

# International Fair Trial Day (IFTD)

**14 June 2026**

## **Focus Country: HUNGARY**

**Save the Date for the IFTD event:**

**18 June 2026, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary**

**and Call for Nominations for the Ebru Timtik Award (deadline 11 May 2026)**

### **Background**

The annual [International Fair Trial Day \(IFTD\)](#) is observed each year on 14 June. Established in 2021,\*\* the initiative is supported by over 100 legal associations across the world who are committed to the vital importance of the right to a fair trial and addressing the serious challenges to due process rights worldwide.

The IFTD is coordinated by a Steering Group\* which, each year, through a nomination process selects a focus country where fair trial rights are being systemically violated, and organises an event and related activities to draw attention to the situation in that country. The event brings together national and international stakeholders to examine systemic fair trial issues and develop concrete recommendations to address them, which are shared in a public statement and report on the event.

Alongside the IFTD, the Ebru Timtik Award is granted each year by an independent jury to an individual or group that has made a significant contribution to the defence and promotion of the right to a fair trial in the focus country. It honours Ebru Timtik, a lawyer from Turkey who posthumously received the first edition of the Award, having lost her life on 27 August 2020 as a result of a 238-day hunger strike protesting against the systemic violations of fair trial rights in Turkey.

### **2026 International Fair Trial Day Focus Country: Hungary**

Following careful consideration of the state of fair trial rights in the country and the potential impact of the initiative, **Hungary has been selected as the IFTD focus country for 2026.** In recent years, the Hungarian government has engaged in a sustained and systematic process of undermining judicial independence, eroding fair trial guarantees, restricting media freedom, and shrinking civic space. These developments form part of a broader dismantling of democratic institutions and an ongoing consolidation of power within the executive, such that the European Parliament has acknowledged “an increasing consensus among experts

that Hungary is no longer a democracy”.<sup>1</sup> The pace and severity of this democratic backsliding have intensified markedly in 2024 and 2025, with successive constitutional amendments accelerating the erosion of judicial checks and balances. The most far-reaching developments occurred with the adoption of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments in December 2024<sup>2</sup> and April 2025<sup>3</sup>. Adopted without meaningful consultation and heavily criticised by the Venice Commission, these reforms epitomise Hungary’s deepening democratic backsliding.<sup>4</sup> By late 2025, the European Parliament’s LIBE Committee warned that the country’s rule of law crisis was worsening, threatening the Union’s legal order and values. The European Commission’s 2025 Rule of Law Report likewise found “no progress” on seven of eight key recommendations from the previous year. Hungary’s troubling record before the European Court of Human Rights reinforces these concerns: in 2024, the Court issued 51 judgments concerning Hungary, 48 of which found at least one violation of the Convention.

Fair trial guarantees have been further undermined by restrictions on the rights of defence. In March 2026, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) was advised that Hungarian legislation violates the right to access a lawyer, which undermines the “practical and effective exercise of the person’s defence rights”,<sup>5</sup> particularly under the trial waiver mechanism in Act C of 2012. Reports further indicate that authorities frequently appoint substitute *ex officio* defence lawyers during the early stage of police interrogations, limiting the right to effective legal assistance.<sup>6</sup> Structural barriers persist within the legal aid system, including high eligibility thresholds, low remuneration for *ex officio* lawyers, and limited understanding of

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<sup>1</sup> European Parliament resolution of 25 November 2025 on the proposal for a Council decision determining, pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union, the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded (2018/0902R(NLE)).

<sup>2</sup> Erika Farkas (April 2025), *Hungary’s 14th Constitutional Amendment: Cementing the Incremental Political Takeover of Judicial Power*, <https://constitutionnet.org/news/voices/hungarys-14th-constitutional-amendment-cementing-incremental-political-takeover-judicial-power>.

<sup>3</sup> Erika Farkas (April 2025), *Hungary’s 14th Constitutional Amendment: Cementing the Incremental Political Takeover of Judicial Power*, <https://constitutionnet.org/news/voices/hungarys-14th-constitutional-amendment-cementing-incremental-political-takeover-judicial-power>; Venice Commission (October 2025), *Hungary - Opinion on the compatibility with international human rights standards of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Fundamental Law of Hungary (CDL-AD(2025)043-e)*, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2025\)043-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2025)043-e).

<sup>4</sup> Venice Commission (October 2025), *Hungary - Opinion (CDL-AD(2025)043-e)*, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2025\)043-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2025)043-e); Venice Commission (June 2025), *Hungary - Opinion on the constitutional and legislative amendments concerning the requirements to be appointed Prosecutor General and Constitutional Court Judge of Hungary, as well as the appointment and retirement of judges (Opinion 1231/2025)*, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice-commission/-/opinion-1231>.

<sup>5</sup> Opinion of Advocate General Ćapeta in *European Commission v Hungary* (Case C-660-24, 12 March 2026) <<https://courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/european-commission-v-hungary-2026-ag-opinion.pdf>> Accessed 13 March 2026.

