

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

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(Please use this reference in your reply)

8 April 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 52/4, 52/9, 59/4, 52/10, 53/10 and 58/5.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **criminal charges and administrative harassment against Gábor Iványi** and the Oltalom Charity Association, as well as the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (Magyar Evangélikus Testvérközösség - MET).

Mr. Gábor Iványi is a Hungarian pastor and human rights defender who leads the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (MET) and the Oltalom Charity Association. He is known for defending the rights of people experiencing poverty, homelessness, and social exclusion.

Oltalom Charity Association is a CSO providing health care, social support and child welfare related care to homeless persons, refugees and victims of natural disasters.

The Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship (MET), part of the Methodist Church, which Mr. Iványi heads, provides shelter, food, and education. It runs shelters, schools, and social programs that serve thousands of people across the country, offering vital support to families, children, including children with disabilities, and individuals experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

According to the information received:

Criminal charges

On 3 November 2025, Hungarian prosecutors brought criminal charges against Mr. Iványi and several opposition politicians, accusing them of "group-committed violence against an official person." The charges relate to a February 2022 tax authority raid on the Oltalom Charity's headquarters; an operation in which Mr. Iványi and others allegedly physically pushed officials when

attempting to enter the building with supporters and journalists. Mr. Iványi denies wrongdoing and says the officials pushed him first.

The raid on the association's offices was carried out by the National Tax Authority (NAV), in connection with the arrears in unpaid taxes. The MET alleges that they were not able to pay taxes as they had not received the government funding that was due for their educational and social activities.

When the tax authority set out to carry out the inspection, Mr. Iványi refused to receive the inspection order and stated that he would only enter the premises with the tax inspectors if representatives of the media were also let in. As this was refused, several opposition MPs and other political, cultural and civic actors arrived to show support for Mr. Iványi who eventually managed to enter the association's premises.

On 9 February 2026, preliminary hearings were held at the first instance court in Budapest. The prosecutors accused Mr. Iványi and six other individuals (mostly MPs and MEPs) of having attempted, through the use of violent force, to prevent the entry of the inspectors from the National Tax Authority into the headquarters of the Oltalom Egyesület in Dankó street in Budapest. All of the accused pleaded not guilty. They argued that they did not push the inspectors but were rather pushed by the demonstrators towards the administrative office. Mr. Iványi stressed that his hands were behind his back, that he did not push anyone and that he also appealed to the demonstrators to remain peaceful. Lawyers for the accused additionally argued that the raid on the offices was illegal, that no warrant was shown by the inspectors and no legal basis for the raid and search were provided. If convicted, Mr. Iványi could face several years in prison. His supporters claim that the charges are politically motivated and tied to the 2026 Hungarian parliamentary election cycle. The timing and nature of the charges have been criticized both inside and outside Hungary as part of a broader pattern of state pressure on dissenting voices.

Pattern of targeting

Government pressure on Mr. Iványi and the MET appear to reflect a wider campaign targeting civil society and human rights defenders, especially those serving vulnerable groups.

The Hungarian government has repeatedly sought to undermine MET's social services, which include homeless shelters, schools for low-income families and children with disabilities, and community support programs. In 2024, authorities revoked operating licenses for three of MET's schools, forcing their closure, a directly affecting educational access for disadvantaged children.

MET's status as an officially recognized church was revoked in 2011, cutting off state funding. This was later declared unlawful by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)¹, yet the government has not fully complied with the court's orders to restore status and provide owed funding.

¹ [Magyarországi Evangéliumi Testvérközösség v. Hungary](#), Application no. [54977/12](#)

Financial pressure has also included tax penalties and seizures of assets by the National Tax and Customs Administration (NAV), exacerbating the charity's debts and undermining its ability to pay staff or maintain services.

