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**UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW
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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN HUNGARY
FOR THE 53RD SESSION OF THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

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Introduction

1. The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is an international, non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in Hungary for the 53rd session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Background

2. Hungary is a country located in Central Europe and has a population of approximately 9.5 million people.¹ The population is predominantly Christian, with approximately 51% of the population identifying as Roman Catholic, 16% as Calvinist, 3% as Lutheran, 2.6% as Greek Catholic, 1% belonging to other denominations, and 25% are either unspecified or unaffiliated.²

3. Hungary's last review was held on November 2, 2021.³ As a result of the review, Hungary received 267 recommendations, 131 of which it accepted.⁴ It was recommended by Cyprus, and noted by Hungary, that the government “[s]treamline gender equality policies by providing education to youth in sexual and reproductive health rights and improving access to relevant services.”⁵ In our previous report on Hungary, we discussed the issue of abortion and Hungary's Constitutional protections for the lives of preborn babies. We also discussed the work Hungary has done to help persecuted Christians around the world. While no recommendations were made regarding religious freedom, we expressed support for the work Hungary is doing to help Christians around the world.

Legal Framework

Christian Persecution

4. Hungary is committed to upholding the rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Hungary is a party.⁶ Under Article 18 of the ICCPR:

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in

¹ Hungary, BRITANNICA (Oct. 20, 2025), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Hungary>.

² Hungary Religion Stats, NATION MASTER, <https://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/profiles/Hungary/Religion>.

³ Universal Periodic Review – Hungary, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/hu-index>.

⁴ Infographic-Hungary, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Infography-hungary.pdf>.

⁵ OHCHR, UPR of Samoa (3rd Cycle – 39th Session) Thematic List of Recommendations, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/UPR39_Hungary_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx.

⁶ Ratification Status for Hungary, OHCHR, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=77&Lang=EN.

public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.⁷

Abortion

5. Under Article 2 of the Constitution of Hungary, “[h]uman dignity shall be inviolable. Every human being shall have the right to life and human dignity; the life of the foetus shall be protected from the moment of conception.”⁸

6. Under Article 6 of Act LXXIX of 1992 on the protection of fetal life:

Pregnancies may be terminated up to the 12th week if:

- a) the pregnant woman’s health is severely endangered,
- b) the fetus is likely, on medical indications, to suffer from a severe disability or other impairment,
- c) the pregnancy is the result of a criminal act, or
- d) the pregnant woman is in a severe crisis situation.⁹

7. In September 2022, a new regulation regarding abortion went into effect.¹⁰ This new regulation requires women seeking abortion to listen to the heartbeat and vitals of the preborn baby before they can continue with the abortion.¹¹ Under this regulation:

In the case of an unwanted pregnancy, the expectant woman must observe the fetus along with its vital functions and cardiac function typical of the gestational age (e.g. an ultrasound image of the fetus and the pulsation of the heart should be clearly identified and shown, if technically possible, and the heartbeat should be listened to, unless there are medical contraindications).¹²

8. Additionally, under Article 6 of the ICCPR, “[e]very human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.”¹³ Hungary

⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 18, Dec. 16, 1966, U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

⁸ CONST. OF HUNGARY 2011 (rev. 2016) art. 2, *supra* note

⁹ Act LXXIX of 1992 on the protection of fetal life art.6 § 1, <https://reproductiverights.org/maps/provision/hungary-abortion-provisions/>.

¹⁰ Weronika Strzyżyńska, *Hungary Tightens Abortion Access with Listen to “Foetal Heartbeat” Rule*, THE GUARDIAN (Sep. 13, 2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/sep/13/hungary-tightens-abortion-access-with-listen-to-foetal-heartbeat-rule>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Világi Máté, *Fact Check: “Abortions Continued to Decline After the Heartbeat Regulation Came into Force,”* TELEX (Jan 5, 2024), <https://telex.hu/english/2024/01/05/fact-check-abortion-continued-to-decline-after-the-heartbeat-regulation-came-into-force>.

¹³ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 6, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

also has a responsibility to protect the lives of preborn babies under other international agreements, such as the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development.

Christian Persecution and Humanitarian Work

9. In our last report, we commended Hungary on the work it has done to provide aid to the persecuted people around the world through the “Hungary Helps Program.” Thankfully, since our last report, Hungary has remained committed to helping Christians around the world. According to the State Secretary for the Aid of Persecuted Christians Tristan Azbej:

Actions and deeds, not words – these are the guiding principles which define Hungary's humanitarian and developmental role, as solidarity can only be authentic in the form of tangible and visible assistance. It is our belief that we have a responsibility regarding the innocent suffering in developing countries and crisis areas. We stand in universal solidarity with all people, but as a millennial Christian nation, we are particularly concerned about helping persecuted Christians around the world. Through the Hungary Helps Program, the Hungarian Government has taken up this challenge.¹⁴

10. In January 2024, the new Act on the Hungary Helps Program went into effect to expand its operation and make the program more efficient.¹⁵ The purpose of Hungary Helps is:

