

Anti-Minority Aggression Intensifies in Vojvodina, Serbia During 2005

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Contents

I. Introduction	
European Parliament Fact-Finding Delegation	Page 2
Official Serbian Responses to the Violence	Page 3
Vojvodina’s Legislature Confirms Anti-Minority Hostilities.....	Page 4
Indifference and Bias in the Judicial System	Page 5
The Police Force: Part of the Problem	Page 5
II. Harassment and Physical Assaults against Non-Serb Minorities; Threats against Ethnic Hungarian and Pro-Autonomy Leaders	Page 6
III. Desecration of Cemeteries, Vandalism of Property	Page 25
IV. Proliferation of Racist, Xenophobic and Anti-Semitic Graffiti	Page 31
V. Vandalism of Multi-Lingual Signs.....	Page 42

HUNGARIAN HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION (HHRF) is an international human rights organization which, for the past 29 years, has monitored the human rights condition of the 3 million Hungarians who live as minorities in Romania, Slovakia, Serbia and Montenegro, Ukraine, Croatia and Slovenia. In accordance with its purpose, HHRF regularly collects, translates, analyses and disseminates reliable reports on the human rights condition of these communities. With offices in the United States and Europe, the Foundation serves as a clearinghouse of information for Western governments, human rights organizations, the media and the public.

I. Introduction

Anti-minority violence surged in the Serbian province of Vojvodina in the period since January 2003. Numbering 300,000, and comprising 14 percent of the population, ethnic Hungarians are the largest national minority in this multi-ethnic region.

Particularly troubling is a seemingly coordinated series of “legal” measures to incapacitate key leaders of the Hungarian community, including the “preliminary” detention since April 26, 2005 of **Gabriella Ágoston** for alleged transgressions a decade ago, and threats to incarcerate the President (**József Kasza**), Vice President (**Zoltán Bunyik**) and other leaders of the Vojvodina Alliance of Hungarians, the minority’s strongest representative body.

HHRF has documented a total of 132 anti-minority incidents since January 2003. Our current report contains thirty-five *new cases* from 2005, *thirty-two* of which have occurred *since* the European Parliament sent its five-member fact-finding mission to Vojvodina between January 28-31, 2005.

Protest letters by prominent U.S. legislators (July 2004), interpellations at the Council of Europe (August 2004), review at the OSCE Warsaw Implementation (October 2004) and the European Parliament fact-finding mission (report issued March 2005) have clearly *not* produced the intended effect. Information obtained by HHRF indicates that the frequency and intensity of anti-minority incidents is *not* abating and, therefore, the *situation warrants heightened international attention*. In fact, a recent Vojvodina provincial government report published on June 14, 2005, detailed below, confirms the types of the anti-minority acts HHRF has identified. Furthermore, it reveals a higher number of incidents for the 2003-2005 period than even the Foundation reported.

The components of this increasing tendency of intolerance consist of, among others:

1. Failure by the authorities to acknowledge and curb anti-minority sentiments and acts
2. Overt provocations by Serbian radical elements within the echelons of power; and
3. Ongoing disparity between the native population and hundreds of thousands of ethnic Serbian refugees resettled from Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo.

European Parliament Fact-Finding Delegation

In accordance with a September 16, 2004 resolution adopted by the European Parliament (EP) on “the harassment of minorities in Vojvodina,” a five-member fact-finding delegation went to the province January 28-31, 2005 to investigate the situation. The mission’s findings concurred with the information detailed in HHRF’s report regarding the types of incidents:

- *Vandalism of monuments,*
- *Graffiti,*
- *Verbal attacks,*
- *Physical attacks,*
- *Threats against minority leaders.*

In its report (No. **PE 350.475**) to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the delegation further established that:

There appear to be three major causes [emphasis added] underlying the ethnic incidents: the demographic changes which have taken place in Voivodina over the last few decades (above all following the recent conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, which brought an influx of 300,000 mostly Serb refugees), the fall-out from the events in Kosovo in March 2004, and the climate of inter-ethnic tension which prevailed during the 2003 and 2004 election campaigns.

Currently, 12,8 percent of the province's population are refugees, only 1 percent of whom have registered jobs. Rising poverty has encouraged the emergence of hard-line attitudes among the refugees and has heightened ethnic tensions, notably during the pre-election periods (November-December 2003 and September-October 2004), where an upsurge of ultra nationalism attracted voters fed up with their difficult living conditions and angered by the March 2004 events in Kosovo.

At the same time, many non-Serbian young people have fled abroad, to avoid being conscripted into the army¹. The economic difficulties resulting from the sanctions imposed on the Milosevic only encouraged emigration. This is the background to the fact that Voivodina population now has a Serbian majority of nearly 67 percent as opposed to 53 percent in 1991; the percentage of non-Serbian minorities is falling, while the numbers of those familiar with Voivodina history and traditions is rising [sic!] sharply.

Moreover, the delegation enumerated the following “effective measures [which] need to be taken so as to prevent a recurrence of inter-ethnic incidents:”

- a) *Implementation of the planned decentralization programme for Voivodina;*
- b) *The visible and efficient application of the various instruments established to protect minorities (National Minorities Council, incident assessment committees, etc.);*
- c) *Stepping up efforts seeking to prevent discrimination with regard to access to education and employment (in the police force and in the magistracy in particular);*
- d) *Reform of the police, the security forces and the judiciary so as to allow them to deal more effectively with any fresh incidents of an inter-ethnic nature;*
- e) *Preserving multilingualism at all levels of education, reforming the teaching of history, and introducing the teaching of civil values, with particular stress on tolerance;*
- f) *Guaranteeing the independence of the media, and training for those working in the media, laying particular stress on the concept of inter-ethnic relations and living together.*

Unfortunately, despite the increasing frequency and intensity of incidents, the Serbian government has not yet implemented these recommendations. At a June 29, 2005 press conference, the head of the EP Delegation, **Doris Pack**, reinforced the institution's commitment to closely monitor the situation in Vojvodina. Ms. Pack also stated that she will be contacting Serbian officials regarding continued concerns, particularly in the areas of education and the administration of justice.

However, the extensive reforms needed, as indicated, cannot take place without Serbian government cooperation. Consequently, in order to ensure the safety of minorities in Vojvodina, sustained attention and further involvement on the part of the EP and other governmental institutions is necessary.

Official Serbian Responses to the Violence

Immediately following the initial expression of U.S. and Hungarian concern in Summer 2004 (detailed in the above-mentioned HHRF report), Serbian Prime Minister **Vojislav Kostunica** agreed to create two committees: one to investigate anti-minority incidents and another to establish and evaluate projects to prevent further incidents. *To date, neither action has been taken.*

Instead of prosecuting criminals and moving toward peaceful reconciliation, Serbian officials have recently taken measures against ethnic Hungarian leaders, in an apparently effort to frighten and intimidate the Hungarian community. On June 2, 2005, **Jovica Maksimovic**, Head of the Szabadka/Subotica Prosecutor's Office, announced the investigation of several leaders of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSz), all for alleged abuse of official power. Prosecutor Maksimovic, an ethnic Serb from Kosovo, held a

¹ A young man living in Voivodina at the beginning of the 1990s, was three or four times more likely to be conscripted than one living in Serbia proper.

similar position under Milosevic and, at the time of his appointment earlier this year to the current post, was a member of the Serbian Radical Party. Those being investigated include: the party's President and former Mayor **József Kasza**; VMSz Executive Vice-President and former Head of the Municipal Executive Committee **Imre Kern**; Head of the Municipal Administration Office **Gyöngyi Vörös Kucsik**; VMSz Vice-President **Károly Dudás**; current Mayor **Géza Kucsera**; former Mayor **István Ispánovics**; former town clerk **Gabriella Ágoston**, in custody since April 26, 2005; Head of the Municipal Property Department **Anna Fodor Lackovics**; and former Director of the Municipal Waterworks **István Plesztovics**. Szabadka is home to 57,092 ethnic Hungarian residents, comprising 38.5 percent of the town's population.

On June 16, 2005 in Újvidék/Novi Sad, **Zoltán Bunyik**, VMSz Vice-President and Vojvodina provincial Minister for Education, was interrogated by a Novi Sad examining judge in the presence of the deputy district public prosecutor, whom Bunyik believes is a Serbian Radical Party (SRP) sympathizer. The accusations of abuse of power and embezzlement were brought by the local branch of the Serbian Radical Party which alleged that Bunyik approved more funding than "necessary" to 15 schools for renovations, thereby "damaging" the province's budget. Bunyik learned of the accusations against him on the day of the interrogation but stated that he easily rebutted the unfounded allegations with solid evidence.

In an interview with the Hungarian-language daily, *Magyar Szó*, published on June 18-19, 2005, VMSz President **József Kasza** stated that the accused are the subjects of a *deliberate, carefully prepared and coordinated campaign of political discreditation*. It is obvious, says Kasza, that Hungarian leaders are being assailed for vigorously protesting, at the international level, ethnically-based incidents; as well as the ineffectiveness of the police force and judicial system. This has incurred the ire of the Serbian Socialist Party and the radicals, who are still part of the country's leadership, both at the state and local levels.

Vojvodina's Legislature Confirms Anti-Minority Hostilities

A long-awaited step in the right direction occurred recently at the provincial level. On June 14, 2005, the Inter-Ethnic Relations Committee of the Vojvodina Parliamentary Assembly released a detailed report confirming the fact that the number of ethnically related incidents is increasing and grew drastically between 2003-2005.

According to the report, there were 178 "inter-ethnic" incidents in 2003 and 2004. In 82 cases, the victims were ethnic Hungarians; in 19, Croatian; in 15, Serbian; in 14, Albanian; in 12, Roma; in 7, Jewish; in 6, Slovak; in 3, Ruthenian; in 2, Ashkali; and there was 1 case each involving the Bunjevac and German nationalities. The report notes that there were *six* cases where the assault involved all of the minorities, and nine cases where they could not identify the targets of the abuse.

The Committee established that there were six types of incidents:

- Graffiti (2003: 4 cases, 2004: 35 cases)
- Posting nationalistic bills (2003: 4 cases, 2004: none)
- Vandalizing church property, statues, monuments, cemeteries (2003: 12 cases, 2004: 30 cases)
- Vandalizing private property (2003: 7 cases, 2004: 17 cases)
- Verbal assaults, threats, brawls (2003: 12 cases, 2004: 50 cases)
- Racial discrimination: once in 2003.

Tamás Korhecz, Provincial Minister for Minority Rights, presented the report, stating that the data was obtained in cooperation with the police forces. Prosecuting the perpetrators, however, is the responsibility of the judicial system, over which the Ministry has no

influence, stated Korhecz. The Minister revealed a key impediment to the effective cessation of violence: failure to establish equality in the judicial system, as evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of anti-minority crimes go unprosecuted.

Indifference and Bias in the Judicial System

Despite nearly two years of proliferating incidents, prosecution has occurred in merely a fraction of the 119 cases HHRF has reported. It is interesting to note that the authorities have been far more effective in their investigations when the victims were ethnic Serbians. A case in point is one **Zoran Petrovic**, who was beaten up by five ethnic Hungarians in Temerin and suffered serious injuries. In this case, the police found the assailants immediately and, on April 11, 2005, the Újvidék/Novi Sad Regional Court sentenced the five assailants, aged 20-30, to a total of **61 years** imprisonment: **István Máriás** to 15 years, **Zoltán Illés** to 13 years, **Zoltán Szakál** and **József Uracs** to 11½ years each, and **Árpád Horváth** to 10 years imprisonment. While the actions of the assailants are clearly reprehensible, the punishment given to them is not fitting for their crime. In fact such harsh sentences are usually reserved for people convicted of murder. For example, on June 29, 2005, the Belgrade District Court sentenced six defendants to 15 years imprisonment each for the October 3, 1999 assassination attempt against current Serbian Foreign Minister **Vuk Draskovic** in which four people died. Former head of the secret service **Radomir Markovic**, who masterminded the plot, was punished with only 10 years of imprisonment while according to the Code of Criminal Procedure assassins can be sentenced for up to 40 years. When these sentencing disparities are coupled with the fact that *no* individual have received *any* severe punishment for assaulting ethnic Hungarians, the case for judicial indifference and bias becomes compelling.

