

NATO ENLARGEMENT AND MINORITY RIGHTS: PREREQUISITES TO SECURITY

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We support NATO's enlargement to include countries that share Western values and are able to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic community. An indispensable component of security in Central and Eastern Europe, tragically neglected throughout most of the last century, is a demonstrable commitment to democracy, including the respect for the rule of law and the rights of national and religious minorities. *See* Attachment 1.

We welcome the fact that the prospect of NATO membership has motivated some invitees to address minority rights. Lithuania, a strong and deserving invitee, has gone far in respecting the rights of its Polish and Russian minorities and providing them schooling in their mother tongue.

A persistent problem in many parts of Central and Eastern Europe is intolerance toward minorities, mistreatment of Roma and conspicuous anti-Semitism. Regardless of its target, discrimination is not only inconsistent with Western values, the rule of law and inter-ethnic harmony, it also undermines regional security.

Romania must continue its reforms in the area of human rights to approach Western norms. Even a casual visitor to Romania senses the second class citizenship of members of national and religious minorities. More than a decade after the Revolution, Romania has yet to fulfill its promises to its more than 1.5 million strong ethnic Hungarians. While Bucharest lavishly funds the Orthodox Church engaged in a church building spree, it has returned less than 1% of the more than 2000 religious and communal properties illegally seized during the Communist era to Romania's Hungarian minority. Romania daily flouts the constitutional guarantee relating to the right to an education in the mother tongue. Romania has even failed to restore the independent Hungarian state university in Cluj.

Several Members of Congress who support Romania's and Slovakia's NATO membership, nevertheless have called on Bucharest and Bratislava to finally resolve long-pending property restitution issues. *See* Attachment 2.

In sum, Romania and Slovakia should be reminded and encouraged in this accession period and beyond to build tolerant societies by respecting the rights of their respective Hungarian minorities. Their expeditiously restoring religious, educational and other properties to their Hungarian communities would translate promises into deeds and help strengthen NATO as it gains new members.

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