<sup>6</sup> Hungarian Helsinki Committee, *Rule 9 Submission in Magyar Helsinki Bizottság v. Hungary* (31 August 2025) <[https://helsinki.hu/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/09/HHC\\_Rule\\_9\\_MHB\\_v\\_Hungary\\_31082025.pdf](https://helsinki.hu/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/09/HHC_Rule_9_MHB_v_Hungary_31082025.pdf)> Accessed 13 March 2026

procedural rights among vulnerable groups.<sup>7</sup> Those facing socio-economic hardship, linguistic barriers, or mental health challenges are particularly disadvantaged, while gender-sensitive judicial practices, online resources for domestic violence support and training for justice actors on gender-based violence remain largely unavailable.<sup>8</sup>

The broader context shows a steadily shrinking civic space and weakening of media pluralism. Legislative and administrative measures have imposed severe constraints on independent civil society organisations, including through the 2025 bill on Transparency, which grants the government extensive powers to monitor and penalise entities critical of official policies.<sup>9</sup> This follows the entry into force of the 2023 law on Defence, establishing the Sovereign Protection Office with wide investigative powers over individuals and organisations deemed “threats to sovereignty.”<sup>10</sup> These laws have been condemned by the Venice Commission<sup>11</sup>, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the Expert Council on NGO Law<sup>12</sup>, while the European Commission has referred Hungary to the CJEU for breaching the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.<sup>13</sup>

**Pressure by international actors and solidarity and support to the Hungarian legal community remain crucial to improve the human rights situation in Hungary. The 2026 IFTD offers a concrete opportunity for dialogue and promises to have a strong impact with strategic analysis of policy and systemic conditions.**

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<sup>7</sup> European Commission, ‘2025 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Hungary’ (Commission Staff Working Document, 2025) 10  
<[https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/524bd8d4-33ba-4802-891f-d8959831ed5a\\_en?filename=2025%20Rule%20of%20Law%20Report%20-%20Country%20Chapter%20Hungary.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/524bd8d4-33ba-4802-891f-d8959831ed5a_en?filename=2025%20Rule%20of%20Law%20Report%20-%20Country%20Chapter%20Hungary.pdf)> accessed 13 March 2026; International Legal Aid Group (June 2023), *National Report Hungary – ILAG Harvard 2023*, <https://clp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/National-Report-Hungary-ILAG-Harvard-2023.docx>.

<sup>8</sup> Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and Hungarian Helsinki Committee, *Research summary: vulnerable groups in criminal proceedings in Poland and Hungary* (30 November 2025)  
<[https://helsinki.hu/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/12/HFHR-HHC\\_research-summary\\_PL\\_HU\\_301125.pdf](https://helsinki.hu/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/12/HFHR-HHC_research-summary_PL_HU_301125.pdf)> Accessed 13 March 2026; Venice Commission (October 2025), Hungary - Opinion (CDL-AD(2025)043-e),  
[https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2025\)043-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2025)043-e).

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch (May 2025), *Open Letter on the Hungarian Bill Entitled 'Transparency of Public Life'*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/05/23/open-letter-hungarian-bill-entitled-transparency-public-life>.

<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Watch (April 2025), *Hungary: Fundamental Law Changes Attack Rule of Law, Rights*,  
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/17/hungary-fundamental-law-changes-attack-rule-law-rights>.

<sup>11</sup> Council of Europe (March 2024), *Hungary: Venice Commission assesses law on national sovereignty protection*, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/hungary-venice-commission-assesses-law-on-national-sovereignty-protection>.

<sup>12</sup> European Parliament (November 2025), *Second interim report on the proposal for a Council decision A10-0231/2025*, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-10-2025-0231\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-10-2025-0231_EN.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> European Union (2025), *Official Journal of the European Union, C 124*, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/124/oj/eng>.

## **Call for nominations for the Ebru Timtik Award**

The Steering Group of the IFTD also invites nominations of one or more individuals or an organisation for the Ebru Timtik Award from amongst those who have demonstrated outstanding commitment and sacrifice in upholding fundamental values related to the right to a fair trial in Hungary. The individual(s) or organisation nominated for the award must be or have been active in defending and or promoting the right to a fair trial in Hungary through either a recent outstanding piece of work in relation to this fundamental right or their distinguished long-term involvement in fair trial issues.

The deadline for nominations is **11 May 2026**. Nominations are welcomed from organisations, or groups of individuals supported by an organisation (see point 3 below). Nominations must be submitted in English to [nominationsetaward@gmail.com](mailto:nominationsetaward@gmail.com) and include:

(1) the candidate's detailed biography

(2) a letter signed by the nominating organisation/group of individuals explaining the reasons why they/it consider(s) that the candidate should be granted the Award, and

(3) one recommendation/supporting letter from an unrelated, external organisation, if the application is submitted by a group of individuals.

For full details of the award criteria and process, please see "Selection criteria for the grant of the Ebru Timtik Fair Trial Award". After the deadline, a jury composed of independent experts on the right to a fair trial, including one or more from the focus country, will review and assess the nominations and determine the award recipient(s).

**The Steering Group for the International Fair Trial Day and Ebru Timtik Award 2026**