The Police Force: Part of the Problem

Lackluster police response to incidents of violent assault continues to compound the situation. The Hungarian community's sense of despair is heightened by the fact that in many instances the very forces which should be providing protection and recourse still

- (1) minimize the severity of the incidents,
- (2) dismiss the ethnic motivations of attacks by attributing them to mere drunken behavior,
- (3) fail to rigorously pursue and conclude investigations, and
- (4) often blame the victims for provoking the attacks.

The clear anti-Hungarian bias exhibited by the Serbian police force, is an enormous impediment to ending the anti-minority violence. The lack of action against perpetrators of anti-minority violence in effect condones its existence, by eliminating the criminals' fear of punishment. Instead, members of the ethnic majority are visibly allowed to exercise aggression against minorities and thus perpetuate the cycle of violence, without fear of retribution by the authorities.

HHRF finds that at the national, provincial and local levels, sufficient political will and commitment to swiftly investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of violence; address the issue of ethnic bias in law enforcement and judicial sectors; curb and prevent future incidents; and formulate and implement a comprehensive strategy to promote tolerance is still lacking.

II. Harassment and Physical Assaults against Non-Serb Minorities; Threats against Ethnic Hungarian and Pro-Autonomy Leaders

The intimidation, harassment and physical assault of ethnic Hungarian youth by ethnic Serbs—oftentimes merely for speaking Hungarian—continues with alarming frequency. For example, on May 8, 2005, a twenty-three-year-old man from Bácskossuthfalva/Stara Moravica was almost beaten to death as a resettled Serbian refugee assaulted him in the local discotheque. Prior to the incident, the assailant publicly stated several times that Hungarians should be exterminated so that the settlement could become a purely Serb village.

The number of incidents is under-reported both by the victims and the authorities, who tend to minimize their severity and ethnic motivation and, are not unknown to blame the victims for “provoking” the attacks. Consequently, a general atmosphere of fear is pervasive among minorities. As the mother of one of the victims said:

“hate-speech is common in the fights that take place between Serbian and Hungarian teenagers both in the school and on the street...ethnic Hungarian children are afraid to inform their parents or other adults, because they fear further violence. Parents feel desperate, because they believe that Serbian authorities will not intervene.” [see HHRF report of March 12, 2004]

There has been one single incident so far which the police conceded was ethnically motivated. However, even in this case of June 11, 2005, the presiding judge in the Újvidék Court released both assailants even though one of them had 14 prior reports and one conviction.



NEW August 30, 2005

A hand grenade exploded outside the Subotica (Szabadka) home of **József Kasza**, President of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina, the largest party representing the interests of the 300,000-strong national minority in the multi-ethnic region of Serbia. The blast occurred around 4:00 a.m. about 30 meters from the entrance door, damaging several buildings in the vicinity. There were no casualties and a police investigation is underway.

The attack is the latest incident in a two-year, escalating campaign of harassment and intimidation against the Serbian province’s minority communities. *“This is not the first threat and act of intimidation against me. This is all a result of continuing pressure and intimidation which has as its goal to drive me and Hungarians out of Vojvodina. I am not frightened; I will not be driven away,”* Kasza told the *Hungarian Telegraph Agency* (MTI) on Monday.



Kasza and other community leaders have received death threats in the past. In a March 2004 letter from the “Serbian Diaspora Summary Revolutionary Court,” allegedly headquartered in Chicago, Kasza was warned: *“You have been sentenced to death for your attempt to separate Vojvodina from Serbia.”* [see report of March 22, 2004]. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), September 1, 2005](#)]

NEW July 26, 2005

The Serbian Supreme Court extended the unlawful detention of ethnic Hungarian lawyer **Gabriella Ágoston** by an additional 60 days. Her incarceration is part of a seemingly coordinated series of “legal” measures to incapacitate key leaders of the country’s 300,000-strong Hungarian community, the largest national minority in Vojvodina province. At the request of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSz), the community’s strongest representative body, Ágoston has defended several local victims of the anti-minority violence that has been on the rise since Fall of 2003. Furthermore, throughout this illegal incarceration Ágoston has been seriously ill and has been denied necessary medical attention by the Serbian authorities. Gabriella Ágoston, aged 44, has been held in custody in the Vojvodina town of Szabadka/Subotica, since April 26, 2005. She has not been officially charged with a crime, yet her detention has been extended three times for a total of 150 days, of which she has already spent 120 in prison [see special report of August 23 at <http://www.hhrf.org/hhrf/en/vojvodinareport-mar-2005.htm>]. [*Magyar Rádió* (Budapest) August 19, 2005]; First-hand interview with Gabriella Ágoston’s husband, **Antal Kujundzsics**, in July 21-22, 2005.]

NEW July 24, 2005

Four unknown perpetrators assaulted and beat two ethnic Hungarian cousins: 22-year-old **Dénes Szabó** and 25-year-old **László Szabó**, on Kiszács Street in Újvidék/Novi Sad. The two young men walked out of the Bela Ladja restaurant, and four unknown ethnic Serbian men attacked them while crossing the street. The Hungarian youths are certain that the assailants attacked them on account of their ethnicity, since they did not know the individuals and, immediately prior to the incident, were speaking in Hungarian. László (on the photo), lost consciousness from a blow to his head; Dénes received a double lower-jaw fracture and was taken to hospital and released four days later.



Hospital personnel were the ones to inform Újvidék police about a seriously injured ethnic Hungarian young man. During the course of their investigation, police questioned the victims several times and alleged that they were drunk when the incident occurred. This, claimed the police, accounts for why the victims could not identify the assailants.

However, **István Szabó**, László’s father, reiterated to reporters that his son lost consciousness and does not remember anything following the incident. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), July 26, 2005; *VajdaságMa – Internetes Hírportál* (www.vajdasagma.info), July 25 and 27, 2005; *Magyar Rádió* (Budapest), July 25, 26 and 27, 2005, *Duna TV* (Budapest), July 27, 2005]

NEW June 11, 2005

An ethnically motivated fight broke out in front of 51 Sándor Petőfi Street in Temerin at 3 a.m. According to the police statement, the Serbian **Dušan Rodić** (born 1981) from Backa Palanka started the fray when he walked up to a group of young men and warned them not to speak in Hungarian. He was then joined by another Serb, **Jesenjin Labura** (born 1984) from Temerin, who tried to hit the Hungarian **Zs. Gy.** (born 1987). In reaction to this, a local Hungarian, **A.B.** (born 1987), slapped Rodić. Rodić fell and another Hungarian, **R.T.** (born 1989), and Zs.Gy. started kicking him. A fourth Hungarian, **Endre Varga** (born 1985) from Temerin, tried to stop the fight, but was hit on the head. The bullies broke the shop-window of the Temprom store. Police established that all the participants of the fight were drunk. The instigators, Dušan Rodić and Jesenjin Labura, were taken into custody. All six young men have been charged with an offence. This was the first incident which the police admitted was ethnically motivated. The presiding judge, however, released the two assailants despite one

of them having 14 prior reports and one conviction. [[Vajdaság Ma](http://www.vajdasagma.info) (www.vajdasagma.info), June 12, 2005; [Magyar Szó](#) (Újvidék/Novi Sad), June 13 and 14, 2005]

NEW May 31, 2005

Csaba Szikora, Executive Secretary of the Hungarian-language daily, *Magyar Szó*, received two anonymous letters threatening him and his family. Both letters were handwritten, with printed letters and both arrived to the editorial offices of *Magyar Szó*. The author threatened Szikora with “*You will swim in the Danube, you and your family, too!*” [[Magyar Szó](#) (Újvidék/Novi Sad), June 2, 2005]

NEW May 29, 2005

Serbian high-school graduates beat ethnic Hungarian 23-year-old **Albert Boros** around 1:30 a.m. in Palics/Palic. Boros was sitting on a bench near the parking lot of the Mala Gostiona Restaurant together with nine former schoolmates after having attended an elementary school reunion in the town. Meanwhile, graduating students were holding their farewell party in the restaurant. There were three ethnic Serbian girls sitting on the bench opposite the Hungarians. When one of them heard the men speaking in Hungarian, she approached them and yelled: “*Get lost! Go to Hungary! This is Serbia!*” To this Boros replied: “*This is Vojvodina; get lost!*” Boros asserts that they were not provoking the Serbian girls prior to her verbal assault. The girl started swearing, so her friends led her away.



The group agreed that they would not respond to any provocation, as they did not want any trouble. Soon after, two Serbian boys came over to them. One of them, **Srdan Cvijanović** (born 1986), threw a beer bottle at the group and shouted obscenities about their mothers. Luckily, the bottle did not hit anyone. The assailant asked Boros' friend, who was sitting on the bench, why he was smiling and slapped him. Albert raised his hand in defense of his friend. The other Serbian boy came behind Boros, pulled him, hit him and pushed him. Both of the attackers kicked Boros but did not cause serious injury. Cvijanovic slapped Boros and threw a beer bottle at his face. At the sight of blood, the assailants fled.

The ethnic Hungarian boys called the police, who quickly arrived to the scene, in about five minutes. All of the participants in the incident, including eyewitnesses, were ordered to report to the local police station on Monday morning. The police found Cvijanović, who had changed, still in the restaurant.

The police issued a statement about the incident which failed to mention its ethnic motivation. According to the statement, Boros made a remark at the girls, and that was the reason one of their boyfriend's attacked the group. The statement says that only two boys participated in the clash. [[Personal statement by Albert Boros given to the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina on May 30, 2005](#); [Magyar Szó](#) (Újvidék/Novi Sad), May 30 and June 1, 2005; [Vajdaság MA](http://www.vajdasagma.info) (www.vajdasagma.info), May 31, 2005]

NEW May 27, 2005

Five unidentified young men severely assaulted two ethnic Hungarian freshmen college students, **A.S.** and **Z.S.**, at the bridgehead of the Petrovaradin Bridge in Újvidek/Novi Sad. The two boys were quietly talking with each other while walking home from a musical event in Petrovaradin. The students were knocked down without warning on the Novi Sad side of the bridge. As they fell, the assailants started to beat and kick them. A.S. was beaten by three, Z.S. by two assailants. The attacker who wore a white shirt was the most belligerent,

reported the victims, this being the only identifying feature they could recall about the assailants. After the attack, one of the assailants shouted, “*And now, get lost!*” (in Serbian: “*A sad brišite!*”) The two boys got up, called a taxi and went home. A.S. suffered a concussion and was under hospital observation for one and a half days. Minor surgery was performed on his mouth, and the attack left other visible marks on his body. Z.S. suffered injuries to his chin. The victims’ parents informed the police of the incident, and a police patrol was sent to the scene but found nobody there. A police report was filed, but no public statement was issued. The victims and their parents reported that the police saw no ethnic motivation to the assault. [*Vajdaság Ma* (www.vajdasagma.info), May 26, 2005; *Newsletter of the Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians*, No. III/57, June 25, 2005]

NEW May 8, 2005

Twenty-three-year-old **József Mike** of Bácskossuthfalva was beaten nearly to death on Sunday dawn in the disco called “Echo” in Stara Moravica. This is how the victim recalls the incident:

“On Sunday at dawn, I was in the disco and rested my elbow on a table where the girl-friend of a local, **R. V.** (born 1987), was sitting. When he noticed it, he pushed my elbow from the table. The girl started to panic, spilling the boy’s drink on herself. When the boy asked her who had poured it on her, she pointed at me. The boy started to make a fuss, but I asked him not to make trouble, and to go home. I tried to calm him down, but he smiled at me malevolently and left. Soon after, while I was behind the dance podium – where it’s rather dark – talking with my cousin, the boy’s father, Dušan Vukšić (born 1952), came over to me, grabbed my neck and hit me with an iron crowbar. I can’t remember what happened later, but eyewitnesses say that he dragged me out of the disco and started to chase my friends who came to help me. He flailed about with the crowbar and hit one of my friend’s elbows. The disco security guard, eyewitnesses said, started to beat and kick me, I don’t know why. I was taken to the police station; the policemen called the ambulance, which then took me to the health center where I was washed, since I was covered in blood. I regained consciousness there, but could not feel my legs, which were totally numb. After I had been given two injections, I was taken to the Subotica Hospital. As I heard later, Vukšić at first admitted his assault, but has since recanted.”

