

WRITTEN QUESTION E-6285/08
by Kinga Gál (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Ethnic Hungarian minority in Slovakia

As the European Parliament's rapporteur on the Fundamental Rights Agency, may I ask what the Commission is doing to defend interethnic and intercultural dialogue in Slovakia, which is part of the Union and where the politicians currently in power daily and systematically attack it?

A climate of opinion inimical to the minority ethnic Hungarian community is increasingly being cultivated, and things have now come to such a pass that open atrocities have even been committed by the authorities and civil and minority rights have openly been violated:

Two years ago in Slovakia a young Hungarian girl, Hedvig Malina, was beaten up in broad daylight for speaking Hungarian, whereupon the machinery of power closed ranks and took no action, and to this day justice has not been done to her.

A year ago the Slovak Parliament reminded the Hungarians living in their country of their continuing status as second-class citizens by politically reviving collective punishment. This open discrimination did not have any consequences at European level.

A month ago the Slovak Minister of Education said that he would ban the use by the Hungarian minority of their language in public places in Slovakia, and an initiative has been taken to order that textbooks should quote Hungarian place names only in their Slovak form.

On 1 November, in Dunaszerdahely, the majority of whose population belong to the Hungarian minority, at a match between the local club and a club from Bratislava, nearly 10 000 spectators witnessed the spectacle of the police attacking Hungarian supporters for no reason, pressing them together within their section of the ground and brutally beating them, not sparing women or children. Meanwhile the Slovak fans chanted anti-Hungarian slogans and encouraged the police to sort the Hungarians out. Instead of investigating the matter, the Slovak Parliament adopted a law whereby as from December it would be prohibited to use symbols of foreign States - i.e. symbols of the minority Hungarians - at Slovak sporting events, thereby violating Council of Europe instruments and constitutional rights.

What will the Commission do to defend the ethnic Hungarian minority in Slovakia within the Union, where in one Member State its own parliamentarians adopt a parliamentary decision against MPs belonging to the ethnic Hungarian minority because they had the temerity to attend a public forum organised by the Hungarian Parliament (neighbouring Member State), stating that they had violated their parliamentary oath?

What will the Commission do to ensure that members of the Hungarian minority do not have to be afraid here in the Union in the Year of Intercultural Dialogue?