

Intervention of the Institute for the Protection of Minority Rights at the ninth session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues

Dear Chairman,

The Institute for the Protection of Minority Rights is based in Budapest and was founded in 2012 with the aim of promoting and protecting the rights of Hungarian minority communities living in countries neighbouring Hungary. Our main goal is to actively support individuals and organizations providing legal aid to members of the Hungarian minority when their human and minority rights have been violated, in order to redress and remedy such violations, as well as to effectively prevent future ones from happening.

Hungarians living in the Subcarpathian region of Ukraine, are directly affected by a humanitarian crisis, given the ongoing war in the country. So far we know of 8 persons belonging to the Hungarian minority who died in the eastern front of Ukraine.

It came to our attention, that Ukrainian public authorities use more and more vigorous measures to conscript men into the army, including among others regulations imposing restrictions on foreign travel for those subject to military mobilization, as the country is increasingly struggling to recruit soldiers to fight in the east. This October, for example, there was a case in Subcarpathia, where the police tried to forcibly draft random passengers on a train who appeared to be of eligible age for conscription. The attempt only failed due to the active resistance of the passengers.

Information from the ground also seems to suggest that the multi-ethnic Subcarpathian region has been disproportionately affected by the crisis, given that soldiers recruited from this region were repeatedly deployed in the most dangerous conflict zones of the Donbass area. These developments prompted a new wave of minority Hungarians fleeing from Ukraine to neighbouring Hungary and other EU member states.

In addition, we see an increasing suspicion towards minority communities in general in Ukraine, and this is often accompanied by or linked to weak or non-implementation of legislation pertaining to minority rights, as well as continuous attempts to curtail linguistic rights. Those who speak up against these phenomena risk getting labelled as separatists.

For the above reasons, we welcome paragraph 20. a) of the draft recommendations, which stipulates that states should “at all times include respect, protection and fulfilment of minority rights as essential elements in their daily governance”. We think it is vital to detect and address serious non-compliance with obligations under domestic and international human rights law as a crisis prevention and impact mitigation tool. We also think that it is important for the UN to engage with the government of the respective State, in order to prevent further deterioration of human rights situation and help preserve the highest possible standard of minority protection. Therefore, we also welcome paragraph 22 b and c of the draft recommendations.