

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HUNGARY

OUR HUMAN RIGHTS SUCCESSES

January – June 2020

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**





Content

INTRODUCTION.....	3
(1) WE DEFEND THE RULE OF LAW	4
1. DEFENDING THE AUTONOMY OF INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS.....	4
2. STRENGTHENING LEGAL AWARENESS, ENCOURAGING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP.....	4
3. PROTECTING THE RULE OF LAW IN THE STATE OF DANGER.....	5
(2) WE FIGHT FOR GENDER EQUALITY	5
1. REDUCING THE GENDER PAY GAP	5
2. STANDING UP AGAINST DISCRIMINATION TOWARDS WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE.....	5
3. CORONAVIRUS AND GENDER EQUALITY.....	5
(3) WE PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY.....	6
1. STANDING UP AGAINST UNJUSTIFIED DATA COLLECTION	6
(4) WE FIGHT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS GLOBALLY	6
(5) WE PROVIDE HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION NATIONWIDE	7
(6) WE MOBILIZE AND STAND UP AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS NATIONWIDE	8
1. ÖSSZPONT.....	8
2. FREEDOM CLUBS.....	8
3. AMNESTY FACES.....	8
(7) NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA APPEARANCES	9

INTRODUCTION

We were appalled that the Court of Istanbul sentenced Taner Kılıç, former president of the Turkish Amnesty, to six years and three months of imprisonment for participating in a terrorist organization. The trial was more of a conceptual process, during which even the most basic criteria of the rule of law was neglected. China has imposed a national security law on Hong Kong that significantly restricts citizens' fundamental rights and provides opportunities for the government to act against human rights defenders. Our Moroccan colleagues received life-threatening letters after having drawn attention to the government's violations. Meanwhile, in India the government continues to stymie our human rights work through administrative means. In every country, we consistently stand up for our beliefs, and do not allow states to cover up their infringements or to muzzle voices critical of them. In recent years, we have been doing the same in Hungary, as we have decided to become the loudest critics of the government's anti-NGO campaign. It has proven to be worth it to stand up for our beliefs and to represent our principles consistently. The European Court of Justice ruled in our favor by vitiating the Hungarian government's NGO civil law of 2017.

The greatest challenges of 2020 were related to COVID-19, in the field of human right, and in organizational terms, as well. In Hungary, Amnesty International has been one of the main figures of drawing attention to the human rights implications of responses to the pandemic. We have appeared in the Hungarian press more than 1500 times; thus, our position on the human rights effects of the Enabling Act and on the restrictions of rights have reached hundreds of thousands of readers. We were the very first to voice the need for the state to, besides general considerations, pay special attention to the protection of women, children, healthcare workers, disabled people, LGBTQ and Roma people, homeless people, and refugees. We also drew attention to the fact that protecting human rights is a means to a more effective fight against the pandemic. Our coronavirus-related [organizational strategy](#) clearly articulates our goals and provides connectivity for all people and communities valuing human rights.

At the beginning of March, Amnesty International Hungary swiftly switched to working online, thus ensuring that, in addition to staying efficient, we also preserve our health. We regularly held online events, talks, press events, wrote op-eds, continued our research, and we digitalized a significant part of the human rights education program. In addition to human rights work, Amnesty supporters provided help by volunteering to shop for groceries, by walking the dogs of the elderly and by collecting computers for residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods and towns. Together with you, we have achieved a lot of success in the first half of 2020. We are living in times of uncertainty, but we can certainly promise one thing: to continue together and to further achieve even more human rights successes.



**THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH US ALONG THE WAY!
WE COUNT ON YOU IN THE FUTURE, AS WELL!**

(1) WE DEFEND THE RULE OF LAW

1. DEFENDING THE AUTONOMY OF INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS

In the first half of 2020, through unique, novel, and credible research, Amnesty International Hungary has contributed to making the domestic and international public aware of developments subversive to the independence of the judiciary. Between November 2019 and January 2020, we conducted an interview-based survey disclosing what the Hungarian judges think about the state of the judicial system and of the independence of the judiciary in Hungary. The research report, titled "[Fearing the unknown – How the rising control is undermining judicial independence in Hungary](#)" was published April 6th, 2020; it received wide press coverage of more than 30 Hungarian news outlets. The research found that the administration of the courts suffers from systemic problems; the organizational independence of the courts has been severely corroded; the government's judicial reform has enfeebled the independence of the courts; and that the recent measures have created a chilling atmosphere in the judiciary. The research report is a point of reference in the domestic and international public opinion and it was also considered as a point of reference in the annual parliamentary report of the President of the National Judiciary Office.