The police filed charges against the assailants for causing serious physical injuries, and the parents of the victim intend to hire a lawyer and file charges. While they are afraid the assailant will attempt revenge, they also believe that to stay silent and leave the case to be “smoothed over” may endanger future victims. The assailant, who arrived as a refugee in the village during the war, has publicly stated several times that Hungarians should be exterminated so that the settlement could become a fully Serb village. This incident stirred up emotions: parents are afraid to let their children go to the disco. There are several hundred Serbian refugees living in the village who have integrated into their new environment, though, of course, there are notable exceptions. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), May 12, 2005; *Vajdaság MA* (www.vajdasagma.info), May 11, 2005]

NEW April 1, 2005

The driver of Taxi No. 502 was fired by his employer, Beotaxi of Belgrade, for verbally assaulting a passenger on an ethnic basis, reported the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in a statement. The slurs were directed at ethnic Albanian **Fitora Berisha-Lekaj**, coordinator of the Pristina office of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights. The driver first asked Berisha-Lekaj where she was from, and followed up this question by asking “*Are you ours or*

theirs?” Additional insults ensued: The driver called her a “*siptar*” — an insulting Serbian term for Albanians — and told her that “her people” were all barbarians.

The YIHR reported the incident to Beotaxi, who replied that they would remove Taxi No. 502 from service. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 2-3, 2005]

NEW March 22, 2005

Assailants attacked a group of ethnic Roma in the “Balata” district of Versec/Vrsac, stabbing and causing severe injuries to 24-year-old **Stevan Stojkov**. According to **Srdjan Sajn**, President of the Committee for Roma Integration in the Vojvodina Parliamentary Assembly, the ten assailants were leaving a local saloon when they met a group of Roma in the street. They verbally abused the Roma on racial and ethnic grounds and started to beat them. Stojkov, one of the horrified victims, started to run and the attackers pursued him. They beat him up and stabbed him with a knife. Stojkov was stabbed under his left armpit, resulting in a perforated lung.

The police in Versec identified the perpetrators and arrested 19-year-old **Ilija Milenkovic**, the assailant who stabbed Stojkov. In an interview with the Beta news agency, **Dusan Panic**, the Versec police chief, said that the police will soon file charges against all those who participated in the fight. According to the Versec police, “only” five drunk young men accosted and attacked Stojkov on Tuesday. Contrary to the victim’s statement, the Versec police spokesperson emphasized that there was no ethnic motivation to the attack. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), March 23, 2005; *B92 News Agency* (Belgrade), March 23, 2005; *Beta News Agency* (Belgrade), March 22, 2005]

NEW January 30, 2005

Two Serbs, 22 year-old **Nenad Sovljanski** and 19 year-old **Goran Dragovic**, beat up two local minors, **A. L.** and **Gy. S.**, in the center of Bajsa/Bajsa, a village near Topolya/Backa Topola. A. L. and Gy. S. were walking home from the local disco when a car pulled into a parking space near them. The assailants got out of the car, asked the boys where Panonija (a nearby village) was, and attacked them without waiting for an answer. One of the victims was able to run away and called the boys’ parents on his cell phone; but the other boy, unable to flee his attackers, was kicked and beaten up. The attackers also stole his cell phone. The police arrived at the scene not long after, and took the victims’ statements. The authorities were able to identify and arrest the two attackers, Sovljanski and Dragovic, and have since filed charges against them. The police also found the missing cell phone and returned it to the owner. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), February 1 and 3, 2005]

December 13, 2004

In downtown Újvidék/Novi Sad, two young Serbian men assaulted an ethnic Hungarian couple on Liberation Avenue during the evening. **Tibor Mészáros Kiss**, a university student from Kanizsamonostor/Banatski Monostor majoring in biology and geography, and his friend **Anita**, who wished to conceal her last name, were walking home on one of the busiest streets in the city around 7 p.m. They were talking in Hungarian when suddenly two unknown young men stopped them and asked why they were using the Hungarian language when they are in Serbia. “*We were so surprised, we could not say a word,*” relayed Mészáros Kiss to the Hungarian-language daily *Magyar Szó* after the incident. One of the Serbian boys also asked Anita where she was from, and she replied: “*from Magyarkanizsa[Kanjiza],*” a dominantly Hungarian-inhabited town. The young man immediately slapped her on the face and then proceeded to beat her companion. The attacker’s friend intervened, in an attempt to prevent further altercation, and then the two walked away to a nearby coffee shop. The harassment, however, continued. This is how Kiss described it afterwards: “*The boy who hit us came*

back a few minutes later while we were trying to leave the scene. He wanted to drag us into the coffee-shop, which we refused to do. He started to beat me again. Luckily, two men were waiting at a nearby bus stop and rushed to our assistance. The incident ended when the attacker returned to the coffee shop.” The next day Kiss went to the local office of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSz) to report the incident. He did not notify the police after the incident, which he later regretted. [[Vajdaság MA — Délvidék Hírportál](http://www.vajdasagma.info) (www.vajdasagma.info), December 18, 2004; *Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), December 18-19, 2004]

November 27 and December 4, 2004

The ethnic tension between Serbians and Hungarians culminated over the past 1.5-2 weeks in Torontáltorda/Torda, a village near Nagybecskerek/Zrenjanin. Several fights broke out between ethnic Hungarians from Torontáltorda and Serbians from the neighboring village of Udvarnok/Banatski Dvor (the two villages are approximately 10 km apart). The overwhelming majority of Torontáltorda’s 1,800 citizens—92 percent—are ethnic Hungarians, whilst in Udvarnok ethnic Serbians—including refugees—make up 60 percent of the population.

As **János Dobai**, president of the local self-government in Torontáltorda and vice-president of the local office of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSZ) explained to the Hungarian-language daily, *Magyar Szó*, 15-20 young ethnic Serbians from Udvarnok (mostly refugees from Bosnia) went to the “Golden Eagle” disco in Torontáltorda just after midnight on Saturday, November 27, and beat-up four-five locals. Torontáltorda’s ethnic Hungarian population did not respond to this incident, in an attempt to avoid further encounters.

The second clash happened during the early hours of December 4, a week later, at the same location. The same Serbian individuals from Udvarnok appeared in the disco, provoked a fight, beat up the Hungarian boys, and then left to vandalize the village center. Soon after, 40-50 ethnic Hungarian parents from Torontáltorda surrounded the assailants, who then fled into the courtyards of the neighboring church and school. The police did not arrive until 1.5 hours later, and immediately started protecting the assailants from the outraged villagers. The assailants finally left for Udvarnok under police protection, claiming that the locals started the fight.

Dobai says the situation is growing more tense: the ethnic Serbians promised to return the weekend of December 12 for revenge, and Torontáltorda’s Hungarian population has already taken defensive measures. The police promised to file charges against the attackers and to locate permanent overnight patrols in Torda.

On December 9, the local self-government, the district police officials, and the parties involved in the incident (parents and children) attended a discussion, where all participants agreed that: (1) avoidance of further incidents is a priority, (2) the police should regularly patrol Torda every weekend, (3) the disco club should not remain open after closing hours and, (4) minors should not be served alcohol. Several other facts were also established at the discussion, namely (1) that there had been a series of incidents prior to the November 27 and December 4 ones: since May 2004 ethnic Serbian youth from the neighboring villages have regularly visited Torontáltorda to provoke fights, often beating girls as well as boys; (2) that on several occasions, ethnic Serbian youth from the neighboring villages brought Serbian flags with them because—according to an anonymous phone caller from Udvarnok—“the citizens of Torontáltorda fly only Hungarian flags;” and (3) that one time when the youth from Torontáltorda locked themselves inside the disco to avoid being beaten, their Serbian assailants burned the shutters. It should be noted that all of these cases were reported to the police; however, the authorities had failed to take any action.

Despite the agreement reached at the meeting, the police issued a statement later that same afternoon omitting several crucial pieces of information: that there was a fight in

Torontáltorda provoked by youngsters from Udvarnok *prior* to December 4, and that the locals from Torontáltorda received all the blame for the incident. In addition, the police asserted in their statement that the fight on December 4 involving about 30 people, and later 60 people, broke out because of a girl, and not because of ethnic tensions. According to the police statement, **Sasa Ibraimovic** from Udvarnok and **Csaba Szabó** from Torontáltorda instigated the fight. The police filed charges against a total of 11 people: five assailants from Udvarnok, a parent from Torontáltorda and five minors, all ethnic Hungarians from Torontáltorda. [MTI, (Budapest, Hungary) December 9, *Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), December 9, 11-12, 13, 2004, and first hand interview with **János Dobai**, December 13, 2004]

November 13, 2004

Local council members from Gombos/Bogojevo told the Hungarian-language daily *Magyar Szó* that in the village's only nightclub called "8," young Serbian refugees regularly provoke local ethnic Hungarians by yelling "Go back to Hungary!" and "We will slaughter you!" The latest incident started when ethnic Hungarian **Mátyás Kovács** started inquiring from people in the disco about his sister's stolen cell-phone. The **Nonkovic** brothers, **Mladen** and **Jovica** reacted immediately by yelling: "We will kill you!" The Hungarians were alarmed and asked: "What did he say?" to which the reply was: "We will show you all; Come outside!" As soon as the Hungarians stepped outside, a beer bottle was smashed on 21-year-old **Zoltán Pintér**'s head. He had to be hospitalized in the nearby town of Zombor/Sombor. A Serbian young man



twisted the arm of **Imre Lajkó Jr.**—who tried to help **Pintér**—and when his sister, **Viktória Lajkó**, stepped between the fighters in **Imre**'s defense, ethnic Serbians beat her. The girl immediately called their father, **Imre Lajkó Sr.** on her cell-phone, asking for help. 55-year-old **Imre Lajkó** rushed to the scene, but in his agitated condition, suffered a heart attack en route and died instantly. This is the first instance in which an inter-ethnic incident has resulted in someone's death. **Ferenc Sörfőző**, a member of the local council, explains why nobody learned about the incident in the first ten days after its

occurrence: *The Hungarians of Gombos are afraid. They were intimidated during the '90s, when 3,000 Yugoslav army reservists waited there to cross the Danube into Vukovar, Croatia, during the war. The victims are afraid to press charges and to bear witness against their assailants. They fear that the police will blame them in the end, as has happened in the past, and they fear the ensuing reprisal. The situation has changed since the European Community showed interest in putting an end to the anti-minority violence. The police react more rapidly and effectively. Unfortunately, the local police do not work 24 hours a day, so in the evening we have to call patrols from Nemesmilitics/Svetozar Miletic.* [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), November 25, December 2, 2004]

October 29, 2004

Two ethnic Serbian tenants, **Ruza Anisic** and her son **Davor Anisic**, beat their landlady, breaking her arm. Since January, the Anisices had rented the second floor in the home of ethnic Hungarian **Rozália Varga** on Plitvice Street in Szabadka/Subotica, and owed four months of back rent. On Friday morning Mrs. Varga was passing by the stairs to the second floor when Mr. Anisic, who was standing there, kicked her twice in the stomach. She subsequently recounted the events of that morning: *“At first, when he started kicking me, he didn’t say a word, but then he told me that I should remember this day. I tried to get away through the garden to my car parked nearby, but he caught me before I could get in and then kicked me some more. His mother joined in soon after that and the two of them kicked me until I passed out. They were shouting that I was a Hungarian whore, that we – Hungarians – all have AIDS, that I shouldn’t speak Hungarian, that this is Serbia and that I should go to Hungary instead of polluting their neighborhood.*

“Someone called the police, and I regained consciousness by the time they arrived. One of the two policemen who arrived did his job properly, but the other just stood by. My son told me that this other policeman was a friend of Davor’s. The policemen warned the tenants that they must move out in two days. However, they only moved out on the third day, kicking and vandalizing our furniture and property before they left. After they left, on Monday, we repaired the gate. They had cut the lock so that we couldn’t lock the house. They came back that evening, asking to be let in, because they’d brought the back rent. When I opened the gate, they started shouting again, saying repeatedly that I was a Hungarian whore and that they will kill my family and burn down our house. I called the police. One of the policemen who came did nothing, and the other took Davor’s side. They kept cursing Hungarians, but both policemen refused to acknowledge it. The Anisices left our house at 9:30 p.m., and slashed two of my car’s tires. That night, they climbed over the gate and kept knocking on the door. The boy shouted that we would never have another peaceful night in the house, because he will harass us every night.”