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that the law invoked to strip MET's church status violates the European Convention on Human Rights. In April 2017, the European Court of Human Rights awarded 3M Euros in damages, as a compensation to MET for lost subsidies, but the church's legal status and funding mechanisms remain uncertain.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we wish to express our concern at the criminal charges and legal pressure against Mr. Gábor Ivanyi, as well as against MET and the Oltalom Charity Association, which appears to be connected with their human rights work. We are particularly concerned that these latest developments appear to form part of a broader pattern of repression against Mr. Ivanyi and his religious and civic organizations.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information about the factual and legal basis for the criminal charges against Mr. Ivanyi and how these are in compliance with Hungary's obligations under international human rights law.
3. Please provide information about the status of implementation of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights.
4. Please explain measures put in place to ensure that human rights defenders and members of civil society are able to carry out their legitimate human rights work without fear of threats, attacks, judicial harassment of any kind, in an enabling environment.
5. Please provide information on measures put in place to safeguard the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and of association, as stipulated by articles 19, 21 and 22 ICCPR, including those aimed at ensuring that civil society organizations can freely seek and receive funding, carry out their activities without undue interference, and that individuals and organizations can participate in peaceful protests and express their views, including those critical of the authorities, without having to fear criminal prosecution.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should Your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations of Mr. Ivanyi's rights to freedom of opinion, expression, and religious belief. We further recommend that these allegations be promptly clarified and promptly and independently investigated in order to prevent their recurrence and, should the allegations be substantiated, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible. We also recommend that your Excellency's Government review any decision that may have led to charges against Mr. Ivanyi in contravention of Hungary's obligations under international human rights law.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Mary Lawlor

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Irene Khan

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Gina Romero

Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Balakrishnan Rajagopal

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Olivier De Schutter

Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

Nazila Ghanea

Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns we would like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to the relevant international norms and standards that are applicable to the issues brought forth by the situation described above.

At the outset, we wish to refer to several provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Hungary ratified on 17 January 1974.

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media". This right applies online as well as offline and includes not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may criticize, shock, or offend. In its [general comment No. 34](#), the Human Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including "political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse" (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 11).

The Committee further asserts that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (para. 23). Recognizing how journalists and persons who engage in the gathering and analysis of information on the human rights situation and who publish human rights-related reports, including judges and lawyers, are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities, the Committee stresses that "all such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, or, in the case of killings, their representatives, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress" (para. 23).

Any restriction on the right to freedom of expression must be compatible with the requirements set out in article 19(3) ICCPR. Under these requirements, restrictions must (i) be provided by law; (ii) pursue one of the legitimate aims for restriction, which are the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security or of public order (*ordre public*), or of public health or morals; and (iii) be necessary and proportionate for those objectives. The State has the burden of proof to demonstrate that any such restrictions are compatible with the Covenant, and restrictions must always be "the least intrusive instrument among those which might achieve their protective function" ([CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 34](#)).

Article 19(3) may never be invoked to justify the muzzling of any advocacy of democratic tenets and human rights (para. 23). Nor, under any circumstance, can an attack on a person, because of the exercise of their freedom of opinion or expression, including such forms of attack as arbitrary arrest and torture, be compatible with article 19 (para. 23).

We also wish to refer to article 18 of the ICCPR, which stresses that “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. These rights shall include freedom [...] either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”

The Human Rights Committee highlighted in general comment No. 22 paragraph 3 that “article 18 protects theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief. The terms belief and religion are to be broadly construed. Article 18 is not limited in its application to traditional religions or to religions and beliefs with institutional characteristics or practices analogous to those of traditional religions. The Committee therefore views with concern any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief for any reason”. In paragraph 5, the Human Rights Committee observes that the “freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief necessarily entails the freedom to choose a religion or belief, including the right to replace one's current religion or belief with another or to adopt atheistic views”.

Moreover, in paragraph 3 of general comment No. 22, the Human Rights Committee stressed that article 18 of ICCPR “does not permit any limitations whatsoever on the freedom of thought and conscience [...]” Peaceful expression of one’s thought and conscience cannot be restricted unless it has fulfilled stringent tests of legality, proportionality and necessity.

The 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (A/RES/36/55) states in its article 2(1): “[n]o one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, group of persons, or person on grounds of religion or other belief.” In article 4(1), the General Assembly further states that: “All States shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms [...]” Furthermore, we would like to refer your Government to article 4(2) according to which: “All States shall make all efforts to enact or rescind legislation where necessary to prohibit any such discrimination, and to take all appropriate measures to combat intolerance on the grounds of religion or other beliefs in this matter”.