We have stood up for the protection of the rule of law in Hungary at global level, as well. We have become an unmissable player in professional debates related to the rule of law. Amnesty Hungary have regularly consulted with EU decision-makers with members of both the Commission and [Parliament](#). In April, [The European Parliament condemned](#) the violation of the rule of law and called the Council to continue the rule of law procedure under Article 7, and it reprobated the deprivation of transgender individuals in Hungary. Together with several [other Hungarian NGOs](#), we participated in the consultation launched by the European Commission in connection with its first rule of law report. The image emerging from the answers clearly depicts the austere consequences of the governmental and legislative measures of the last decade. It also shows the deteriorated state of the Hungarian rule of law in which the Enabling Act and the regulatory governance came into force in 2020.

This year, Amnesty International continued to be one of the loudest voices against government attacks on civilians. The first of the laws specifically designed to restrict critical NGOs was the 2017 Act on the "transparency of foreign-funded organizations," aiming to stigmatize critical organizations and to intimidate their supporters. In 2017, the membership of Amnesty International Hungary decided not to stand for such defamation, but rather do our utmost to ensure that this infringing law will not remain in force. Together with 23 NGOs, we appealed [to the Constitutional Court](#), and later [to the European Court of Human Rights](#). We also tried to persuade EU decision-makers to investigate the law. After a lengthy procedure, the [European Court of Justice](#) finally ruled in June that the 2017 law was contrary to EU law as it discriminated against NGOs, violating their freedom of association, the right to private and family life, and the right to the protection of personal data. This is a very important stage in the lives of Hungarian NGOs and our supporters, but we must continue our work to ensure that civilians can work freely and without intimidation in Hungary and that the 2017-18 anti-NGO laws will be repealed in Hungary.

2. STRENGTHENING LEGAL AWARENESS, ENCOURAGING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

This May, the Parliament passed a law abolishing legal gender recognition of transgender people. Henceforth, the gender in one's ID card must be the same as their "sex at birth" according to the civil registry, even if the person goes under gender reassignment. This is a serious violation of transgender and intersex people's rights to privacy, to the legal recognition of their self-perceived gender identity, and to dignity. Therefore, we turned to the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights and demanded that he sends the relevant part of the law to the Constitutional Court, for constitutional review. Budapest Pride, Háttér Society, the Hungarian LGBT Association, and Prizma Transgender Community have all joined our initiative. Our petition was signed by more than 13.000 people in Hungary, and by 105.000 people in 17 other countries. Signatures were continuously sent via e-mail and, following a [press conference](#), we collectively filed them to the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights.

We have launched a petition against the Enabling Act and the new Criminal Code provision on scaremongering because it induces the opportunity for police abuse and jeopardizes freedom of expression. During the pandemic, informing citizens is particularly important, and journalists and doctors must not be coerced or intimidated.

We held an [Online Civil Forum](#) together with the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union and the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, where we examined the government's measures related to the coronavirus. Attendees at the forum could ask questions regarding the state of emergency, the Enabling Act, and legal advocacy. Furthermore, we published a quiz on Facebook, in which we asked questions about the rule of law and the judiciary. Through this we managed to reach thousands of people who tested their knowledge and learned about the values of rule of law.



3. PROTECTING THE RULE OF LAW IN THE STATE OF DANGER

During the state of emergency declared due to the coronavirus pandemic, Amnesty remained the fiercest defender of the rule of law and of human rights. We were able to influence domestic and international public opinion significantly, to ensure that there were no arbitrary human rights violations under the aegis of fighting the pandemic. We made a substantive impact early in the pandemic by drawing attention to the shortcomings of the defensive measures in [Hungary](#) and [abroad](#). We have [published](#) a position piece with other human rights organizations, claiming that the Enabling Act does not meet the democratic, nor the constitutional requirements regarding special legal order. We called on the Parliament to pass a law that complies with the rule of law and protects our fundamental rights. Following our claims, the [Secretary General of the Council of Europe](#), the [Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#), the Committee of the European Parliament, and the [Director of OSCE/ODIHR](#) issued similar statements, as well.

Throughout the emergency, our lawyers continually monitored the measures taken by the Government, the decrees issued without the control of the Parliament. We [consider](#) it a success that, albeit the Parliament extended the scope of several problematic rules after the termination of the emergency, it ceased several provisions that we had marked concerning.