Rozália Varga suffered a broken arm and other injuries on Friday. The police recorded her statement. Mrs. Varga also told the Szabadka/Subotica ombudsperson, **Gyula Ladócki**, about the case, and he promised to forward it to the provincial ombudsman. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), November 3, 2004](#)]

UPDATE September 30, 2004

Two days after the assault, police issued a highly inaccurate statement about the incident on the 6:30 a.m. Topolatrans bus [See report of September 28, 2004 below]. According to the victims and eyewitnesses, a Serbian fellow student from Szikics/Lovcenac beat and trampled on E.N., a resident of Bácsfeketehegy/Feketic, for smiling at him. The assailant had said: *“No Hungarian has ever smiled at me and none will ever do so!”*

The police statement reads: *“A fight broke out around 8 a.m. on the Topolatrans bus between students who were going to school. The fight began when Z.R. (born 1987) of Újvidék/Novi Sad got off the bus in Topolya/Backa Topola and, following a short argument, punched E.N. (born 1988) from Topolya, as well as I.S. from Bácsfeketehegy and I.U. from Kishegyes/Mali Idos. [Subsequently] All participants in the incident took part in a discussion with the principal of the local Agrarian High School and the police. The police pressed charges against Z.R. for the fight.”*

This police statement is filled with factual errors.

1. *“A fight broke out around 8 a.m...”* — The students were already in school by 8:00 a.m. The bus actually arrived at 6.30 a.m.

2. “*The fight began when Z.R. (born 1987) of Újvidék/Novi Sad...*” — Z.R. is not an Újvidék resident. He lives in Szikics and could not have been coming from Újvidék, since the bus left from Szikics.
3. “*...punched E.N. (born 1988) from Topolya...*” — E.N. is not a Topolya resident, because if he were, he would not be traveling by bus to school.
4. “*The fight began when Z.R. ...got off the bus...*” — The fight happened **on** the bus and not at the station.
5. The statement fails to mention any reason for the fight.

[[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), October 1, 2004](#)]

September 28, 2004

An ethnic Hungarian high school student, **E.N.**, was beaten for smiling at a Serbian fellow student on the bus. The ethnic Hungarian boy from Bácsfeketehegy/Feketic, and the Serbian boy from Szikics/Lovcenac, were both traveling on the 6.30 a.m. bus of the Topolatrans Bus Company to the agricultural high school in Bácsstopolya/Backa Topola when the incident occurred. According to eyewitnesses and the victim, the Serbian boy said: “**No Hungarian has ever smiled at me, and none will ever do so!**” and then proceeded to punch E.N. Several other boys started to punch E.N. as well, and when two of his friends tried to help him, all were beaten. E.N. suffered numerous bruises and injuries. The case was reported to the local town council, as well as the police. **Károly Pál**, Chairman of the Executive Committee of Bácsstopolya municipality, told reporters of the Hungarian-language daily *Magyar Szó* that the police have already investigated the incident, identified the aggressors and filed charges against them. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), September 29, 2004](#)]

September 27 and 28, 2004

A fight broke out among several students of the technical high school in Temerin on September 28. The previous day an ethnic Hungarian student, **L. N.**, had found the wallet of an ethnic Serbian girl from the school and returned it to her. The girl later accused L.N. of stealing 200 Dinars (approx. \$3) from the wallet. Ten students from the girl's class came over during recess and started demanding the missing money. L.N. and his friends showed them their empty pockets as a sign of good will. The Serb students left, but after 10 minutes came back, saying that L.N. should apologize. The boy refused to do so, as he did not have a reason. A Serbian boy hit L.N. and a small fight erupted between the two boys. During the fight **Cs. M.**, another ethnic Hungarian student, was also hit. When the break was over, all involved returned to their respective classrooms and went home at the end of the school day.

The next day, on September 28, the taunting continued. **G. K.** and **A. P.** gave a first-hand account of the encounter to **Béla Csorba**, Vice-President of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina (VMDP) from Temerin, who transcribed the events for HHRF. This is how **G. K.** remembers the case:

“During recess, about 30 boys gathered in the schoolyard, some of them with baseball bats, taunting us. When they left school at the end of the day, L.N. and another boy, stuck with two teachers, and the group did not follow them. Instead, the group came after us, as we headed towards the park. There were only eight of us, so we started to run. I stumbled and fell; they overwhelmed me and started to kick me while I was on the ground. They kept asking me: “What happened to the wallet?” “Where is the money?” “What are you [Hungarians] doing here? This is our land!” My wallet fell out; they searched it, and after taking a few less important papers, gave it back. Adults walking by came closer to help, so our attackers fled. However, one of them was too slow, I caught him, and hit him a couple of times because I felt very desperate and hurt by what had just happened to me. His friends saw this and came

back, but by that time, my friends had arrived with branches from the nearby trees. Someone tried to call the police station, but no one picked up the phone. We walked to the police station with a friend of mine, E. P., and I called my mother on my cellular."

At the police station, the boys recounted the incident to three officers and stated that they felt there was an ethnic motivation to the attack. One of the police officer's dismissed the ethnic taunts recounted by the victim with "*You must have provoked them.*" The officers also expressed doubts that 30 people would have attacked one person. **Lajos Miskolci**, senior police officer, asked G.K. to show his injuries and after seeing them retorted "*This is nothing.*" The mother of G.K., who was present at the hearing, told them: "*I didn't expect this kind of attitude from the police,*" and took her son to the local medical center for evaluation. [First-Hand Account Taken in Temerin for HHRF by **Béla Csorba**, Vice-President of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina (VMDP) on September 28, 2004]

August 23, 2004

The ethnic Hungarian mayor of Szabadka/Subotica, **Géza Kucsera**, is the latest victim of threatening telephone calls. On Monday, he received a message on his official answering machine from an unidentified man summoning him to the headquarters of the extremist Serbian Radical Party to "pick up a package from The Hague" and sing a belligerent fascist Chetnik song. It should be noted that Serbian Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj, now on trial for war crimes in The Hague, considers himself the new Chetnik Vojvod. The Mayor exclaimed indignation at the affront to his character and said he will file a police complaint. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), August 24, 2004]

August 22, 2004

At 3:30 a.m., a group of ethnic Serbian youth assaulted two ethnic Hungarian teenagers in front of the Hotel Patria, near the Croatian Consulate, in downtown Szabadka/Subotica. The two boys — 19-year old **Denisz Sötét** and another wishing to remain anonymous — were getting off a bus in the company of others, at a bus stop. Shortly thereafter, a dark gray Mitsubishi pulled up and five young men jumped out. They told the two teenagers that they were looking for someone called "Zsolt." When they realized that neither of the two boys was the sought individual, one of them shouted: "*It doesn't matter, these are also Hungarians, so let's beat them!*" The gang started to brutally beat and kick the two boys while others around them fled. Denisz Sötét was dragged to the front garden of the Hotel Patria, and kicked severely while lying on the ground. In the meantime, the guard standing at the nearby Croatian Consulate remained idle, as did the dozen guests celebrating a wedding in the hotel and privy to the incident, Sötét's father later recounted to reporters. When the assailants left, Sötét and his friend crawled to the guard patrolling the Hungarian Consulate a few hundred meters from the scene, who called the police immediately. Soon, six to eight policemen arrived at the scene. However, instead of trying to catch the perpetrators who were getting into the car which was still at the bus stop, the police officers kept questioning the ethnic Hungarian teenagers about the incident. Sötét's father later reported to the Hungarian language daily *Magyar Szó* that after arriving to the scene, he overheard one of the policemen say: "*Enough of this nonsense that Serbs are beating Hungarians. I do not want to deal with this. Anyway, one or two smacks are not such a big deal.*" Sötét suffered serious bruises; head, face and abdominal injuries. Police escorted him to the hospital, but in the absence of an acting surgeon, Sötét was told to go home and come back if his pains continued. In a September 8 interview with *Magyar Szó*, Szabadka's police chief, **Borivoj Mucalj**, stated that after having investigated 90 Mitsubishis, police found the gray car belonging to the perpetrators. He also said that the police identified the assailants: two minors. No further details have been released. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), August 23, September 18 and 19, 2004; *Vajdaság MA — Délvidék Hírportál* (www.vajdasagma.info),

August 23, 2004; *Népszabadság* (Budapest), August 24, 2004; *Magyar Hírlap* (Budapest), August 24, 2004]

August 20, 2004

In Csóka/Čoka, local police chief **Ivan Mijandzic** physically assaulted the mayor of Padé/Padej, ethnic Hungarian **László Komáromi**, at the police station. The victim said he had no explanation as to why the police officer slapped him twice on his face. He told the Hungarian-language daily *Magyar Szó* that the incident occurred between 9:15-9:30 a.m. when he went to the police station to procure certificates necessary for running in the upcoming local elections in September. Komáromi is a member of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina and is on the party list for the post of local councilman in Padé. While he was waiting for the document certifying that he is a resident of Padé, a police officer told him that the police chief wanted to see him in his office. When Komáromi entered the room, the police chief started to arrogantly question him about why he wanted to damage inter-ethnic relations and who he thought he was. Komáromi replied that he is a taxpaying citizen of the country and is on official business at the police station. When the police chief threatened him again, the mayor said: “*Sir, whatever your intentions are, act according to the law and police regulations.*” **Mijandzic** responded by slapping Komáromi twice on the face, yelled at him to get out, and shoved him out of his office. After the incident, Komáromi went to the Zenta/Senta hospital where he was examined. The medical report states that the victim suffered a highly visible suffusion of blood and the incident has affected his nervous system as well. Five days after the incident, the Csóka police station still refused to comment on the event. At the inquiry of the Hungarian daily, *Népszabadság*, police said that an official statement could be obtained at the central police station in Nagyikinda/Kikinda. However, the head of the Nagyikinda police station was said to be out of the office when sought. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), August 24, 2004; *Népszabadság* (Budapest) August 25, 2004]