...to ensure long-term social stability and sustainability through our projects, to help build strong, crisis-resilient, and diverse (e.g. religious) communities, to support the return of displaced people in conflict situations, to promote sustainable development and to prevent further conflict and to create decent living conditions.¹⁶

11. The Hungary Helps Program has been involved in more than 500 projects across more than sixty countries, helping more than three million people.¹⁷ These projects have helped persecuted Christians and has provided humanitarian assistance in Nigeria, Iraq, Pakistan, and many other places throughout the world.¹⁸

12. In Nigeria, Hungary Helps has helped provide nurses in southern Nigeria with resources and training to help them deal with the increase in refugees who have fled from the northern regions as a result of Islamic terrorism.¹⁹ In Iraq, Hungary Helps worked to rebuild a town in northern Iraq that was captured by ISIS forces.²⁰ Many Christians called this town home, but were unable to return due to the substantial damage that the town endured. Hungary Helps worked to

¹⁴ *Hungary Helps*, HUNGARY HELPS, <https://hungaryhelps.gov.hu/en/home>.

¹⁵ *Hungary Helps Agency*, HUNGARY HELPS, <https://hungaryhelps.gov.hu/en/agency>.

¹⁶ *Humanitarian and Development Programs*, HUNGARY HELPS, <https://hungaryhelps.gov.hu/en/programs/humanitarian-and-development-programs>.

¹⁷ *Hungary Helps*, *supra* note 14.

¹⁸ *Our Projects Worldwide*, HUNGARY HELPS, <https://hungaryhelps.gov.hu/>.

¹⁹ *Nurse Training in Onitsa*, HUNGARY HELPS, <https://hungaryhelps.gov.hu/en/projects/breeding-in-onitsa>.

²⁰ *Reconstruction of the Town of Tell Askuf*, HUNGARY HELPS, <https://hungaryhelps.gov.hu/en/projects/reconstruction-of-the-town-of-tell-askuf>.

rebuild homes, community centers, and a church. In Pakistan, Hungary Helps is working to help provide education for the children of brick kiln workers, who are mostly Christian and affected by debt slavery.²¹

Abortion

13. In our last report for Hungary, we commended the government for protecting life and upholding its obligations under the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development, which requires U.N. Member States to have an affirmative commitment to “reduce the recourse to abortion” and to take “appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion.”²² Since 2010, the number of abortions in Hungary has dropped by almost 50%.²³ In 2010, there were 40,490 abortions; in 2025, the number was 20,400.²⁴

14. Since Hungary’s last UPR, the government has taken further action to recognize and protect the dignity of life as is required under the UDHR, the UN Charter, and other international instruments. On September 15, 2022, a new regulation went into effect stating that doctors must provide women with a “a clearly identifiable indication of fetal vital signs” before carrying out an abortion.²⁵ Since this new regulation was implemented, abortion rates have continued to fall. In 2022, 21,779 abortions were carried out; in 2025, that number dropped to 20,400.²⁶

15. Hungary’s efforts to reduce abortion, and the impact it has had on abortion rates in the country, demonstrate why Hungary was right in rejecting the recommendation to improve access to abortion. Again, Hungary’s Constitution states that “life of the foetus shall be protected from the moment of conception,”²⁷ and Hungary’s new regulation on abortion reinforces this right. By requiring doctors to share the vital signs of the preborn baby with the mother, it proves that the preborn baby is a distinct human life and that this life has dignity worth protecting. Hungary has an obligation under its Constitution and international agreements to protect human life, and it is doing just that.

Recommendations

16. We commend the work Hungary has done and continues to do to help persecuted Christians who are suffering around the world. We want to encourage Hungary to continue the work it is doing in this space.

17. Further, we applaud Hungary’s efforts to protect all human life, including the life of preborn babies. Hungary’s efforts to reduce abortion are working and can be seen through its

²¹ *Education and Training Support in Pakistan*, HUNGARY HELPS, <https://hungaryhelps.gov.hu/en/projects/education-and-training-support-in-pakistan>.

²² Rep’ of the Int’l Conf. on Population & Dec., ¶ 8.25, U.N. Doc. A/CONF/F.171/Rev. 1 (Sept. 5-13, 1994).

²³ Mike Tobias, *How Hungary’s Pro-Family Policies Can Inspire the Pro-Life Movement in America*, HUMAN COALITION, <https://www.humancoalition.org/impact/blog/how-hungarys-pro-family-policies-can-inspire-the-pro-life-movement-in-america/>.

²⁴ 22.1.1.1. *Main Indicators of Population and Vital Events*, HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE, https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/nep/en/nep0001.html.

²⁵ Owen Dyer, *Hungary Requires Doctors to Present Women with Fetal Vital Signs Before Abortion*, THE BMJ (Sep. 2022), <https://www.bmj.com/content/378/bmj.o2260.full>.

²⁶ 22.1.1.1. *Main Indicators of Population and Vital Events*, *supra* note 24.

²⁷ CONST. OF HUNGARY 2011 (rev. 2016) art. 2, *supra* note 8.

steadily declining abortion rates. We want to urge Hungary to continue to be steadfast in protecting human life and be an example to other countries.