HHRF
HUNGARIAN HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION

Post Office Box J, Gracie Station
New York, NY 10028
(212) 289-5488
(212) 996-6268 (Fax)

HHRF ALERT

August 30, 2005

Hand Grenade Explodes Outside Home of Ethnic Hungarian Leader in Vojvodina, Serbia

A hand grenade exploded outside the Subotica (Szabadka) home of **József Kasza**, President of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina, the largest party representing the interests of the 300,000-strong national minority in the multi-ethnic region of Serbia. The blast occurred around 4:00 a.m., August 30, about 30 meters from the entrance door, damaging several buildings in the vicinity. There were no casualties and a police investigation is underway.

The attack is the latest incident in a two-year, escalating campaign of harassment and intimidation against the Serbian province's minority communities. *"This is not the first threat and act of intimidation against me. This is all a result of continuing pressure and intimidation which has as its goal to drive me and Hungarians out of Vojvodina. I am not frightened; I will not be driven away,"* Kasza told the *Hungarian Telegraph Agency* (MTI) on Monday.

In a seemingly coordinated series of "legal measures," Serbian authorities have recently sought to incapacitate and discredit key ethnic Hungarian leaders and intimidate the community as a whole:

- In June, the Subotica and Novi Sad prosecutors threatened to imprison **Kasza**, **Zoltán Bunyik,** Vice President, and several other leaders of the Vojvodina Alliance of Hungarians.
- An ethnic Hungarian lawyer from Subotica, **Gabriella Ágoston**, who had defended local victims of anti-minority violence, has been in police custody since April 26, 2005 on questionable grounds. Ms. Ágoston, who is very ill, has been denied vital medical care. Another ethnic Hungarian, **Gábor Nemes**, has also been incarcerated since May 16, on a similarly unjustified pretext.
- Kasza and other community leaders have received death threats in the past. In a March 2004 letter from the "Serbian Diaspora Summary Revolutionary Court," allegedly headquartered in Chicago, Kasza was warned: *"You have been sentenced to death for your attempt to separate Vojvodina from Serbia."*

HHRF has documented 132 anti-minority incidents in Vojvodina since January 2003, consisting of harassment and physical violence against non-Serbs, the intimidation of ethnic Hungarian and pro-autonomy advocates, the desecration of cemeteries, anti-Hungarian, anti-Croatian and anti-Semitic graffiti, and the vandalism of historic symbols. [See the latest HHRF Report of August, "Anti-Minority Aggression Intensifies in Vojvodina, Serbia, During 2005" at http://www.hhrf.org/hhrf/en/vojvodinareport-mar-2005.htm]

Despite over two years of proliferating violence, at all levels of government, Serbian authorities have failed to effectively investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of violence; remedy ethnic bias in law enforcement and the judiciary; curb and prevent future incidents; or formulate and implement a comprehensive strategy to promote tolerance.

The Hungarian Human Rights Foundation calls upon the United States and other governments, human rights organizations, and all concerned individuals to protest the longstanding, relentless campaign against Serbia's Hungarian and other minorities. The Serbian authorities must swiftly apprehend, indict and punish the individual(s) responsible for the August 30th attack against József Kasza. In addition, HHRF urges the immediate and unqualified release of Gabriella Ágoston and Gábor Nemes, as well as a thorough investigation of the Subotica and Novi Sad Prosecutors Offices.

Letters can be sent to:

His Excellency Vojislav Kostunica
Prime Minister of Serbia and Montenegro
Office of the Prime Minister
Belgrade, Serbia

Telefax: (381) 11-361-7609 and (381) 11-361-7597