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# Responses to Information Requests

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1 August 2018

## HUN106147.E

Hungary: Jobbik Party [The Movement for a Better Hungary, Jobbik Magyarorszagert Mozgalom] and the Our Country Movement (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom), including impact on the government and paramilitary groups; relationship with the Roma community, including incidents of violence and discrimination; state response (2016-July 2018) Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

## 1. Overview

Sources indicate that the Jobbik Party arrived second in the Hungarian parliamentary elections held on 8 April 2018, winning 26 of the 199 seats, with the coalition between Fidesz and the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) winning 133 seats (OSCE 27 June 2018, 30; Politico 9 Apr. 2018; FPRI 10 July 2018). Sources note that in the last parliamentary elections [in 2014 (Politico 9 Apr. 2018)], Jobbik won 23 of the 199 total seats (Politico 9 Apr. 2018; FPRI 10 July

2018). According to sources, the leader of the Jobbik party, Gabor Vona, resigned following the party's defeat (Reuters 10 Apr. 2018; Bloomberg 9 Apr. 2018; MTI 10 Apr. 2018), and gave up his parliamentary seat (Reuters 10 Apr. 2018; MTI 10 Apr. 2018).

## 2. The Jobbik Party and Its Impact on the Government

According to sources, the Jobbik party, previously known for xenophobic and anti-Semitic views, has shifted to the centre of the political spectrum (*FP* 6 Apr. 2018; Reuters 22 Mar. 2018). *Foreign Policy (FP)*, a US-based magazine, explains that Jobbik, which started in the early 2000s as a "radical nationalist student movement" known for its "extreme rhetoric" directed at Jews and Roma, has, since 2013 and throughout the campaign for Hungary's 2018 parliamentary elections, abandoned its anti-Semitic views to pitch itself as the centrist, "people's party" alternative to Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party (*FP* 6 Apr. 2018). Sources indicate that Jobbik has proposed to tackle social inequalities in Hungary and reduce the flow of workers leaving Hungary for elsewhere in Europe, and that it has attacked corruption in Hungary (*FP* 6 Apr. 2018; Reuters 22 Mar. 2018). *FP* also reports that the party has "soften[ed] its stance" on the European Union (EU), stating that it does not want to leave it, but "supports working with the EU and reforming it from within" (*FP* 6 Apr. 2018). Without providing further details, Reuters adds that Jobbik has "steadily" abandoned its far-right views on Europe and immigration (Reuters 22 Mar. 2018).

Reuters reports that, while Jobbik has moved to the centre of the political spectrum, Hungary's ruling Fidesz party has "moved sharply to the right" (Reuters 22 Mar. 2018). Similarly, the *Globe and Mail*, noting that Jobbik is aiming for the "centre-right," states that "Fidesz and Jobbik have traded places" (*The Globe and Mail* 6 Apr. 2018). Katherine Kondor, a doctoral fellow at the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) [1] who specializes in Hungary's radical right, indicates that, since its re-election in 2014, Fidesz has, among others, harboured Holocaust-revisionist tendencies, militarized Hungary's southern border, campaigned against migrants, and "countenanced the paramilitary activities of radical-right groups" (Kondor 4 Apr. 2018). The same source states that, following a recent defeat in the mayoral by-election in Hódmezővásárhely [in south-eastern Hungary] and in what many believe

was an attempt to attract Jobbik's "disenchanted voters," Fidesz "turned its attention to migrants and gypsies (with Orbán publicly drawing connections between the two)" (Kondor 4 Apr. 2018).

Jobbik indicates on its website that it elected, on 12 May 2018, Tamás Sneider as its new leader; he was opposed by László Toroczkai (Jobbik 13 May 2018). Sources report that approximately 54 percent of the vote went to Sneider, and the rest to Toroczkai (FPRI 10 July 2018; *Budapest Times* 27 June 2018). Agence France-Presse (AFP) notes that Sneider was, in the early 1990s, a leader of a "skinhead group" (AFP 6 May 2014). According to the *Budapest Times*, an English-language Hungarian weekly newspaper, Sneider stated that Jobbik's goal was to be a "socially sensitive people's party" that wanted to "remedy social injustices" and that his leadership would not detract Jobbik from its "people's party course" (*Budapest Times* 27 June 2018).