July 30, 2004

Around 3:00 a.m. a fight broke out in Csantavér/Cantavir between four young men: **Siniša Ćulum** and **Duško Maljković** of Újfény/Novi Žednik, and **Róbert Dudás** and **Kornél Nagy** of Óbecse/Becej. Police were able to intervene quickly, thereby preventing serious injury. The initiators, Ćulum and Maljković, were charged with a misdemeanor for “disturbing the peace.” The conflict was probably ethnically-based, since the victims reported the assailants shouting: “*What are you doing here? Go home! We’re going to kill you!*” upon hearing the two speaking in Hungarian. “*I have never participated in a fight, not to mention an inter-ethnic one. I have had a Serbian girlfriend now for two years. I have many Serbian friends; none of them has ever treated me in this way,*” said Dudás. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), August 3, 2004](#)]

Similar to the incident in Törökkanizsa/Novi Knezevac on May 30, violence erupted in Szabadka/Subotica at a 17 year-old boy’s private birthday party. After four uninvited ethnic Serbian boys bullied their way onto the premises around 11 p.m., and objected to the Hungarian music being played, approximately 30 members of a well-known neighborhood gang returned. The gang broke down the door, proceeded to destroy bottles, hitting people over the head with them, and damage music equipment and other property inside the rented space. At least five of the party participants had to be hospitalized. The police arrived late after the mother of one of the boys called them to the scene. Asking to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals, she recounted the events to reporters: *My older son [aged 29] managed to dial us up on his cellular before he passed out. We called the police station. We were told that they had no available cars at the time and we should call another number. We called the other number, told them about the situation, and hurried to the spot. I saw both my sons covered with blood. The streets were covered with blood.*”

“*By the time we arrived, only three of the attackers remained at the scene,*” continued the mother. “*I started shouting to them; the police told me to behave. One policeman insinuated that there had been alcohol consumption and no supervision. I told him, in vain, that there were five adults present at the party. I find it unbelievable that soon we will have to hire private security detail in order to guard Hungarian private events,*” concluded the visibly shaken mother. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), August 2, 2004](#)]

July 3, 2004

At 11:00 p.m., four 17-18 year-old ethnic Serbian perpetrators (**C.S.** born 1987, **A.V.** born 1987, **P.K.** and Velibor Vulikic born 1984) attacked four 16- to 17-year-old ethnic Hungarians (**T.A.** born 1988, **P.S.** born 1989, **A.E.** and **B.E.** born 1988) in the so-called „Fighter’s line-up” district of Szabadka/Subotica, an area inhabited mainly by Serbian refugees from Kosovo and Bosnia. One of the victims said that the Serbians attacked without provocation, shouting „*Kecske, kecske*” (goat, goat), an abbreviated version of a popular anti-Hungarian slogan. T.A. was hospitalized for internal bleeding, facial fractures and kidney bruises. The incident happened at 69-71 Joó Lajos Street in a parking lot. Police conducted a swift investigation and detained all perpetrators on July 7. The official police press release stated that P.K. and P.S., minors, are well-known to the authorities as delinquents. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), July 7 and 8, 2004](#)]

June 14, 2004

Seventeen year-old ethnic Hungarian student **Krisztián Börösök** said unknown assailants attacked him on an empty street of Keresztúr/Ruski Krstur at 1:00 p.m. The victim was riding his bicycle home from school in the nearby village of Törökkanizsa/Novi Knezevac when he was attacked and beaten in the face several times. There were no witnesses. Börösök had to be hospitalized for his injuries. A police investigation is currently underway. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), June 16, 2004](#)]



The Újvidék/Novi Sad Ministry of Interior office issued a press release regarding three perpetrators who had attacked two high school students from Óbecse/Becej on June 6, 2004 at 1:00 a.m. [see report of June 6]. The aggressors — **Dragan Radivojevic** (born 1985), **R.P.** (born 1986) and **M.S.** (born 1989) — were minors under the influence of alcohol. One of their victims was repeatedly beaten on the face and body. The press release, however, failed to mention that the attack had ethnic overtones. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), June 17, 2004](#)]

June 6, 2004

Unknown perpetrators attacked two ethnic Hungarian minors, **Szabolcs Pap** (born 1987) and **Kazimir Korolija** (born 1987) on Petar Drapsin Street in Óbecse/Becej shortly after midnight. The victims were riding home on their bicycles when they passed a gang of young men standing near the road. Suddenly, someone from the group started running after the bikers to inquire about the time. Since only one of them had a watch, they started to speak in Hungarian. Szabolcs Pap gave a first-hand account of what happened next:

“By then the boy who had asked about the time reached my side and kicked the rear wheel of my bicycle. First I lost my balance and then fell off the bike and hit a pile of bricks at the edge of the road. I was lying on the ground when the boy started kicking me, and immediately three of his companions came over to beat me. They loudly cursed my mother and told me to get away from this place, I have no business being here. Since my friend, who stopped his bicycle a bit further, saw that I was overwhelmed, he started shouting for help in both Serbian and Hungarian. Upon hearing the noise, a man and a woman came out from a nearby house and shouted at the crowd beating me. Only then did they begin to loosen their grip around me, so my friend could get to me and help me escape. We started running toward a bridge, leaving our bicycles behind. Only when we turned around and saw that no one was following us did we stop, and I called my father on my cellular phone.”

Pap added that by the following day he was covered with bruises and injuries all over his body. The physician **László Kovács**, who performed a medical examination of the boy two days later, reported the incident to the police. At first, the parents were reluctant to file charges against the assailants for fear of reprisal. However, with the aid of the local branch of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSz), they went to the police. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), June 10 and 11, 2004](#)]

May 30, 2004

In Törökkanizsa/Novi Knezevac, a private party organized by young ethnic Hungarians in a rented house turned into a massive street fight after a large group of Serbian youth arrived at the scene. Earlier that evening, two Serbian young men had been told that the party was a private affair. According to one party attendee, they muttered “*We’ll be back!*” as they left the house. After the partygoers called the police, five cars arrived carrying 15-20 attackers. The uninvited group started to beat a



small group who had gone out for some fresh air. The new attackers claimed that they had come to protect their friends, who had been assaulted earlier. The fight ended only with the intervention of police officers. Six ethnic Hungarian and two Serbian teenagers were seriously injured and had to be hospitalized. The Knezevac branch of the police has begun an investigation. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), June 1 and 3, 2004](#)]

May 27, 2004

In Szabadka/Subotica, six to seven young Serbian men attacked an ethnic Hungarian teenager during the daytime in the downtown area. The boy was walking home from school when the attackers approached him and grabbed his bag, kicking his arms and back. The perpetrators fled when the boy’s father noticed the incident. The attack was reported to the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSz) which led VMSz President **József Kasza** and Chairman of the Executive Committee **Árpád Papp** to visit the chief of police. In an interview with the Hungarian-language daily *Magyar Szó*, police chief **Borivoj Mucalj** claimed that after having investigated the incident, the police found no signs of ethnic motivation. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), May 29-30 and June 2, 2004](#); [Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), July 24-25, 2004](#)]

May 22, 2004

In Szabadka/Subotica, a group of eight Serbian young people attacked three ethnic Hungarian teenagers, aged 18 and 19, on the main square at 1:30 a.m. The victims were engaged in a conversation in Hungarian at a popular local bar when a group of Serbian individuals arrived. As the Hungarian teenagers grew apprehensive and left the bar, the Serbian group followed them to the town hall street corner. One of the victims said that they were outnumbered and could not protect themselves. “*I did not hit back, because there were so many of them, and I feared that I would receive even more [blows]. I held up my arms to cover my face. I had no idea why they started beating us and why they stopped. I think that they were drunk. Maybe they had taken drugs and wanted to show off. I am certain, however, that they beat us because we are Hungarians. They heard us speak in Hungarian in front of the café. We were not in their way; we tried to avoid them, but they followed us,*” said the freshman university student who suffered bruises and a black eye.

A few days prior to this incident, Serbia's only Hungarian-language daily, *Magyar Szó*, reported that a larger group of Serbian youth provoked ethnic Hungarian high school students in Subotica’s downtown area near the theater. The victims were beaten with baseball bats. In both cases, the ethnic Hungarian teenagers were reluctant to tell their stories to the police for

fear of reprisal. In a subsequent interview with *Magyar Szó*, police chief **Borivoj Mucalj** said that no one filed a report about this case at the time, only a few days later, and by then it was impossible to find the parties engaged in the fight. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), May 22, 2004; *Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), July 24-25, 2004]

May 3, 2004

In Újvidék/Novi Sad, a group of young people harassed members of the Adventist religious community participating in an evening service, and assaulted two of its ministers who were trying to defend believers from further attack. One of the ministers was an ethnic Hungarian. The assailants were quickly taken into police custody. A Ministry for Religious Affairs statement, released subsequently, reiterated the right to freedom of religious expression. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), May 5, 2004]

April 17, 2004

Unidentified perpetrators set the car of a man from Kosovo Polje on fire in Újvidék/Novi Sad, causing damage of 100,000 Dinar (approx. \$US 1,700). [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 20, 2004]

April 9, 2004

Béla Csorba, Vice-President of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina (VMDP), found a 12-inch kitchen knife wrapped in paper slipped under his door. Attached to the weapon was the following message in Serbian: “*We will slaughter you*” (in Serbian: “*Zaklacemo vas*”). Csorba reported the threatening note to the police, who have begun an investigation. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 10-12, 2004]



April 5, 2004

József Kasza, President of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSz) and **Miroľjub Labus**, Serbian Deputy Prime Minister and President of the G17 political party, met — at the initiative of the former — to discuss ethnic tensions in Vojvodina. Shockingly, Labus asserted that neither police files nor the national media had reports on any serious ethnic-based incidents or human rights violations. Kasza proposed the establishment of a special government committee consisting of local experts, including psychologists, sociologists, doctors, and teachers, to develop tools promoting tolerance and co-existence in the primary and secondary schools of Vojvodina. Labus pledged to examine the proposal. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 7, 2004]

March 22, 2004

Nenad Čanak, the President of the Vojvodina Parliamentary Assembly, received a threatening letter for the second time this year saying: “A death sentence on you came into force yesterday. We are here to execute this sentence. Your disloyal career has ended, and no one can help you.” The letter was handwritten and mailed from *Nova Pazova*, a city between Belgrade and Novi Sad. An entity calling itself “The Serbian Diaspora Summary Revolutionary Court,” allegedly headquartered in Chicago, claimed responsibility for the letter. This entity had sent similar letters in the past to both Čanak and **József Kasza**, who is President of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSz). The last letter to Kasza stated: “You have been sentenced to death for your attempt to separate Vojvodina from Serbia.” [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), March 23, 2004]

March 17 and 18, 2004

Vojvodina was marred by two days of province-wide demonstrations, vandalism of minority-owned establishments, and incitement to hatred in reaction to the wave of violence in Kosovo. Over 40 ethnic-based incidents occurred between March 17-23, including hitherto unprecedented attacks against ethnic Slovaks and Ruthenians. In the town of Zombor/Sombor, 10 businesses including bakeries, shops and restaurants run by ethnic Albanians were damaged. In a public statement, the chairman of the municipal council, **Jovan Vujicic**, linked his regret for these incidents to the wave of violence against ethnic Serbs in Kosovo. On March 18, the Vojvodina Parliament was the target of nationalistic demonstrations in the center of Újvidék/Novi Sad. Speeches were made, and heckling heard against **Nenad Čanak**, the President of the Vojvodina Parliamentary Assembly. The flag of Vojvodina Autonomous Province was torn from the assembly building. Police mostly watched as crowds damaged a bakery owned by an ethnic Albanian, although it did block roads once the organizers of the demonstration (in three cars equipped with loudspeakers and bearing Novi Sad and Ruma registration plates, as well as one without any plates) started to direct the masses towards the suburban enclaves of Veliki Rit and Mali Beograd, well-known to be inhabited by Kosovo refugees and Roma. However, en route, the demonstrators were able to shatter the windows of buildings, including those of the Novi Sad Theater (a Hungarian cultural institution) and those belonging to the headquarters of the Islamic religious community. The demonstrators dispersed around 2:00 a.m. [*Népszabadság* (Budapest), March 19, 2004; *Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), March 21 and 23, 2004]

