



ASSOCIATION FOR
JEWISH STUDIES

April 4, 2017

Mr. Zoltán Balog
Minister of Human Capacities
1054 Budapest, Akadémia utca 3.
Hungary

Dear Minister Balog:

As the elected leaders of the two major scholarly organizations for the academic study of Jews and Judaism in North America, the Association for Jewish Studies and the American Academy for Jewish Research, we are writing to express our solidarity with Central European University and express our grave concern at proposed legislative changes to CEU's status in Hungary. These changes would endanger the academic freedom vital for CEU's continued operation in Budapest and would strike a blow against the academic freedom that enables all universities, including those in Hungary, to flourish.

We write especially with the keen awareness of the vital role Jewish studies has played at CEU from its inception. Offering students from around the world, especially from Eastern and Central Europe, a wide range of courses in the languages and literature, history and sociology of Jewish civilization, CEU has succeeded in educating a new generation about a culture and society almost obliterated by the Holocaust. CEU has not only committed its resources to hiring outstanding scholars and teachers in this area but has fully integrated them into its outstanding programs in the humanities and social sciences—specifically its medieval studies program, its departments of history, religious studies (especially its resources in Christianity and Islam), sociology, and international relations. The result has been the emergence of one of the most prominent programs in Jewish studies in Europe and beyond. Scholars from other countries, especially North America and Israel, have regularly visited CEU and have participated in the fine intellectual programs the university has offered.

CEU is a valued member of our international academic community and its presence in Hungary has added to the reputation of Hungarian academic life on the international stage. The government's proposed legislation represents a threat to all who care deeply about humanistic learning, about the study of religion in general and Judaism in particular not only in Budapest and Hungarian institutions of higher learning but in Europe, the United States, and throughout the world.

We respectfully urge the government to withdraw the proposed legislation and enter consultation with CEU, bearing in mind the damage such legislation might do to Hungary's well-earned international academic reputation, to its relationships with its European partners and with the United States, and to its rich and profound cultural legacy for the future.

Sincerely,

Pamela Nadell, President
President
Association for Jewish Studies

Gershon Hundert
President
American Academy of Jewish Research

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