Sources indicate that Toroczkai formed a platform within the party to return Jobbik to its former ideology, and said the party could split if Jobbik leaders refused the platform (Reuters 22 May 2018; *Budapest Times* 27 June 2018). According to the *Budapest Times*, Toroczkai said that the platform would welcome those who had left Jobbik or could not identify with the party's strategy of the two previous years (*Budapest Times* 27 June 2018). Reuters reports that an "end to immigration" and "a tough line on Hungary's Roma minority" are among the goals the platform sought to restore (Reuters 22 May 2018). The same source adds that Toroczkai said that the [now defunct] Hungarian Guard, "a uniformed vigilante group that Jobbik founded and used to carry out intimidating patrols in Roma-populated towns," could serve as a model for the future of Jobbik, and it quotes Toroczkai as stating that "[t]here is definite demand from voters to deal with Roma-Hungarian co-existence problems. We will see what options we have. We will revisit these towns but this time in suits" (Reuters 22 May 2018). Reuters further explains that, according to a Jobbik spokesman, the party considers Toroczkai's platform "'illegitimate'," quoting the spokesperson as stating that Jobbik's congress decided that the party "would continue on a path that led us to try and represent the widest possible cross-section of Hungarian society, regardless of political right or left, as a socially sensitive patriotic people's party" (Reuters 22 May 2018).

Sources indicate that, in early June 2018, Jobbik expelled Toroczkai from the party after a disciplinary committee concluded that he had violated the party's bylaws with his platform (FPRI 10 July 2018; MTI 8 June 2018). Without providing further details, an article published by the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI), a non-partisan, non-profit think tank (FPRI n.d.), adds that Dóra Dúró, a former Jobbik spokesperson, was excluded from the party's parliamentary group and denied her parliamentary seat (FPRI 10 July 2018). Magyar Távirati Iroda (MTI), the Hungarian state news agency (Reuters 29 June 2018), reports that, on 8 June 2018, Dúró announced she would leave Jobbik (MTI 8 June 2018).

## 2.1 Our Country Movement

FPRI indicates that Toroczkai founded the Our Country Movement (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom, MHM) [Our Homeland Movement], a "new radical nationalist political force," and that it emerged from a "fractured" Jobbik (FPRI 10 July 2018). The same source states that Dúró joined the MHM after she was excluded from Jobbik's parliamentary group (FPRI 10 July 2018). Similarly, *Magyar Idők*, a Hungarian newspaper associated with Fidesz (BBC 26 June 2018), reports that MHM was founded by Dúró and Toroczkai, both "expelled from Jobbik" (*Magyar Idők* 25 June 2018).

The FPRI articles indicates that "Jobbik's footprint is shrinking, flanked now to the right by MHM and to the center by Mr. Orbán [current prime minister, representing Fidesz]," and, citing a Hungarian news site, notes that "many see the MHM as 'a very small rightwing extremist group'" (FPRI 10 July 2018). Without providing further details, the same source states that, according to a June 2018 survey conducted by *Magyar Idők*, 35 percent of Jobbik voters support MHM and 49 percent think that Jobbik should align itself with Toroczkai's "radical" platform (FPRI 10 July 2018). Yet, the same source also asserts that Toroczkai "poses little real electoral threat, save perhaps to Jobbik's increasingly frantic leaders" (FPRI 10 July 2018). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