March 18, 2004

A Serbian neighbor and his son assaulted **Tihamér Lavró** in the staircase of their house. Lavró lives with his mother and a younger sister in a compound called “Fighters Line-Up” in Szabadka/Subotica, an area with a 90 percent Serbian population, mainly refugees from Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo. On the day in question, Lavró was returning home with a friend, who lives in the same building, when a Serbian neighbor tripped and kicked him. The boys tried to escape via the elevator, but the perpetrator blocked its outer door. While the victim tried to protect himself by holding the inner door of the elevator, the son of the assailant joined his father and kicked in the inner door. After cornering the victim, they kicked and beat the young man with a bicycle part until he passed out. The victim was hospitalized with a



concussion, facial fractures and numerous bruises on his body. In the past, the father had mocked the victim's ethnic origins, shouted insults about his mother, shoved the victim's sister, and repeatedly vandalized his car. Lavró and his family have been harassed daily by this neighbor either by telephone or in person. Following the victim's hospitalization, the son of the assailant threatened the mother, saying that the next time Lavró will end up in the morgue. Although police have begun an investigation, the victim told reporters that he is pessimistic since a prior incident involving the son is still under investigation after a year. The only possible solution he sees is to move to another place. [[HírTV \(Budapest\) May 25, 2004](#)]

March 12, 2004

Three Serbian boys assaulted **Zsana Mészáros** in the local Miroslav Antic School in Palics/Palić during the recess between classes. The boys kicked her in the back and continued



kicking after she fell to the ground. The girl was hospitalized and an x-ray examination showed chipped cartilage. Months have passed, but Mészáros has still not fully recovered and might have complications in the future. Mészáros and her mother told reporters that during the school investigation several teachers tried to protect the boys by not giving out names and telephone numbers. Mészáros' mother visited the headmaster, who informed her that the boys were reprimanded and the incident will be discussed at a school meeting. But

the school has not taken any action since the incident and Mészáros' classmates continue to laugh at her and mock her Hungarian origin. According to the mother, hate-speech is common in the fights that take place between Serbian and Hungarian teenagers both in the school and on the street. She also added that ethnic Hungarian children are afraid to inform their parents or other adults because they fear further violence. Parents feel desperate because they believe that Serbian authorities will not intervene. [[HírTV \(Budapest\) May 20, 2004](#)]

January 29, 2004

Jasmina Kovačević Čavlović, Consul General at the Croatian Consulate in Szabadka/Subotica, received an anonymous threat on the phone in her office. [[Večernji List \(Zagreb, Croatia\), February 7, 2004](#)]

January 25, 2004

The Editorial Board of TVNS (the Újvidék/Novi Sad branch of state television) banned the airing of a Croatian-language program called "*TV Divani*," in which **Tomislav Zigmanov**, Executive Board Member of the National Council of the Croatian National Minority, would have criticized the state controlled media for its failure to report recent anti-Croatian and anti-minority incidents in Vojvodina. In the banned segment, Zigmanov also criticized several statements by historian **Jovan Pejin**, aired previously during prime-time by the same network (see news item of September 10, 2003), including one in which Pejin concludes that "Croatians do not exist as a nation." Lastly, **Danica Dulic**, editor of the weekly program, said that the segment would have contained a report on threats against the only Croatian-language weekly, "*Hrvatska Rijec*," made via anonymous phone calls (See: News item of January 13-14, 2004 below). This is not the first time TV programs critical of the government's failings have been banned: in August 2002, for example, another segment of the "*TV Divani*" program was banned, because it featured a report on an anti-Croatian incident at the celebration of a national anniversary organized by the "Stjepan Radić" Croatian Cultural Association in Novi Slankamen. Serbian extremists heckled the assembled

by chanting nationalist slogans and throwing firecrackers at the Croatian Ambassador, the honorary guest of the event. [[Večernji List \(Zagreb, Croatia\), February 7, 2004](#)]

January 13-14, 2004

Members of the editorial office of the only Croatian-language weekly “*Hrvatska Riječ*” received several anonymous telephone threats. The unidentified adult male voice told the staff, “*Ustashas! If your paper comes out one more time, I'll slaughter you all! You killed my child!*” The next call came ten minutes later. “*You are all dead!*” The police came soon after the reporters called them, and promised their full cooperation. Only 15 minutes after the police left the building, the phone rang again, and the same voice cursed the staff and kept swearing. The same caller rang twice the next day, saying, “*I wish you a Chetnik Merry Christmas! We are the Chetnik Movement of Subotica, and we will slaughter you all!*” The police have thus far been unable to discover the identity of the anonymous caller. [[Hrvatska Riječ \(Szabadka/Subotica\), January 16, 2004](#)]

November 13, 2003

In Szabadka/Subotica, three to four Serbian high school students assaulted an ethnic Hungarian college student approximately 200 meters from the main post office at 10.00 p.m. The victim had been speaking in Hungarian and the incident occurred after he said goodbye to his friends at the post office and started walking home alone. Suddenly, a group of Serbian teenagers grabbed him from behind and started to pummel him. The assailants asked what his name was. After it turned out that the victim's last name was Serbian, the assailants said they would not hurt one of their own people and left the scene. The student had to be hospitalized. His father reported the incident to the police and the mayor's office. The Hungarian-language daily *Magyar Szó* pointed out in its article that ethnic-based incidents are becoming a daily occurrence in the city's schools. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), November 18, 2003](#)]

September 21, 2003

In Temerin, five Serbian-speaking young men attacked and beat two ethnic Hungarians, **Tibor S.** and **Árpád Sz.** in a restaurant called “Pivarium.” After the incident, which occurred around 11:20 p.m., one of the victims was hospitalized for several days. The police found the assailants. [[Béla Csorba, Vice-President of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina \(VMDP\), Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), September 23, 2003](#)]

August 26, 2003

Around 4:00 p.m. in Zenta/Senta, a local police officer was unwilling to handle the case of an ethnic Hungarian citizen because he addressed the policeman in Hungarian. The local resident went to the police station to file a complaint against a neighbor who had hit him that day and threatened his life. The neighbor was said to have been terrorizing the entire neighborhood for more than six years, while the police neglected the case. When the local resident tried to explain to police what had happened, the policeman on duty became agitated and, instead of processing the claim, shouted at the man, asking him whether he knew he lived in Serbia, where he must speak in Serbian. The resident was within his rights, since the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Liberties of National Minorities establishes that a minority language can be used in official communications in those communities which are at minimum 15 percent minority-inhabited. Zenta is a predominantly Hungarian-inhabited town where the proportion of minorities exceeds 80 percent. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), September 1, 2003; Report by László Rác Szabó of Zenta/Senta](#)]

March 8, 2003

After a peaceful demonstration against the imposition of visa requirements for Vojvodina Hungarians wishing to travel to Hungary, a group of young ethnic Hungarians were walking towards a supermarket on the outskirts of Szabadka/Subotica. A car with a Belgrade license plate No. BG 148-03 passed by and suddenly stopped. Four to five young Serbians jumped out of the car, grabbed the Hungarian flag from one of the ethnic Hungarian teenagers, beat them and left the scene immediately. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), March 11, 2003](#)]

January 31, 2003

A bus driver insulted an ethnic Hungarian teacher and her class of 6-7 year-old primary school students on the No. 1 Klisa-Telep bus line in Újvidék/Novi Sad. The teacher, and her students from the local József Attila Elementary School, were returning from a play. However, as soon as the children started talking in Hungarian, the bus driver turned to the teacher and told her that she should teach her pupils the “proper culture and language.” In response, the teacher called on the bus driver not to say such incorrect things before the children. The bus driver then began to shout and curse loudly, insulting the teacher and the students. After the incident, the teacher reported the case to the local authorities. After an examination of the incident, the disciplinary committee of the Public Transport Company decided to discipline the bus driver for intolerance exhibited against passengers. However, **Svetko Tanasic**, the company’s director, denied any ethnic motivation to the incident. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), February 11 and 19, 2003](#)]

III.

Desecration of Cemeteries, Vandalism of Property

The following are four new cases of desecration of Hungarian, Croatian and Jewish cemeteries, historic sites and symbols; and the vandalism of church and minority institutions. The police are generally lax in investigating these acts of violence which offend and strike fear in the affected communities as a whole, while undermining centuries of peaceful co-existence between nationalities.



NEW March 31, 2005

The **Óbecse/Stari Becej** police charged 18-year-old **T.D.** with vandalizing the town's Roman Catholic Church on March 27 [See report of March 27, 2005]. According to the police, the day before, T.D. had an argument with a group of ethnic Hungarian young men. One of them slapped T.D. in the face, and so he vented his anger at the "Hungarians'" church. According to the suspect, he unhooked a metal garbage can from its mounting and hurled it through the glass above the entrance door of the church. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 1, 2005]

NEW March 28, 2005

In a letter, **Miodrag Zivanovic**, President of the High Committee of the Adventist Church, informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that unknown perpetrators painted threatening graffiti on the walls of the Adventist church in the Banovo Brdo section of **Belgrade**. The letter quotes one of the slogans: "*Death to the Adventists.*" The church also reported the case to the police. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), March 31, 2005; *Vajdaság MA* (www.vajdasagma.info), March 23, 2005]

NEW March 27, 2005

During the night of Holy Saturday, unknown perpetrators broke the windows of Our Lady (Nagyboldogasszony) Roman Catholic Church in **Óbecse/Becej** and threw a garbage can into the church.



A street cleaner was the first to see the broken glass in the morning and immediately informed the nun who opened the church that morning. Father **László Fuderer** called the police, who reacted promptly and assessed the damage before the 9 a.m. Easter service.

Police assume that one of the perpetrators used a bike rack from somewhere nearby as a makeshift

ladder to climb through the broken window above the outer doors into the small area between the entrance door and the inside entrance of the church. Since a set of bars made the building inaccessible, the perpetrator simply emptied the garbage can into the passage along with an empty beer bottle.

The incident provoked indignation in the church's Hungarian congregation, that it should be the target of such acts on an important holiday. The town has been known for peaceful co-existence between various nationalities and religions. The local police have started their investigation and revealed that several other locations in the town were also vandalized during the night. [[Local eyewitnesses for HHRF](#), March 28, 2005; [Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), March 29, 2005; [Vajdaság MA](#) (www.vajdasagma.info), March 23, 2005]

NEW January 27, 2005

Unidentified perpetrators vandalized a memorial stone placed in 1997 near the former synagogue in **Törökkanizsa/Novi Knezevac** to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. The perpetrators drew a swastika and wrote the words "**Jews**" and "**Chivuts**" (stingy, money-grubber; "**Civutin**" is a Serbian pejorative for Jews) in Serbian. The memorial stone bears the names of 63 Holocaust victims. Local residents in Törökkanizsa were outraged by the fact that the graffiti appeared on the anniversary of the Holocaust. A police investigation is underway. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), January 29-30, 2005]

November 5, 2004

Unknown perpetrators vandalized the flowers and candles placed on All Saints' Day at the stone cross in the Szent Rókus Catholic cemetery in Zombor/Sombor. The stone cross was raised to commemorate all who lived in Zombor and have passed away, regardless of where their graves may lie. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), November 6-7, 2004]

October 11, 2004

Unidentified perpetrators removed nine copper letters from a tombstone in the Catholic cemetery in Újvidék/Novi Sad. The perpetrators also removed the tombstone from its original place. The police have started an investigation in the matter. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), October 14, 2004]

July 31, 2004

Unidentified perpetrators threw Molotov-cocktails into a shop in Temerin during the night. The street-level store belongs to **Zoltán Úri**, an ethnic Hungarian, who lives in the same building with his family. The fire caused extensive damage but since nothing was stolen from the store, the perpetrators' motives remain unknown. The police are still investigating the case. Locals believe that it might be the act of nationalists who have been sending threatening letters to certain ethnic Hungarians in the town postmarked from Újvidék/Novi Sad, and who might be behind the flag-burning incident of July 25. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), August 2, 2004]

