

....

## Hungary

Legal changes introduced by the government continued to threaten the rule of law and weaken human rights protections. Constitutional amendments in March further undermined judicial independence, stripped the Constitutional Court of significant powers, and introduced several legal provisions previously ruled unconstitutional.

Despite piecemeal changes to the media laws in March, the main media regulator, the Media Council, continues to lack political independence. Potential fines for journalists remain excessive, and requirements for content regulation are still unclear. In March, independent news station Klubradio was able to renew license after four favorable court rulings.

In response to international criticism, including a detailed opinion by the CoE Venice Commission and a damning EP report highlighting concerns about, inter alia, the independence of the judiciary, the legal status of churches, and political advertising, the government made cosmetic changes to the constitution in September that did not put an end to discrimination of religious groups and only partially addressed limitations on political advertising in private media.

Roma continue to face discrimination and harassment. The mayor of northern city Ozd shut off public water supplies to Roma settlements, affecting some 500 families. The ECtHR ruled in January that Hungary discriminated against two Roma pupils by enrolling them in special education and in July upheld a Hungarian court's ban of the Hungarian Guard, an anti-Roma and anti-Semitic group. In August, a Budapest court convicted four men of killing six Roma, including one child, in racist attacks in 2008 and 2009.

Anti-Semitism remains a problem. Police are investigating the April assault on the president of the Raoul Wallenberg Association after a soccer game where supporters chanted the Nazi slogan *sieg heil*.

In March, the UN CEDAW Committee urged Hungarian authorities to strengthen legal protections for domestic violence victims and increase space in shelters. A domestic violence offense introduced in July created stiffer penalties and widens public prosecution but excludes non-cohabitating partners without common children and is only triggered by repeated abuse. In September, the UN Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities told Hungary to repeal a constitutional provision restricting voting rights for persons under legal guardianship and reinstate six such applicants to electoral lists.

In July, the government reinstated detention for asylum seekers on overly broad grounds. In October, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention urged Hungary to take effective measures to prevent arbitrary detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants. By the end of August, 15,069 people, including 588 Syrians, had applied for asylum, a significant increase from 1,195 applications during the same period last year.

In September, parliament adopted a law enabling local governments to criminalize homelessness, punishable by fines, community service, and even prison.