At the same time, when the emergency ended, we drew attention to the fact that both the declaration and the termination of the new, so-called “state of health emergency” are at the discretion of the government; therefore, once again, there are no guarantees by the rule of law. These regulations under the new emergency rules are problematic, because no guarantee is given that -without parliamentary authorization- they would expire after a set amount of time. We [presented](#) and defended our position not only in expert materials, but also in a public debate [with the Secretary of State for the Prime Minister's Office](#). Amnesty's position was regularly published in [local](#) and international press, and the largest independent foreign and domestic press outlets and TV channels referenced our director and [Amnesty Hungary's staff](#).

(2) WE FIGHT FOR GENDER EQUALITY

1. REDUCING THE GENDER PAY GAP

On March 8th, we launched our [#EgyLépésselKözelebb](#) (“#OneStepCloser”) campaign to foster closing the gender pay gap. Companies and municipalities joining the campaign have committed to publishing their gender pay data annually, on International Women's Day. So far, among others, BKK (Centre for Budapest Transport), BKV (Budapest Transport Privately Held Corporation), the Municipality of Budapest, and Municipalities of Districts II., IV., VI., VIII., XI., XIV., XV. have all joined our initiative. From the private sector, both multi-companies and smaller companies have joined, such as, IKEA, Netpincér, SPAR Hungary, Oláh & Társa Kft. or the UX Studio. We are continuously looking for new members to join our campaign. We have created a sample letter that individuals can send to their employer if they wish their workplace to join the initiative.

2. STANDING UP AGAINST DISCRIMINATION TOWARDS WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE



We conducted a much-needed study on the issue and published the findings in June. [Our research](#) examined discrimination at work towards women, especially pregnant women and women with small children. It has shown that women encounter innumerable forms of discrimination in the labor market solely due to their gender and, in many cases, motherhood. The research also revealed that, in many cases, women's fixed-term employment and probationary period are terminated unlawfully prematurely, and that pregnant women are deprived of training, and further employment and career development opportunities.

Furthermore, discrimination against women with small children is prevalent, and in many cases female workers cannot return to the same position after maternity or parental leave. Moreover, since society and employers also expect mothers to care for the children during illness, that also leads to direct as well as indirect discrimination against women in the workplace. With the research

results, we drew attention to significant problems, engendering [important media attention](#).

3. CORONAVIRUS AND GENDER EQUALITY

During the pandemic, we have persistently drawn attention to the fact that various minority and social groups are affected vastly differently by the economic- and social impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. We first outlined in an [op-ed article](#), specific ways that the pandemic affects women and what positive and negative changes it can induce to gender equality. During the pandemic, we worked together with WeAreOpen, BAGázs Association, Háttér Society and Salva Vita Foundation to develop a material for employers to help mitigating the impact of the pandemic on marginalized employees at the workplace. [The guide](#) contains useful information, data, resources, specific tips and suggestions for employers.

(3) WE PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY

1. STANDING UP AGAINST UNJUSTIFIED DATA COLLECTION

We were the very first to draw public attention to the fact that from May 1st, the police can use facial recognition on people refusing to identify themselves. We explored the new technology and explained the process of verification in a [detailed article](#), in order to bring awareness of the changes and their human rights implications to as many people as possible. Lest the occurrence of infringements concerning the introduction of facial recognition, we wrote a letter to the Data Protection Commissioner to investigate whether the police procedure would be compatible with data protection rules.

After examining the quarantine application introduced by the government during the emergency, we [concluded](#) that contrary to the government's claim, its use is not voluntary, since people who refuse electronic monitoring face more serious consequences than those who comply. We provided exclusive training to Amnesty members and volunteers on facial recognition software and their impact on human rights.

In addition to our materials on domestic issues, we also translated several important articles to Hungarian, to show how governments are using the coronavirus pandemic to broaden [mass surveillance](#). We wrote about international research identifying the most perilous [contact tracing applications](#), and we also provided advice on [how to keep one's phone](#) and on it the personal data stored as securely as possible during demonstrations.

We are currently developing a human rights class for high school students on the subject, drawing attention to the importance of protecting privacy and showing interested youth how to protect their data online.

