



PRESS UPDATE: Immediate Release

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MDAC RESPONSE TO STATEMENTS OF PARENTS AND CZIBERE IN THE MEDIA TODAY REGARDING TOPHÁZ

BRUSSELS/BUDAPEST – We are aware that Hungarian media today reported statements made by parents of residents of Topház Speciális Otthon (Topház Special Home). We are also aware of reported statements made by Károly Czibere, Minister of State for Social Inclusion concerning [MDAC's findings](#) in Topház.

Along with the parents, family members and the Hungarian public, we are all deeply concerned for the immediate safety and welfare of the children and adults concerned. This is precisely why we have been raising the problems identified at the highest levels of the European Union today, as quickly as we possibly can. As we have stated today, if the Hungarian Government cannot immediately assist the victims and their families, then the EU should must step in.

MDAC and our partners urge all those with concerns to come forward. We will fully cooperate with all investigations taking place and have made all the evidence available to the police.

Steven Allen, MDAC Campaigns Director said: “We fully stand by the accuracy of our findings and the legality of our actions in obtaining this shocking evidence of human rights violations against adults and children with disabilities. Every precaution has been taken to protect the identities, personality rights and human rights of the victims of this atrocity. We also caution against any interference in the ongoing investigations or reprisals against staff, victims or our team.”

Ann Campbell, MDAC Litigation Director said: “It is manifestly in the public interest that this situation has been brought to the attention of the Hungarian people and the international community. Uncovering these abuses is also in the overwhelming interests of victims, families, staff and 25,000 people in similar institutions in Hungary.”

Finally, we urge the institutions of the European Union to take action to ensure that Hungary uses EU funds to support the development of rehabilitative and other services in the community.

ENDS



NOTES FOR EDITORS:

- According to press reportage, Mr. Czibere said that photos taken by MDAC in Topház were obtained “illegally”. It was also reported that Mr. Czibere stated that "What the MDAC have seen does not exist." He alleged that conditions in Topház are not what MDAC has reported. Finally, it was reported that Mr. Czibere stated that MDAC went to Topház without permission. All of these allegations are false and we shall adduce evidence as such in any relevant independent investigative proceedings.
- Hungary was recently found in violation of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights for interfering with the freedom of expression a civil liberties organisation in the country (Társaság a Szabadszégjogokért v Hungary ([Application no. 37374/05](#))). At para 38: “The Court considers that obstacles created in order to hinder access to information of public interest may discourage those working in the media or related fields from pursuing such matters. **As a result, they may no longer be able to play their vital role as ‘public watchdogs’ and their ability to provide accurate and reliable information may be adversely affected.**” (Emphasis added)
- At para 36 of the same judgment: “Moreover, the State’s obligations in matters of freedom of the press include the elimination of barriers to the exercise of press functions where, in issues of public interest, such barriers exist, solely because of an information monopoly held by authorities.”
- MDAC has opened an urgent appeal to get assistance to the victims of Topház and other institutions in Hungary: www.mdac.org/tophazappeal.
- A recording of the press conference held in Brussels today is available online at www.facebook.com/mentaldisabilityadvocacy.