

**Presentation of Mr. Péter Kunos, Executive Director
Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary
(MAZSIHISZ)**



Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me tell you a historical summary: in 1944 the property of the Hungarian Jews were taken away by the Hungarian state. Days after the German occupation 66.000 flats and houses were given to non-Jews. Hungarian authorities actively helped the German SS forces in gathering and deporting the Hungarian Jews people from the countryside, altogether 440.000 people. We lost 600.000 Jewish people including greater Hungary with bigger territories that time. From October 1944 the Hungarian Nazi Arrow-Cross regime murdered an additional of tens of thousands Jewish people by death marches, in the ghetto or by random killings. 90 % of the countryside Jewish people were lost and 30% of the Budapest Jewish people were murdered too. Due to these facts, there are about 100.000 Hungarian Jewish people, 95% of them live in Budapest.

The communist regimes from 1945 till 1990 were against all religions including Judaism. The Jewish community was organized by the state and kept under strict state control. After the political changes in 1990 a so called “Jewish renaissance” began. Hungarian Jewish people were already free to practice Judaism and live Jewish life as it is, however vast majority of Hungarian Jews today attend synagogues only during Jewish holidays or not even those times. Our organization, MAZSIHISZ, which I represent here, is one of the four historical churches in Hungary recognized by the state, is bearing the task of protecting and fostering interests of the whole Hungarian Jewry, religious and non-religious ones too.

As far as the roots of anti-Semitism in Hungary concerns it has quite long history. From the mid-end of 19th century until the era between the two world wars, Jewish people contributed a lot to developments of industry, agriculture, arts, literature etc., and in result of economical growth, quite lot of them became wealthy or even rich. A part of the non-Jewish Hungarian society looked at this phenomena with hatred and envy. The Hungarian regimes before the WWII intensified the anti-Semitic feelings among the Hungarian society and as ally of the Nazi Germany the situation of the Hungarian Jewry became even worst. There were well known stories about Jewish people with packed personal belongings on route to the ghetto or railway station, were despised by Hungarians. We all are aware of the consequences...

During the communist era it was not recommended to be openly Jewish. The holocaust trauma, problems and issues of the Hungarian Jewish people remained unsolved, just brushed under the carpet. After 1990 anti-Semitic feelings came up again in the public and political life. An extremist part from the first democratic government’s party formed the Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIÉP) and gained seats in the parliament in 1998.

After 2010 the party called Jobbik continued the MIÉP’s track but equipped with the most advanced press and mobilization techniques. Jobbik is in the Hungarian parliament since 2010. Jobbik’ central agenda is the ultra-nationalism, historical World War II related revisionism, xenophobia, anti-Roma behavior and anti-Semitism. In November 2013 the party unveiled a statue of Nazi-allied war-time

leader Admiral Miklós Horthy outside a church in Budapest, in some countryside towns, couple of streets and squares were renamed after him, plaques were uncovered.

During 2014 elections this party managed 21 percent of total votes. Nowadays, Jobbik is the second largest party in the Hungarian parliament and its popularity is increasing.

Jobbik has been involved in creating paramilitant guards (banned by the courts) one after the other, hate speech in the public and in the parliament, burning Israeli flags during protest rallies, publishing extreme-right websites and journals. The MAZSIHISZ monitoring group publishes a document every half year on anti-Semitic incidents in Hungary.

The Hungarian courts can ban the all the time re-forming guards after long legal process.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban is aware of the WJC's concerns and has made gestures of support to the Hungarian Jewish community. He attended and spoke at the 2013 WJC conference in Budapest, and in an Israeli newspaper he announced zero tolerance against anti-Semitism and excluded any cooperation with the Jobbik.

The Hungarian government was not so strongly committed concerning the history and responsibility that led to the holocaust. The MAZSIHISZ leadership stands up against attempts of falsification of the history. Our community's current strong position is the first occasion since WWII. We receive strong international support, including from the World Jewish Congress.

After half year of silence the government summoned the "Jewish round table" meeting in September this year. We received positive gestures from the government. Janos Lazar, minister of the Prime Minister's cabinet promised the Jewish organizations that without consensus the government will not finish the House of Fates. The government promised to give financial support for renovating some of our synagogues, cemeteries and elderly homes.

In the recent period Jobbik is trying to show a friendly and less extremist face in order to gain voters from a wider spectrum. The current Hungarian government is step by step makes some program elements of the Jobbik enable. Verbally

Verbally the Hungarian government is not anti-Semitic and sends positive gestures to the Hungarian Jewry. During the next Jewish round table meeting, together with leaders of the police, prosecution office, the agenda will cover the so far quite weak municipal handling of the anti-Semite phenomena.

These steps don't change the irrational circumstance that the anti-Semitism is still a living one since decades and centuries in the soul many Hungarians. We don't know how it is possible to change this kind of anti-Semitic soul but maybe we may obtain hints from this meeting.

Thank you for your attention.