



## PRESS RELEASE

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James P. McGovern**

**Co-Chairman  
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**For Immediate Release**

***Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Co-Chairmen Express Concern over Revocation of Award to Bishop Laszlo Tokes, Noted Champion of Freedom and Democracy in Romania***

Washington — Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Co-chairmen Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Frank Wolf (R-VA) today sent a letter to the President of Romania expressing concern about decision of the ethics committee of the Order of the Star of Romania to revoke its award to Bishop Laszlo Tokes, who had previously been recognized for his extraordinarily courageous role in toppling the Ceausescu dictatorship during the 1989 revolution.

The co-chairs noted that the revocation was occasioned by Reverend Tokes exercising his constitutional rights by “peacefully speaking up on behalf of a minority population within Romania.” The complete letter text is below.

*Your Excellency:*

*We write to you today regarding Bishop Laszlo Tokes, whose heroism and leadership in helping to end Nicolae Ceausescu’s dictatorship during the 1989 Revolution are undeniable. Bishop Tokes championed the freedom of all Romanian citizens through his ministry in Timisoara — frequently reaching across ethnic and religious boundaries to help liberate Romania from the burden of Communism. He was given the Order of the Star of Romania in 2009 in recognition of his service to the country.*

*We were therefore surprised and deeply disappointed to learn that the ethics committee of the Order of the Star of Romania revoked its award to Reverend Tokes. The revocation was made on alleged grounds of “anti-constitutional” acts by Reverend Tokes, when in fact it is our understanding that he was exercising his constitutional rights, including his right to free speech, by peacefully speaking up on behalf of a minority population within Romania.*

*The development with regard to Bishop Tokes is troubling on a number of levels, not the least of which is that seems to indicate a closing of democratic space in Romania.*

*Mr. President, we urge you to do everything within your power to request that the ethics committee rescind its unjust action against Reverend Tokes. His courage, which helped bring about a free and just Romania, deserves due recognition. Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your reply.*

The bipartisan Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission was established in the U.S. House of Representatives to educate Members of Congress on human rights issues and advocate on behalf of human rights defenders world-wide.