



Nr. 43/2009
Săpânța, 3 Iunie 2009

His Excellency Mats Åberg
The Ambassador of Sweden in Romania
Sos. Kiseleff nr. 43
011837 Bucuresti

Re: The Romanian State is violating human rights and erasing the greek-catholic heritage from Sapanta, Maramures County, by refusing to apply a court order

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

I am Father Grigor Mihai and I am writing you on behalf of the Greek-Catholic Parish from Sapanta, Maramures County.

For the last 20 years, since the fall of the communism, our community tried to express its faith publicly and to live according to our conscience in a country that calls itself democratic and ruled by law. Unfortunately, during this time our community has been constantly harassed, intimidated, discriminated and persecuted, our rights and civil liberties constantly violated with the knowledge and sometimes the support of the Romanian authorities.

In 1997 the body of a greek-catholic believer was stolen by the mayor at that time along with other people, to be buried by the orthodox priest. Since 2003 we have been trying to obtain a permit to build a church on the land that we bought after the fall of communism (the land that was confiscated from us in 1948 we were not able to regain) and are continuously refused. Meanwhile the Orthodox Church built a new church, on one of the properties that we had prior to 1948, with the money from the Government, while they still kept the church that was taken from us by the communists in 1948. This entire time we were and are currently praying in a storage shed.

Recently, the Orthodox Church, with the approval and support of the Romanian Government, started a "reparation" and "restoration" job to the greek-catholic church from Sapanta, which would actually erase the architectural signs showing that this church is greek-catholic.

We filed a lawsuit to get the church back and we obtained a court order that mandates the stoppage of any demolition or construction work to the greek-catholic church until the case is resolved. But since April 29th, the Romanian authorities are declining any responsibly in applying this court order so the destruction of the greek-catholic church continues and our heritage is destroyed with the support of the Romanian Government.

It is hard to believe that in a country ruled by law and member of the European Union such things can happen. How can there be an independent justice system that works in Romania when the authorities are not applying the law for all citizens? This is not the first greek-catholic church demolished in Romania after the fall of the communism with the support of the Romanian Government.



BISERICA ROMÂNĂ UNITĂ CU ROMA, GRECO-CATOLICĂ
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In this particular case, we informed all the Romanian authorities, from the President and Prime-Minister to the Chief of Police and Prefect of Maramures, but nobody is doing anything to apply this court order. We are getting threats even in the media from the representatives of the Orthodox Church that are saying that nobody can stop them, or that they „will take this situation into their own hands”. One of our believers was threatened with death by an orthodox representative. What should we believe? In what country and what Union do we live in?

We have all the reasons to believe that the destruction of the greek-catholic church from Sapanta, adjacent to the Merry Cemetery, is part of the cultural and the religious cleansing that the Romanian Government is perpetuating against the greek-catholic community and greek-catholic heritage from Romania.

In this desperate situation we appeal to you asking for international support.

We want this church, built in 1886, saved for humanity, because the Merry Cemetery started around it in 1935. The Merry Cemetery is known around the world for its uniqueness and beauty, and we want it saved for future generations as it is: the cemetery and the church. By destroying the greek-catholic church and make it into kitsch, this place will loose its purity that makes it unique.

Please address this issue to all the European officials to helping us to save this church from destruction and to demand the Romanian Government to apply the law, as it should be in any country that has a healthy justice system and is ruled by law.

We are attaching to this letter all the documents which prove that the Merry Cemetery and the church are our properties, the court order that mandates the stoppage of any work to the church, and the letters that we sent to the Romanian authorities in regards to the obstruction of justice that is taking place in Sapanta which apparently, so far, didn't get the attention of the Romanian Government.

We are looking forward to your support to stop this injustice and we will keep you updated about the on-going situation.

Thank you.

Fr. Grigor Mihai
Greek-catholic priest
Sapanta

ROMANIA
SIGHETU MARMATIEI COURT OF JUSTICE

File no. 1140/307/2009

RULES:

Approve the demand of the presidential order issued by the plaintiff Sapanta Greek Catholic Parish, with headquarters in Sapanta no. 909, Maramures County opposing the defendant Sapanta Orthodox Parish, with headquarters in Sapanta no. 772, Maramures County.

Decides to cease the demolition and construction works performed by the defendant for the Greek Catholic Church, owned by the plaintiff, located in Sapanta no. 517, Maramures County until the final and irrevocable resolution of the demand to put on trial issued in the file no. 1132/307/2009 at the Sighetu Marmatiei Court of Justice.

Early and rightful enforceable judgement, without notice.

Final.

With the right to appeal in 5 days from the deliverance.

Delivered in public session today April 23rd 2009.

PRESIDENT
NEMES POP IOAN
SEAL, ILLEGIBLE SIGNATURE



Subsemnata, **Ramona Alina Tivadar**, traducător autorizat prin Ordinul Ministerului Justiției nr. 7266/2002, certific exactitatea traducerii cu textul înscrisului original în limba română, vizat de mine traducător.

I, **Ramona Alina Tivadar** sworn translator, licenced by Justice Minister's Order no. 7266/2002, do hereby certify that this translation is true and accurate to the original document in Romanian, stamped by me, translator.

Traducător / Translator

TIVADAR RAMONA
Traducător autorizat
engleza - franceză
Aut. nr. 7266/2002



the greek-catholic church prior to demolition



May 1, 2009 – the greek-catholic church during the demolition



May 1, 2009 – the greek-catholic church during the demolition



May 10, 2009 – the demolition continues after the court order



the Romanian State authorized the destruction



May 31, 2009 – the destruction continues despite the court order