



European Buddhist Union  
Institute of Oriental Philosophy  
Taplow Court  
Taplow, Maidenhead  
Berkshire SL6 0ER  
United Kingdom

Rt. Hon. Orbán Viktor  
Prime Minister of Hungary  
Postafiók 6.  
H-1357 Budapest  
Hungary

Berkshire 7 December 2011

Dear Prime Minister,

The European Buddhist Union, founded in 1975 in Paris, represents almost 50 Buddhist organisations in Europe, among them 12 national unions of Buddhist organisations in European countries. Buddhism is the fourth largest of the world religions with an estimated following of more than 500 million. In Europe there are almost 2 million followers of Buddhism. In Hungary Buddhism has a following exceeding 15000 with a history of more than 60 years as an organised religion.

Being recognised as churches according the Act of 1990, Buddhist communities in Hungary have engaged in educational and social activities such as the Dharma Gate Buddhist College in Budapest and various educational programs for pupils of Roma background. These accomplishments have been widely admired by the international Buddhist community.

We were therefore surprised and saddened by the report that the Hungarian Parliament this summer passed a new Act on Religion that deprives all but a few of the major Christian churches and Jewish congregations of legal recognition as churches, thereby leaving them without the benefits depending on the status of being a recognised church. Thus Buddhism will by 1st of January, 2012 lose the status it has enjoyed for more than 20 years in Hungary.

The reason why this is a matter of concern for the European Buddhist Union is our commitment to freedom of religion as it is expressed in the European Convention on Human Rights and other international declarations and covenants. Refusing recognition as churches of the great majority of religious groups, that previously have enjoyed such recognition in Hungary, raises the question whether implementation of freedom of religion will continue in a non-discriminatory manner with the new Act taking effect from 1st of January 2012.

Specialist opinion on the matter suggests that with the abolition of current rights of recognised churches and the narrow and restrictive procedures outlined for future recognition of churches, Hungary will violate the principle of non-discrimination of religions that follow from the clauses on freedom of religion of the European Convention on Human Rights.

As an organisation representing the Buddhists in Europe we are particularly sad that these changes in legislation will from 1st of January 2012 exclude the Buddhist communities in Hungary from enjoying the same rights as those religious groups that have been granted recognition as churches according to the new Act.

We therefore appeal to the Government of Hungary to ensure that any changes in legislation affecting the status of religious communities do not violate the Human Rights conventions to which Hungary is a signatory. Abolishing and restricting the rights of religious communities is a serious matter which should not happen without careful consideration of the Human Rights conventions relating to the issues in question.

We therefore appeal to the Government of Hungary to suspend the implementation of the “Act on the Right to Freedom of Conscience and Religion, and on Churches, Religions and Religious Communities” until such considerations have taken place and necessary amendments have been made.

Questioning the grounds for depriving the Buddhist churches of their status we would specifically request the Government of Hungary to respect the Buddhist religion by allowing its institutions in your country to retain their status as equal to that of the recognised churches.

We would also mention that Hungary has many friends in the world who would very much like to continue to hold it in high regard as a progressive country adhering seriously to upholding the international standards on Human Rights.

Yours sincerely

Jamie Cresswell  
President

Joseph Serra  
Vice President

Mark von Rössing  
Council member

Egil Lothe  
Vice President

Hans\_Erich Frey  
Treasurer

Gabriela Frey  
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