



PERMANENT MISSION OF HUNGARY  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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**Protection of Religious Minorities in Conflict**

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**Opening remarks by  
H.E. Ambassador Katalin Bogyay  
Permanent Representative**

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Hungary as a committed member in the United Nations in protecting human rights and religious freedoms is honored to host today's event.

The expansion of violent extremism and terrorism affects not only the Middle East and North Africa, but poses the greatest challenge to all nations. The increasingly frequent attacks on religious minorities by terrorist groups is an alarming trend in many places around the world.

We believe that it is essential to condemn these indiscriminate and atrocious attacks. These acts, have to be condemned at all levels and by all actors, including politicians and religious leaders and perpetrators have to be held accountable.

ISIL/Da'esh's actions in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere are horrific and cannot go unpunished. The human rights abuses committed by them are increasing both in the number of victims and in atrocity including abuses of the worst kind against children and women and the persecution of persons belonging to different religions, ethnic communities and vulnerable groups.

Hungary attaches especially great importance to the protection of religious minorities. We support international initiatives aimed at combating this dangerous phenomena. We must protect the people against the violence and defend religious diversity, tolerance and mutual understanding.

Hungary attaches especially great importance to the protection of religious rights and fundamental rights in general. Violating ethnic, religious, racial or linguistic freedom of religion and belief, right for education, minorities rights poses a great risk on future of societies. We not only have to step up the **protection of the freedom of religion and belief but also protect religious and cultural heritage.**

Fighting exploitation of all forms and protecting the most vulnerable groups are topics I also frequently talk about before the Security Council, in the General Assembly and at other UN and non-UN fora.

I believe that closer cooperation in this area is of utmost importance. Coordination among Member States should also be strengthened if we wish to fight this global threat more effectively.

In order to foster tolerance, mutual understanding, and respect for religious diversity we need to engage in an effective dialogue by sharing best practices and experience with all the relevant stakeholders. We can only win this fight together.

Effective and strengthened cooperation and information sharing among states, international organizations, civil society, religious group and business actors is necessary. Religious leaders and civil society organizations have an extremely important role to play in this regard. They are perhaps the best suited actors to work with victims.

This is why I am very delighted to host today's event together with His Excellency, H.E. Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See and Ambassador H.E. Mr Teodoro Lopez Locsin, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Philippines to the UN.

I am particularly pleased to welcome Mr. Mark Donfried from the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (ICD). The Institute was founded with the aim of promoting international links and understanding between countries and people through cultural diplomacy.

Hungary's firm belief is that the international community must do everything to protect minorities. Hungary pays utmost attention to the protection of human rights and is deeply committed to the fight against the violation of human rights and religious freedoms. This is why I am proud to welcome H.E. Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Your Excellency.....

#### Questions:

- How should the UN step up support to protect religious minorities, foster tolerance and prevent attacks?
- How could we in practice effectively engage women and youth in order to foster tolerance, mutual acceptance and prevent such crimes?
- How does we effectively raise awareness about it?
- How can we step up protection of the freedom of religion and belief and foster coordination in this regard?

#### Closing:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on this very topical issue.

We are pleased to see growing interest in tackling this global challenge.

We believe it is our joint, but also individual responsibility to protect the populations of these regions, in particular those most vulnerable, such as children, women, religious and ethnic minorities. The barbaric acts can be stopped only if we join our forces against these groups.

The protection of minorities against violence and the promotion of their human rights and fundamental freedoms should be at the heart of the international community's action during conflict as well as post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation, recognizing that religious diversity, tolerance and mutual understanding are key to sustainable peace and stability.

We hope to see more and more states and other actors getting involved, becoming active, adopting new strategies and legislations or simply just talk about these issues.