July 3, 2004

Unidentified individuals desecrated 30-40 ethnic Croatian and Hungarian graves in the St. Rókus Roman Catholic cemetery in Zombor/Sombor. This was the third similar incident in the cemetery since 1995. The grave of **János Herceg**, a prominent ethnic Hungarian poet, was also desecrated. **Josip Pekanovic**, leader of the Sombor/Zombor branch of the Croatian Democratic Community of Vojvodina, was the first to learn about the incident. He reported the case to the local police, the



Croatian Consular office in Szabadka/Subotica, and the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina. Police ignored requests by the Croatian and Hungarian minority organizations to investigate the incident. After numerous calls, the police registered only 17 of the total cases of desecration. Citing the lack of effort made by the police authorities, **József Kasza**, President of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina, called on **Dragan Jocić**, Minister of the Interior, to resign. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), July 6, 7, 8 and 9, 2004]

July 3, 2004

Unidentified persons twice desecrated graves in Monostorszeg/Backi Monostor during the past four days. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), July 9, 2004]

May 29, 2004

Marjan Medesi, aged 29, broke into the Catholic parish in Nagybecskerek/Zrenjanin around 4:30 in the morning. The thief put valuables, cash amounting to 1,970 Dinar (approx. \$US 600) and a cell phone in a plastic bag. He severely beat **Jenő Tietze** and his sister **Adamina** who were trying to prevent the robbery. A criminal proceeding is underway and the assailant's detention has been ordered. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), June 2, 2004]

May 2, 2004

In Magyararkanizsa/Kanjiza, unidentified perpetrators vandalized the Jewish cemetery, overturning a large marble monument erected originally in 1948 to commemorate the town's 160 Holocaust victims. **Paja Vigoda**, the cemetery's custodian, found the monument on the ground, smeared with human excrement. Police have yet to investigate the incident. Vigoda, who was appointed in 1996 by the Belgrade Jewish Community to safeguard the cemetery, said it was not the first time vandals had broken in. He said that no monies are allocated for the restoration and preservation of the cemetery. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), May 5, 2004]

Meanwhile in Törökbecse/Novi Becej, a total of 21 tombs (10 Roman Catholic and 11 Orthodox) were vandalized and damaged in the local cemetery. Two employees discovered the extensive damage in the morning. A police investigation swiftly began and the perpetrator was apprehended the next day, confessing to the crime. Authorities said they will issue a statement shortly revealing the identity of the perpetrator, who has numerous prior convictions. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), May 4 and 7, 2004; *Magyar Nemzet* (Budapest), May 05, 2004]

March 27, 2004

In Szabadka/Subotica, perpetrators broke into the Roman Catholic cemetery again, dislodging and destroying 82 wooden crosses and 10 stone decorations from Hungarian and Croatian graves. Three days later, police issued an incredible statement: the perpetrators had been caught: three children (**A.F.**, **D.T.**, and **S.S.R.**) between the ages of seven and eight. The investigation was discontinued even though children of that age and size would have been physically incapable of inflicting the extent of damage which was caused in the cemetery. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), March 29 and April 2, 2004]

March 18, 2004



Overnight, unknown perpetrators vandalized and damaged a few graves in the Roman Catholic cemetery located in the upper part of Zenta/Senta. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), March 19, 2004]

January 19, 2004

The tomb of a five year-old girl was vandalized in the Roman Catholic cemetery of Újvidék/Novi Sad. The perpetrators broke the white marble tombstone probably with a hammer. The local branch of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina issued a press release demanding an end to such incidents. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), January 20, 2004]



January 13, 2004

Unknown perpetrators broke into the Hungarian Reformed Church in Zombor/Sombor sometime after Sunday, January 11. They vandalized the churchyard, broke ornamentation on the church door, attempted to break into the church itself and, in the end, flooded the church's cellar with 120 cubic meters of water. By the time the minister arrived back to the church on Tuesday afternoon, the church yard itself was already flooding. Police responded immediately after the minister called them, and continued investigating into the following morning. Strangely, while the police were still at the scene on Wednesday morning, unnamed minors were found to be kicking the church wall and taking apart the brick fence. After an hour and a half of questioning they were let go, and told that charges would be pressed against them. On August 18, **Andor Békássy**, minister of the church, told HHRF that he has not heard from the police since the date of the incident seven months earlier. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), January 20, 2004]



January 5, 2004

“Đukić’s Cross,” a marble Catholic cross located at the entrance to the village of Kisbosznia/Mala Bosna, was damaged. The case was reported to the police who, after questioning locals and consulting stone-carvers, concluded that there was no ethnic motivation to the incident. Six month later, after being queried about the incident by a *Magyar Szó* reporter, **Borivoj Mucalj**, chief of police of Szabadka/Subotica, stated that the cross had toppled, because it was old and close to the road. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), January 9, 2004; *Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), July 24-25, 2004]

December 28 and 31, 2003

The statue of Matija Gubec (a 16th-century Croatian leader of peasant rebels) located in the school yard of the Matija Gubec Elementary School in Tavankút/Tavankut was overturned by unknown perpetrators. **Kalman Kuntić**, the ethnic Croatian director of the school, reported the case to the police, who soon started an investigation. It was overturned again on the night of December 31, only two days after local officials restored the statue to its rightful place. This time the vandals defecated on it, presumably to deter its reinstallation. [[Hrvatska Riječ \(Szabadka/Subotica\), January 12, 2004](#)]

December 27, 2003

Two windows of the Croatian House in Zombor/Sombor were broken in with bricks and beer bottles on the night prior to the parliamentary elections. Members of the “Vladimir Nazor” Croatian Cultural-Artistic Association discovered the act in the morning and notified the local police, who arrived to the scene soon afterwards. It should be noted that just a day earlier the Croatian Alliance for Student Assistance had distributed supplies from the same building. [[Hrvatska Riječ \(Szabadka/Subotica\), January 12, 2004](#)]

December 24, 2003

In Szabadka/Subotica, several cars parked in front of the Croatian Cultural Center (in Croatian: “Bunjevačko kolo”) were damaged during the night. Their tires were slashed and a Serb acronym widely used by nationalists (four Cyrillic S letters divided into four fields by a cross) was scratched into one of the hoods. [[Hrvatska Riječ \(Szabadka/Subotica\), January 12, 2004](#); [Večernji List \(Zagreb, Croatia\), February 7, 2004](#)]

December 6, 2003

A statue of Hungarian poet Antal Kovács, located a few meters from the guard’s post at the entrance to the Temerin town hall, was spray-painted during the night. Similarly, the entrance door of the local Szirmai Károly Hungarian Cultural Alliance (Szirmai Károly Magyar Művelődési Egyesület) was also spray-painted and, the name of the Serb Radical Party was emblazoned on the door of the local Historical Museum. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/ Novi Sad\), December 11, 2003](#)]

November 26, 2003

More than 50 wooden and stone crosses were damaged in a Roman Catholic cemetery in Felsőmuzslya/Muzlja (a village neighboring Nagybecskerek/Zrenjanin). On December 3, 2003 police arrested three minors — **L.N.** (aged 17), **N.K.** (aged 16) and **K.D.** (aged 17) — from Nagybecskerek/Zrenjanin. One of the perpetrators, L.N., was placed under psychological evaluation, the other, N.K., was seriously rebuked, while the third perpetrator, K.D., was exempt from further examination. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/ Novi Sad\), November 27 and December 5, 2003](#)]

October 5, 2003

At 7 a.m. in Grbavica (near Újvidék/Novi Sad), on the corner of Tolstoy and Puskin Streets, three young Serbian men aged 25-26 insulted **Károly Nász** and his wife, sprinkling beer over the husband. The couple was saying goodbye when the three, drunk men approached them. Hearing the spouses speaking Hungarian, they spilled beer over Károly Nász, started insulting them, and kicking their car. Nász called the police but was unable to give an accurate description of the aggressors due to his emotional state. Nász also told reporters that a week ago his grandparents' grave was desecrated in the Roman Catholic cemetery in Novi Sad. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/ Novi Sad\), October 9, 2003](#)]

September 28, 2003

During the night, 86 graves were desecrated and severely damaged in the Roman Catholic cemetery of Újvidék/Novi Sad. Several crosses were overturned and tombstones uprooted. A 35 year-old grave of an infant, for example, was dug out half way after its marble tombstone was removed. The total damage is estimated at 950,000 Dinars (approximately \$US 15,800). Police began an investigation and found the perpetrators: two minors, a girl (**A.K.**) and a boy (**M.P.**) who are currently high school students. The perpetrators admitted to the crime and said they were intoxicated at the time of the act. The legal guardian of one of the perpetrators said that police investigation was very controversial. At first, police stated that both perpetrators' houses were searched in trying to gather evidence for the crime. However, police did not, in fact, come to their houses. Secondly, it appears that more than two perpetrators were involved in the incident. The legal guardian told the daily *Dnevnik* that it is impossible for two minors — a boy weighting 64 kg and a girl weighing 35 kg — to cause such extensive damage in only one hour (which was the length of the incident according to the police report). Before the judge, the two perpetrators claimed that they damaged only a few crosses and graves but added that a group of older boys had been watching them from the cemetery's fence and also drinking. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/ Novi Sad\), September 29 and 30, October 2, 7, November 8-9, 14 and 22-23, 2003](#)]

April 16, 2003

In Szabadka/Subotica, unknown perpetrators vandalized one of the memorial stones in the Parcel No. 44 of the Zenta Street cemetery. This section holds the engraving of the names of 29 innocent victims of the 1944 massacres in Vojvodina. Local residents informed **Ferenc Sinkovits**, President of the '44 Memorial Committee, who reported the incident to the police. Last year one of the memorial stones was also damaged along with the gate and fence of the section. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/ Novi Sad\), April 18, 2003](#)]

February 1, 2003

In the Roman Catholic cemetery of Újvidék/Novi Sad, unknown perpetrators vandalized three tombstones. A police investigation is underway. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/ Novi Sad\), February 6, 2003](#)]

IV. Proliferation of Racist, Xenophobic and Anti-Semitic Graffiti

Graffiti messages scrawled on homes as well as public institutions explicitly incite to violence against minorities and contain frequent use of the words “*death to Hungarians,*” “*slaughter,*” “*go home,*” and “*this is our land.*” The latter two messages are particularly grotesque in light of the fact that while the country has not adequately addressed the issue of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced ethnic Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia, Hungarians and other ethnic groups in Vojvodina are autochthonous to the region. The well-known and unmistakable Serbian nationalistic acronym “CCCC” often accompanies these warnings, as do anti-Semitic symbols. HHRF reports 16 new incidents since January 2005.



NEW July 23, 2005

Graffiti praising the ethnic cleansing of Srebrenica (July 11, 1995) appeared on the wall of the building located behind the College for Kindergarten Teachers and the Synagogue in **Újvidék/Novi Sad**. The extreme nationalist “National Front Line” signed the inscription which reads “*Hurrah for the Serbian Srebrenica 1995-2005!*” The signature was accompanied by the well-known nationalistic symbol of four C's (Cyrillic “S” letter), divided into four fields by a cross.