## 3. Activities and State Response

Sources report that Toroczkai is the mayor of Ásothalom [a village of around 4,000 inhabitants on Hungary's southern border with Serbia (Hungarian Free Press 29 Nov. 2016)], and that, in November 2016 [while he was a member of Jobbik], the town introduced decrees that prohibited Muslims from wearing "Islamic" attire in public, forbade the opening of mosques in town, banned the construction of minarets, and forbade the promotion of same-sex marriage in public (Hungarian Free Press 29 Nov. 2016) or "'any kind of propaganda activity' which presented marriage as anything other than a union between a man and a woman" (Hungary Today 12 Apr. 2017). The Hungarian Free Press, an Ottawa-based, English-language online newspaper (Hungarian Free Press n.d.), explains that a fine of 150,000 Hungarian forints (HUF) [approximately C\$713] would be given to "[a]nyone 'apprehended' promoting gay rights in public or wearing traditional Islamic garb" (Hungarian Free Press 29 Nov. 2016). Sources indicate that Hungary's Constitutional Court invalidated the decrees as unconstitutional (Hungary Today 12 Apr. 2017; *The Independent* 13 Apr. 2017), ruling that local authorities cannot introduce regulations that affect basic rights (Hungary Today 12 Apr. 2017). The *Globe and Mail* reports that the two Muslim families who were living in Ásothalom have since left (*The Globe and Mail* 6 Apr. 2018). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to sources, Hungary built fences along its border with Serbia to keep migrants out of Hungary (*The Globe and Mail* 6 Apr. 2018; NBC 2 May 2018). *The Globe and Mail* reports that it was Jobbik who initially thought of the fence, and that Toroczkai [then a member of Jobbik] called for the fence in 2014 (*The Globe and Mail* 6 Apr. 2018). NBC News describes Toroczkai as "one of the loudest voices" that "convinced" Hungary's government to build the fence at the border, consisting of "two parallel 10-foot-high razor-wire electric fences" (NBC 2 May 2018).

Without providing further details, FPRI reports that, according to a May 2018 article published by *Magyar Idők*, Toroczkai addressed the issue of "Roma criminality" and is quoted as saying the following:

"I'm a believer in zero tolerance ... in this area. If need be, they must be dragged away in front of their own community and tossed into a paddy wagon to be sent away for a very long time, applying the 'three strikes' rule or even banishing them from Roma society." (FPRI 10 July 2018)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

## **4. Relations with Paramilitary Groups**

### **4.1 The New Hungarian Guard (Új Magyar Gárda)**

According to sources, the New Hungarian Guard was founded a few weeks after the dissolution of the Hungarian Guard in 2009 (Kondor 14 May 2018; Budapest Institute 9 July 2015, 7). Sources indicate that the Hungarian Guard was disbanded by a court order because it threatened minority groups (BBC 2 July 2018), or after it paraded in Tatárszentgyörgy [near Budapest] in a Roma settlement and "'threatened the rights of Roma'" (Budapest Institute 9 July 2015, 7). In 2015, the European edition of the American news publication *Politico* described the New Hungarian Guard as the paramilitary wing of Jobbik (*Politico* 27 July 2015).

On 28 January 2017, activists belonging to the New Hungarian Guard staged a demonstration at Jobbik's "year-opening event," protesting against Jobbik's new political direction away from the right and demanded that [then] party president Gábor Vona "hand back his [Hungarian Guard] vest" (*Hungary Today* 30 Jan. 2017). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sean Lambert, a former English-language journalist for MTI whose blog documents "the rise of illiberal democracy in Hungary" (Lambert n.d.), indicates that the New Hungarian Guard has become "largely inactive" since the "deradicalization" of Jobbik (Lambert 24 June 2018). However, according to Kondor, the New Hungarian Guard has chapters in most Hungarian counties (Kondor 14 May 2018).

Lambert indicates that some attendees at MHM's inauguration in June 2018 wore the uniform of the New Hungarian Guard (Lambert 24 June 2018). *Hungarian Spectrum*, a blog that features "daily analyses of news from Hungary" and whose "editor and primary pundit" is Eva S. Balogh, former professor of East European history at Yale University (*Hungarian Spectrum* n.d.), states that members of both the New Hungarian Guard and the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom) were in attendance at the MHM inauguration (*Hungarian Spectrum* 25 June 2018).

## 4.2 Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement

Sources state that the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement was founded by Toroczkaï in 2001 (Kondor 14 May 2018; *Hungarian Spectrum* 25 June 2018). The same sources describe the group as a far-right irredentist group (*Hungarian Spectrum* 25 June 2018) or a "national radical," revisionist and irredentist group (Kondor 14 May 2018). The BBC similarly describes the group as an "anti-Semitic and Hungarist revisionist sect" (BBC 2 July 2018). According to Kondor, the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement is active in the Hungarian regions of neighbouring countries, "especially in the eastern part of Transylvania in Romania" (Kondor 14 May 2018).

