

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK OF ACADEMIES AND SCHOLARLY SOCIETIES

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July 29, 2019

The International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies (H.R. Network) is an alliance of more than 90 national academies and scholarly societies that defends the fundamental rights of academics worldwide and supports scholarly institutions that are under threat. We, the members of the H.R. Network's Executive Committee, are greatly concerned about the Hungarian National Assembly's recent adoption of a bill, subsequently signed by the president, that effectively hands over control of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' research institutes to the government. The bill does not accord with the basic principles of scientific research funding and jeopardizes essential academic freedom.

It is our understanding that the bill provides for the transfer of the Academy's 15 research institutes to a newly established state research network to be governed by a board appointed by the country's prime minister and supervised by the Hungarian Ministry of Innovation and Technology. We find these structural changes highly problematic as they threaten the independence of the Academy by eroding key safeguards against political interference in basic research. As UNESCO affirms in its recommendations concerning higher education, research "can only be fully enjoyed in an atmosphere of academic freedom and autonomy."

The Hungarian parliament's bill has prompted protest and expressions of concern from the scientific community in Hungary and abroad. Public statements in support of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences issued in recent weeks from distinguished scholarly organizations throughout Europe—including the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities—attest to the high regard in which the Academy is held in terms of the quality of its researchers and the excellence of their scientific work. We join our other international scientific colleagues in strongly opposing the measures outlined in the bill on the grounds that these measures infringe upon the core principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy that underpin the scientific enterprise and threaten to diminish Hungary's tradition of excellence in research and innovation.

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(*Nobel Laureate)

Academies in the Network support and promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, assist unjustly incarcerated nonviolent professional colleagues, address grave science-related human rights issues, and advocate for member institutions whose independence is threatened.

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