(4) WE FIGHT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS GLOBALLY



- We led the most successful [Write for Rights campaign](#), in years. A record number of people participated in the world's largest human rights campaign, with a total number of more than 6.6 million letters, signatures, and messages sent to authorities and to victims of human rights violations.
- Another outstanding result of the first half of 2020, is that after examining the contact tracing application introduced by the Qatari authorities, Amnesty [gave notice](#) that anyone could easily access users' names, locations, and health data, upon which warning the Qatari authorities resolved the error within 24 hours. This achievement is even more important, as the use of the application is mandatory in Qatar; thus, thanks to Amnesty International, more than 1 million people now know that their personal data is more secure.
- Bahrain has finally released [Nabeel Rajabo](#), for whose freedom Amnesty International has been fighting for years. The renowned human rights defender was imprisoned for 4 years for condemning the Yemeni armed conflict on social media. Thanks to our international campaign [Abdi Malik Muse Odon](#), Somali journalist, is also free, after having spent more than a year in prison for excoriating the president of his country on Facebook. In Switzerland, the proceedings against the [Reverend Norbert Valley](#), who was prosecuted for helping a Togolese asylum seeker, got dismissed.
- Amnesty International also partook in a campaign aimed at having US authorities drop espionage allegations against Julian Assange, who disclosed documents on WikiLeaks.
- Our international series of demonstrations prevented the Polish legislation from further restricting abortion and banning sex education in schools.

(5) WE PROVIDE HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION NATIONWIDE



Over the past six months, students, teachers, and parents have been hit by several unexpected challenges in public education. The most severe ones include the forced introduction of the national core curriculum (NAT) without professional consultation, tens of thousands of students dropping out of digital education, and the deployment of school guards in state schools. Our [human rights education program](#) drew attention to the unilateral decision-making process of the Ministry of Education, while also providing help in the arising situation. Just eight months before the commencement of the 2020 school year, the new national curriculum was adopted. [We shed light to the fact](#) that the newly adopted subject of civic education does not support neither democratic values, nor critical and independent thinking, but rather creates obedient followers. In May, [we published](#) our resolution on the school guard system, claiming that the notion does not respond to the real problem, as deploying

school guards does not prevent violence and instead it further consolidates existing social stratification.

We participated in demonstrations by PDSZ (Democratic Union of Teachers), and a [community forum](#) organized by Emberség Erejével (Power of Humanity Foundation). We had several [media appearances](#) in connection with NAT and the introduction of the school guard system.

Until March, our human rights classes were requested 48 times from 17 cities, reaching a total of 1061 students. We held a training for human rights trainers in Pécs, the success of which is well illustrated by the fact that one third, 319, of the students whom we reached were from Baranya county. Our lesson called "Enemy", which we held 23 times was the most sought-after among elementary schools, while in high schools the most demanded lessons were those on rule of law and bullying. After the onset of the state of emergency, we have found a way in the new digital realm to reach the youth with human rights content. Promptly responding to the situation, we developed an online course on the relationship between [human rights and the coronavirus](#), and launched a new video series for independent development and learning, called [Mesés Emberi Jogaid](#) (Your Wonderful Human Rights), in which well-known actors read aloud Csimota publisher's human rights books. The performers also provided follow-up questions and thought-inducing notes.

Meanwhile, our connection with our volunteer trainers remained strong: by forming an inner learning community, we organized online workshops for learning about tools of online facilitation, about different methods of questioning techniques, and about age-specific characteristics of students. Together with our trainers, we digitalized our "Hate Crimes" course, thus we could continue to reach our primary target group: students.

(6) WE MOBILIZE AND STAND UP AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS NATIONWIDE

1. ÖSSZPONT

This was the seventh year that we held Összpont, our human rights contest aimed to engage high school students. Participants could partake in a variety of exciting and creative tasks, learn about social issues and their human rights implications, and obtain tools and skills to induce positive change. Due to the pandemic, all communication took place online, which offered wider accessibility, as well as some obstacles. Throughout the three rounds of the competition, participants delivered speeches on climate change; started petitions and campaigns on social issues of their choice; they had online debates; and the most inspired ones could apply for an Amnesty grand to win support for the further development of their projects. Amnesty's volunteer mentors assisted the participants throughout the contest, and they will continue to assist the teams who advance their projects beyond the competition. The winners of Amnesty's Összpont contest will be able to expand their human rights experiences even more, as prizes include tickets to an interactive theatre play exploring human rights; a training of their choice; and the prize for first place is a study trip to Amnesty Norway.

2. FREEDOM CLUBS

Our student groups were active even throughout the state of emergency: they held meetings and chose committee representatives in each of the four cities, lead regular meetings and adopted a new yearly structure for the clubs. The Freedom Clubs swiftly switched to the online realm, continued their activism digitally, and participated in online actions and demonstrations. During the lock-down, our activists started "Quarantine Pigeon," a blog exploring the experiences of 12 activists from 11 countries, connecting through the shared experience of the quarantine. The Freedom Clubs also developed their own human rights related [gifs and Instagram filters](#), that were used over 3 million times worldwide.