In the context of her country visit to Hungary from 7 to 17 October 2024, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief noted that religious organizations can be relegated within the four-tier system introduced by the revised Church Law, resulting in the loss of related benefits and subsidies. In this respect, the Special Rapporteur examined the situation of the MET, led by pastor Gábor Iványi (see A/HRC/58/49/Add.1, paras. 36 and 37).

We would also like to recall that the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council adopted resolutions 76/157 and 49/31 on Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief, urging States to foster a domestic environment of religious tolerance, peace and respect. The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief stressed that “manifestations of religious intolerance, not least those that lead to discrimination and violence, prevent the full realization of the right to freedom of religion or belief” (see A/72/365 paragraph 72).

We would like to recall the “Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence” (A/HRC/22/17/Add.4). It clarifies State obligations and other stakeholders’ responsibilities under articles 19 and 20 of the ICCPR and sets out a framework of measures via the implementation of legislation, jurisprudence and policies to combat activities that constitute incitement to violence and discrimination on multiple grounds, including religion.

Furthermore, article 27 of the ICCPR provides that in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

The 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities establishes the obligation of States to protect the existence and identity of religious minorities within their territories and to adopt the appropriate measures to achieve this end (article 1), recognizes that persons belonging to religious minorities have the right to profess and practice their own religion without discrimination (article 2) and requires States to ensure that persons belonging to minorities, including religious minorities, may exercise their human rights without discrimination and in full equality before the law (article 4.1).

We would also like to recall articles 21 and 22 of the ICCPR, protecting the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, respectively. Article 21 of the Covenant protects peaceful assemblies wherever they take place: outdoors, indoors and online; in public and private spaces; or a combination thereof. Such assemblies may take many forms, including demonstrations, protests, meetings, processions, rallies, sit-ins, candlelit vigils and flash mobs. They are protected under article 21 whether they are stationary, such as pickets, or mobile, such as processions or marches" (CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 6). The ability to associate in turn is a key civil and political right, essential to individuals’ participation in their societies more broadly as well as in terms of shaping the structures that affect their lives, and essential to the establishment of democratic societies. All individuals enjoy the right (A/HRC/53/38/Add.3, para.17).

States not only have a negative obligation to abstain from unduly interfering with the rights of peaceful assembly and of association but also have a positive obligation to facilitate and protect these rights in accordance with international human rights standards (A/HRC/17/27, para. 66; and A/HRC/29/25/Add.1). This means ensuring that the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association are enjoyed by everyone, without discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (A/HRC/41/41, para. 13). States must furthermore allow assemblies to take place without unwarranted interference and facilitate the exercise of the right and to protect the participants (CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 8).

Regarding the right to freedom of association, States have the responsibility under international human rights law to respect, protect and facilitate the right to freedom to access resources by civil society organizations. States’ obligations must be implemented in a nondiscriminatory manner, with particular attention to the rights and

needs of individuals from groups or populations at higher risk of facing discrimination and marginalization, including women; youth; indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to minority groups or groups at risk, including those victims of discrimination because of their sexual orientation and gender identity, and non-nationals, as well as activists advocating for women's and sexual and reproductive rights and facing discrimination for their political views, including opposition to their government. (A/HRC/53/38/Add.4, paras. 17 and 21). Furthermore, the right of associations to freely access human, material and financial resources is inherent in the right to freedom of association, as set out in article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. To realize this right, States are required to ensure civil society organizations can seek, secure and use resources from domestic, foreign and international sources without prior authorization or other undue impediments – including from individuals, associations, foundations and other civil society organizations, foreign Governments and aid agencies, the private sector, the United Nations and other entities (A/HRC/53/38/Add.4, para. 1).

The former Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association furthermore stated in a report in 2021 that providing accountability for violations of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association is essential to guarantee full exercise of those rights (A/HRC/47/24, para. 27). It was further indicated that “[a]ll complaints of human rights violations in the context of peaceful assemblies must be promptly, independently and thoroughly investigated. Additionally, a crucial element is to ensure accountability, bring perpetrators to justice, combat impunity and avoid repetition. It is also key that authorities publicly recognize when violations occur” (A/HRC/47/24, para. 46). Moreover, all perpetrators must be brought to justice and victims must be offered reparation even when they did not ask for remedies (A/HRC/47/24, para. 74, (f)).