## 4.3 Outlaws' Army [Outlaw Army, Army of Outlaws] (Betyársereg)

The Athena Institute, a Budapest-based independent research organization on security matters in Europe (Athena Institute n.d.), indicates that Toroczkaï, together with Zsolt Tyirityán, founded the Outlaws' Army in 2008, and describes it as a "hate group [that] defines itself as a 'self-defense army'" (Athena Institute 7 July 2014a). According to Kondor, the Outlaws' Army is "by far the most violent non-marginal radical right group in Hungary," and it "provides security for radical right demonstrations" in Hungary (Kondor 14 May 2018). The BBC similarly notes that the group is "a violent, masked neo-Nazi movement" (BBC 2 July 2018). Without providing further details, the Budapest Institute, a research organization focused on policy research and analysis (Budapest Institute n.d.), explained in 2015 that the group, counting approximately 60 members who "bear arms and engage in activities meant to intimidate the Roma," is "illegal" (Budapest Institute 9 July 2015, 8).

## 4.4 Impact of Paramilitary Groups

The BBC reports that, when asked in a 29 June interview whether MHM would cooperate with the Hungarian Guard, the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement or the Army of Outlaws, Dúró stated that MHM would "work closely with far-right paramilitary-style groups in the future" and that these groups have "a lot to contribute to society" (BBC 2 July 2018). The Budapest Institute notes that

apart from organising street demonstrations against Roma, Jews and homosexuals, the [Hungarian Guard and later the New Hungarian Guard] ha[ve] been involved in various social activities, such as charity or humanitarian disaster management, where the state has either failed or been present only marginally. This type of activism has greatly contributed to the positive popular image of the movement. (Budapest Institute 9 July 2015)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Information on incidents of violence involving paramilitary groups associated with Jobbik or MHM and members of the Roma community could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

## 4.5 State Response

According to Lambert, citing Hungarian-language news sources, on 12 April 2016, the Keszthely Court of Appeals upheld a fine for 100,000 HUF [approximately C\$469] imposed on New Hungarian Guard Captain István Mészáros for violating Hungary's law on assembly when he "organized and directed gatherings of the New Hungarian Guard" (Lambert 24 June 2018). The Athena Institute lists Mészáros as a "presumed" leader of the New Hungarian Guard and indicates that, in 2013, the "prosecutor's office" of Hungary suspected he had been "'abusing the freedom of assembly'" (Athena Institute 7 July 2014b).

Without providing further details, MTI reports that, on 5 July 2017, an appeals court in Hungary sentenced a man to three years in prison for "verbally and physically assaulting participants in the Budapest Pride march" in July 2013; 20 to 30 "radicals" found to belong to the New Hungarian Guard attacked 3 men while shouting "'you are faggots, you are Gypsies'" (MTI 5 July 2017). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

MTI reports in 2017 that a Hungarian parliamentary national security committee [2] stated that "[e]xtremist paramilitary organisations in Hungary have been 'suppressed' and pose no national security risks" (MTI 21 Nov. 2017). The Budapest Beacon, an online news publication reporting on events in Hungary, states

that the committee's head identified the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement and the Outlaws' Army, among others, as paramilitary organizations to be examined for infringement of the rule of law (The Budapest Beacon 10 Nov. 2017). According to MTI, a Jobbik member, Adam Mirkoczki, said that these groups have not committed any crimes (MTI 21 Nov. 2017). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

### Notes

[1] The Centre for the Analysis of Radical Right (CARR) is a "specialist-led website and research collective" that aims to be "the leading information aggregator and knowledge repository on the radical right" (CARR 1 Apr. 2018).

[2] The Parliamentary Committee for National Security (*Országgyűlés Nemzetbiztonsági Bizottsága*), or National Security Committee, is a parliamentary committee that oversees the "authorisation procedure of the Minister of Justice," and of the National Security Services and that controls the "classified activities" of the Military National Service; its chairman is always to be a member of the parliamentary opposition (Hungarian Helsinki Committee 26 Sept. 2014, 6).

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## **Additional Sources Consulted**

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