For our members and activists, we held interactive online events titled "Be Present," in Hungarian and in English. During these discussions, we interviewed experts of the given topic in an informal setting, and attendees were encouraged to ask questions, share opinions, and actively engage in the given human rights issues along the lines of our strategic foci. Furthermore, we discussed what individuals and communities can do regarding each issue, to make a difference.

The pandemic posed a variety of challenges to everyone. In order to ease the difficulties that our activists and volunteers had to face, we arranged for them 6 well-being sessions led by a professional coach, in English and in Hungarian, as well. These meetings focused on the mental well-being of the activists, as well as on strengthening the community, so every activist and volunteer knew that they are not alone.

3. AMNESTY FACES

In January, we began to develop a new project to bring one of Amnesty's most important endeavors closer to the people. This year we adopt the model of Faces -volunteers to distribute petitions and urgent actions and collect signatures in the streets. In February, we successfully trained the first group of Faces, who had a quick chance to try themselves in the streets, just a day before the pandemic hit and we had to cease all offline activities. Once the lockdown is over, we plan to hold more trainings, and have the Faces return to the streets to reach even more people with our petitions and urgent actions.

(7) NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA APPEARANCES

The first half of 2020 was dominated by [COVID-related news](#) in the media. Besides explaining in articles and [analyses](#) the ways that human rights may serve as a tool when responding to the pandemic, we were also committed to warning people about the potential human rights risks that the government's measures posed. It is our mission to protect rule of law, even during the state of emergency.

- As soon as the state of emergency took effect, we published an [op-ed in Index](#), explaining the dangers of the government having uncontrolled powers.
- Along [with our civil partners](#), we wrote a reaction paper on Balazs Orban -the Secretary of State for the Prime Minister's Office- calling our concerns pathetic.
- Besides giving several [domestic](#) and [international](#) interviews on the Enabling Act and [the following law](#) preserving its measures, our writings also appeared on two prominent European platforms: in [Euronews](#) and in [Politiken](#), the leading Danish newspaper.
- At the end of June, an extraordinary event took place: David Vig, director of Amnesty Hungary, and Balazs Orban, Secretary of State for the Prime Minister's Office [debated live](#) about the state of rule of law, about the Government's emergency measures, and about NGOs in Hungary.



Besides conducting human rights work in relation to the pandemic, we also continued our other endeavors. While the topic of coronavirus ruled the national and international media in the first half of 2020, we still managed to draw significant media attention to other issues, such as decrees put in force by the government during the state of emergency, the state of the Hungarian judiciary, and discrimination against women in the workplace.

At the beginning of April, we published [our research report](#) on the independence of the courts, which not only drew nationwide [media attention](#), but it also evoked a reaction from the [National Judiciary Office](#). Since we find it important to examine the state of the judiciary on an international level as well, in January, we connected an Index journalist with two Polish judges, who gave an elaborate [interview](#) on the measures that the government has been taking to undermine the independence of courts in Poland.

- In June 18th, the Court of Justice of the European Union [ruled](#) that the 2017 Anti-NGO Law violated EU law. On the law and the ruling, we gave interviews to [The New York Times](#) and several other media outlets.
- Regarding our work on gender inequality, we were invited to the morning show of ATV two times. In March, we went on the show to [discuss the launch](#) of our [“One Step Closer”](#) campaign aiming to close the gender pay gap. Then, in June, we [introduced our current research](#) on discrimination against women in the workplace. The [research](#) was also featured in [Nők Lapja](#), a prominent Hungarian [newspaper](#) aimed at women.
- At the end of April, we were [the first one](#) to shed light to the dangers of the police using facial recognition to identify people. Furthermore, we thoroughly discussed the [quarantine app](#) as well.
- On May 9th, the Parliament passed the Act banning the legal recognition of transgender people, in response which we launched an international campaign. In order to reach and engage as many people as possible, we addressed an [opinion piece](#) to the ombudsman, Akos Kozma, asking him to do his job and send the law to the Constitutional Court; we also stood up for the rights of trans people in [Germany](#) and in [South Africa](#), among others.



During the first six months of the year, we were mentioned 1500 times in Hungarian media (30% increase compared to this time last year), we gave more than 60 interviews, and published 4 opinion pieces. Our international publications regarding the Enabling Act and the rights of transgender people were the most referenced Amnesty sources on the week of their issuing in the European region (494 and 449 mentions, respectively). Our publication on the anti-NGO legislation was the third most referenced work, with 260 mentions