

**HUNGARIANS IN SUBCARPATHIA AND UKRAINIAN REFUGEES ARE NOT ALONE -
ZSOLT SZEKERES, PRESIDENT OF HHRF -**

What is happening in Ukraine, how did we get here? Is it possible for a country at war to join NATO in the near future; and what can the diaspora do for refugee families? We sought answers to these questions in a broadcast by Bocskai Radio with Zsolt Szekeres, president of the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation. President Szekeres informed us about the position of member organizations of the Hungarian American Coalition (HAC) regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and encouraged the audience to provide humanitarian aid.

The Hungarian Human Rights Foundation (HHRF) was founded in 1976, but gained more opportunities to fulfil its original mission after the 1989 regime change in Hungary. HHRF's major activities are documenting and reporting on the human rights conditions of Hungarian minority communities living in the Carpathian Basin. In Western countries, HHRF is the only professional organization dedicated to protecting the human rights of these communities. It has also assumed the role of representing the legal affairs of NGOs in the United States and to present their aspirations at high-level meetings.

HHRF also stands up for Hungarians in the area of security policy. It was present when Hungary joined NATO in 1999. *'We still feel the wounds of 45 years of communism. We joined to protect ourselves from Russian communism'*. President Szekeres added that military compliance was not the only condition to join. Currently, he does not consider it likely that Ukraine could join this military alliance after the end of the war. At some point, Ukraine's place should be in NATO, but the current uncertain situation does not help this process at all. Hungary has been accused by many of blocking Ukraine's Western integration. All it demands, however, is that the fundamental rights of the minorities living in that country be respected. As this did not happen, and several laws discriminating against minorities were signed in Ukraine, the Hungarian government did not allow it to participate in high-level political meetings within NATO, but it did not impede all other preparations, and the accession process worked according to plan.

The Hungarian Human Rights Foundation considers one of its most important goals in these difficult times to support the fundraiser of the Hungarian American Coalition. The extent of assistance given even so far is very moving to experience: since the war started, more than \$30,000 has been raised from more than 300 donors. The funds will be donated to Hungarian aid groups as they have a lot of experience in how to turn the money into useful assistance.

HHRF is working closely with several organizations and institutions, doing everything possible to alleviate the pain of the tragedy for affected families. Shelf-stable food supplies and medical equipment will be delivered to Hungary soon. The latter will be transported to municipalities in Subcarpathia. Unfortunately everything indicates that instead of one-off donations, permanent support will be needed. Mainly the neighboring countries such as Hungary, Poland and Romania have received people fleeing Ukraine, but the European Union also indicated that it will accept refugees using a simplified process, and families can start a

new life as full citizens. However, this takes time, and in the meantime the basic needs of the refugees need to be addressed while they wait. Many African medical students studying in Ukraine have also fled to Hungary, and universities are accepting them with open arms so that they can complete their studies. HHRF is very pleased to see that students getting every help they need.

Zsolt Szekeres and the Foundation have a close relationship with Dr. László Brenzovics, President of the Cultural Alliance of Hungarians in Subcarpathia. HHRF takes action based on proposals from Dr. Brenzovics. As food is becoming more and more expensive or scarce in Subcarpathia, the community wants to procure shelf-stable food supplies in Hungary from the donations received.

We respectfully ask our audience to consider donating to the Hungarian American Coalition's fundraiser. If requested, the Coalition will send a 501(c)(3) tax deductible receipt for your records. The Coalition will also provide updated information about how donations are being used, as needed. Contributions are also being accepted via check indicating 'Aid to Hungarian and Ukrainian refugees' in the memo and mailed to: Hungarian American Coalition, P.O. Box 57135, Washington, DC 20037. If you have any further questions, please send an email to: info@hhrf.org.