

## **Musai-Muszáj Advocacy Group**

Human Rights Council - Ninth session of the Forum on Minority Issues

24 and 25 November 2016, Geneva, Switzerland

Agenda item 4 - Protecting minority rights during humanitarian crises.

**Thank you Mr. Chair,**

My name is András Bethlendi, I am a lawyer and activist of the Musai-Muszáj advocacy group from **Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár, Romania**. In the case of the Hungarian minority, language is considered to be the major identity marker. Representation of the Hungarian language in the public space marks the level of accommodation of a minority culture by the society at large.

In my city where 50.000 Hungarians live, the use of the Hungarian language in the public space is discriminated against. **Despite the law guaranteeing the official use of Hungarian language in public, the Mayor's Office opposes consistently the enforcement of the letter of law. For instance, there are no bilingual place-names or any other public signs.**

Therefore, my organization dedicates its activities to the protection of minority language rights. I will comment on the Draft Recommendations from this perspective.

A critical component of all emergency planning and assistance is communication. Minority groups whose members have limited proficiency in the majority language are more exposed to discriminatory treatment, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, if they are not communicated with in their mother tongue.

1. We support Draft Recommendation No. 23, paragraph f) on States' commitment to "establish or continue to maintain open communication channels with affected communities, and provide timely information in a format and language that is appropriate and culturally tailored to the specific minority groups." However, in the decision of the appropriate language, minority communities should be included or minority language should be used by default.

2. We would also like to draw the attention to the fact that service provisions in crises cannot meet the standard of equal treatment if they are not available in the mother tongues of the affected persons. Therefore, it is imperative that whenever relevant, recommendations make provisions to ensure the delivery of services in minority language.

3. Since the appropriate protection and treatment of people who suffered traumatisation or persecution in crises have to be a priority, we emphasize that treatment needs to be secured in the language best understood by the affected persons. Therefore, Draft Recommendations No. 23 and No. 25 should reflect this need.

**Thank you for your attention!**

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