the vicarage, while the leaders of the armed forces made their reports on telephone.


At about noon the policemen and commandos withdrew from the scene in a convoy accompanied by the applause of the church members protecting the vicarage.



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