The Újvidék branch of the Vojvodina Social Democrat League organized an action on July 23 to paint over the chauvinistic texts. [*Magyar Szó (Újvidék/Novi Sad), July 25, 2005*]

NEW June 14, 2005

The Belgrade Youth Initiative for Human Rights announced that it has pressed criminal charges against **Zoran Lukovic**, a member of the Belgrade criminal police, for inciting racial, religious and ethnic hatred. In the charge, the YIHR shows that in his books and public speeches, Lukovic has referred to several smaller churches as sects and to their followers as manipulators, mentally ill, alcoholics and drug addicts who will end up in psychiatric institutions or the cemetery. The YIHR is demanding an investigation of Lukovic’s book entitled *Sects—Handbook for Self-Defense* (In Serbian: *Sekte – prirucnik za samoodbranu*), which is used as a textbook in the police academy at Kamenica. [*Magyar Szó (Újvidék/Novi Sad), June 15, 2005*]

NEW June 13, 2005

Anti-Croatian, Cyrillic-lettered graffiti inciting to hatred appeared on the back wall of the Medical High School in **Szabadka/Subotica**. One text read: “*Croatians, you are inferior beings,*” was signed by “*Serbian Kings,*” and accompanied by the Serbian nationalistic symbol of four Cyrillic “S” letters divided into four



fields by a cross. The other message said *“Chetnics: Ustashes, slaughter awaits you. There is no escape for you.”*

School principal **Géza Szukola** told the reporters of the Hungarian-language daily, *Magyar Szó*, that the perpetrators must have been very quiet since the night guard did not hear or see anything. He pointed out that the school had repeatedly asked the police to provide for effective protection, including more frequent patrols. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), June 14, 2005]

NEW April 24, 2005

Graffiti inciting ethnic, racial and religious hatred appeared on the walls of several Chinese shops in **Újvidék/Novi Sad**. The perpetrator(s) used black car-paint. The police have begun an investigation. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), October 1, 2005]

NEW April 7, 2005

Unknown perpetrators spray-painted anti-Semitic, anti-Adventist and otherwise nationalistic slogans on the walls of the Adventist chapel in Dusan Czar Street and on the Educational Institute (located at the corner of Sava Tekeli and Prva Proleterska Streets) in **Beckerek/Zrenjanin**. The messages painted on the Adventist church said: *“Orthodoxy or death,”* and *“They serve Satan here,”* and were accompanied by the Serbian nationalistic symbol of



four Cyrillic “S” letters divided into four fields by a cross. The messages on the educational center said: *“Serbia for the Serbs”, “Jews get out of here”, “Gay people get out of here”, “Serbian women, give birth to healthy white children, not to pederasts!”* Both buildings have been defaced with similar graffiti in the past. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 8, 2005; *MTI — Hungarian Daily Telegraph* (Budapest, Hungary), April 6, 2005]

NEW April 5, 2005

Unknown perpetrators spray painted nationalistic graffiti, including death threats against the Croatian community, on the walls of the No. 3 municipal building in **Verbász/Vrbas**, reported the local committee of the Democratic Party. After an on-site investigation, the police painted over the inflammatory text written in Cyrillic letters. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 6, 2005]

NEW April 1, 2005

Unknown vandals defaced the display-window of the Luo shop in the Sumica district of **Nagybecskerek/Zrenjanin** with a swastika accompanied by racist graffiti (“Yellow skum” [sic]). Shop owner **Luo Hsziu-in** reported that the store had been robbed a month ago, but no racist messages were left behind. A few weeks ago, similar graffiti appeared on the display window of another Chinese shop in Nagybecskerek. [[BETA News Agency \(Belgrade\), April 1, 2005](#); [Vajdaság MA \(www.vajdasagma.info\), April 1, 2005](#)]



NEW March 31, 2005

Belgrade police arrested twenty-four-year-old **Nenad Lazic** for defacing the wall of the Jewish cemetery on Mijo Kovacevic Street with anti-Semitic graffiti. According to a statement by **Miodrag Simic**, Chief of the Belgrade Secretariat of the Interior, the police caught Lazic in the act of painting the graffiti around 3.00 a.m. Charges have been filed against the perpetrator, who is in police custody. [[B92 News Agency \(Belgrade\), March 31, 2005](#); [Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), April 1, 2005](#)]

NEW March 30, 2005

Nineteen year-old Nikola Stamenkovic, 21-year-old Aleksandar Joksic and 20-year-old Ratko Sakic were sentenced to ten days imprisonment for placing placards calling for a boycott of **B92 Radio and Television** [see report of March 22, 2005]. According to a statement by the Ministry of the Interior, the offenders have already started serving their sentences. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), March 31, 2005](#)]

NEW March 24, 2005

In a rising wave of xenophobia, during the past two days anti-Semitic graffiti appeared at several locations in **Belgrade**, as well as in the town of **Negotin**. Vandals left graffiti inciting hatred against Jews on the Technical School, Chinese shops, the headquarters of the Resource Center and the Committee for Human Rights in Negotin, Serbia. **Dusan Prvulovic** of the Committee for Human Rights, reported that the graffiti read: “*Racial equality is a Jewish trap*”, “*Serbia for the Serbs*” and “*On your knees before the Serbs!*” and was accompanied by the nationalistic symbol of four C’s (Cyrillic S letter), divided into four fields by a cross. Prvulovic believes that the Belgrade incidents of the previous day and the graffiti in Negotin are related, and that the perpetrators of both incidents are one and the same.



Commenting on the incidents, intellectual **Filip David** said in an interview with the TV program “*Kaziprst*” that the biggest problem facing Serbia is that its intellectual elite fails to respond to these incidents. He believes that the Orthodox Church bears a great deal of responsibility, since **Nikolaj Velimirovic**—recently proclaimed a saint by the Church—has tremendous influence over young people. Velimirovic wrote many of the anti-Semitic beliefs espoused by the vandals, and his books are popular among Orthodox believers. David quoted from Velimirovic’s writings: “*All modern European values were invented by Jews (the people who crucified Jesus): democracy; strikes; socialism; atheism; religious tolerance; pacifism and outright revolution, capitalism and communism. All these are Jewish findings, or, more*

precisely those of their father—the Devil—and all intended to humiliate Jesus, to annihilate Jesus and to put their own Jewish Messiah on Jesus’ throne. They do not know, even today, that their Messiah is the Devil himself, their father, who conquered them.” According to David, all Serbian nationalistic and racist organizations allude to Velimirovic. [[B92 News Agency \(Belgrade\), March 22 and 23, 2005](#)]

NEW March 22, 2005

Anti-Semitic posters calling for the boycott of the B92 television station appeared in the center of **Belgrade**. The placards contained the symbol of the B92 News Agency inside a Star of David, accompanied by the following text: *“Boycott because of anti-Serb activity, the bad influence over Serbian youth, Kosovo’s independence, drug addiction, homosexuality and other diseases coming from the West, and the support of a world ruled by many races.”* The posters were signed by the National Front Line. **Veran Matic**, director of B92, expressed incredulity that someone was able to place posters near the police station over a span of several hours, without being carded. These circumstances imply a well-organized effort, stated Matic.

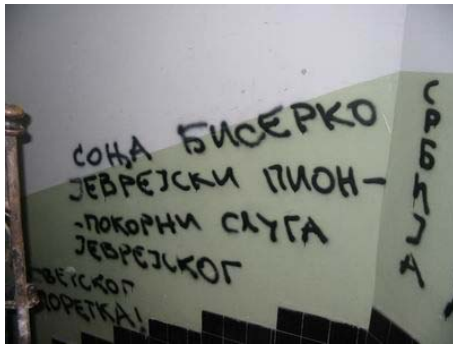


On the same day, anti-Semitic graffiti appeared on the walls of the city’s Jewish cemetery and several NGO buildings in Belgrade. The graffiti on the walls of the Jewish cemetery said: *“Defy the Zionist occupation of October 5; “The B92 is a Jewish TV station;” “Parasitic Jews, out of Serbia;” “We want freedom, not the Jewish yoke;”* and *“Serbia for the Serbs.”* These signs were accompanied by the well-known symbol popular among Serbian nationalists: four Cyrillic “S” letters divided into four fields by a cross.

Aca Singer, President of the Jewish Communities of Serbia and Montenegro, condemned these anti-Semitic acts, and said that Jewish communities have faced hostile treatment ever since the revolution of October 5, 2000. He said that the Jewish community also requested that police not remove the graffiti until the perpetrators are exposed.

Similar graffiti appeared on the buildings of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia and of The Humanitarian Legal Fund, saying: *“Sonja Biserko—a Jewish marionette—humble servant of the Jewish world order,”* and *“Serbia for the Serbs,”* accompanied by the nationalist symbol described above and B92’s logo with the Star of David. Additionally, similar graffiti also appeared on the walls of the Reks movie theater, located on Jevrejska Street (Jevrejska means Jewish in Serbian).





The Helsinki Committee believes that the timing and reason for the appearance of the graffiti on its headquarters is due to the anti-Semitism petition drive it mounted—along with eight other NGOs—the prior day in downtown Belgrade.

The police identified and arrested three minors in connection with the incident. At a press conference, **Dragan Jovic**, Minister of the Interior, said that the minors were arrested on March 23 while in possession of several of the above-mentioned

posters. [[BETA News Agency \(Belgrade\)](#), March 22 and 23, 2005; [B92 News Agency \(Belgrade\)](#), March 22 and 23, 2005; [Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), March 23 and 24, 2005]

NEW March 17, 2005

Graffiti inciting to ethnic hatred appeared on a house belonging to 52-year-old **Pjetr Kajtazi** on Ady Endre Street in **Újvidék/Novi Sad**. The perpetrators used car paint to scribble graffiti two meters long in Cyrillic letters, saying: **“Death to Schipetars”** (“*Smrt Siptarima*” in Serbian). The word “Schipetar” is a Serbian pejorative for Albanians. In a twist on a popular Serbian nationalist symbol, four Cyrillic “S” letters divided into four fields by a swastika, was also drawn under the text. The usual arrangement uses a cross instead of the swastika. A police investigation is underway. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), March 21, 2005]

NEW January 22, 2005

Anti-Hungarian graffiti appeared on the walls of the Cultural House in **Csúza**, an overwhelmingly Hungarian-inhabited village in Croatia, numbering 800 residents. The graffiti appeared following an incident in the local Piros Csizma (Red Boot) Inn. On Saturday at midnight, three strangers dropped in and derided the music, which consisted of Hungarian folk songs. Gyula Fekete, owner of the inn, told them that it was a Hungarian village and all his guests were ethnic Hungarians. He remembers the encounter:

“They did not care for my answer; one of them shouted out loud, ‘Where do you live?’ I answered, ‘In Croatia, but the population of this village is still Hungarian.’ Then, the shouter grabbed my collar but the guests prevented further hostility. The three strangers were shown out. They shouted back, ‘We will meet again!’ and said they will remember this place’s name and we shouldn’t expect any good to come of the incident.”

Locals found Croatian-language graffiti on the walls of the cultural house the next morning: **“F***k your Hungarian mother!”** A police investigation is underway. [[Új Magyar Képes Újság \(Hungarian-language weekly in Croatia\)](#), January 27, 2005; [Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\)](#), January 26, 2005]

NEW Mid-January, 2005

Graffiti saying, **“Hungarians, the mafia is watching you!”** appeared on the walls of the gymnasium of the **Csóka/Coka** high school. The school’s walls are often vandalized. In March 2004, unidentified perpetrators vandalized the decorations for the “Durindó” and “Gyöngyösbokréta” Hungarian folk festivals by scrawling anti-Hungarian graffiti. Several times under the previous, Hungarian-led, local government, the administration had to cover over



anti-Hungarian graffiti calling for Hungarians to leave on the school's walls. [[Magyar Szó](#) (Újvidék/Novi Sad), January 22-23, 2005]

NEW January 13, 2005

In **Szabadka/Subotica**, unknown perpetrators spray-painted chauvinistic graffiti at the entrance of the headquarters of the political party representing the Croatian, Bunjevci and Shokac minority groups. The message read: **“Get out of Serbia!”** (In Serbian: *“Mars iz Srbije.”*) Party President



Blasko Temunovic condemned the incident and said that the graffiti reminded him of the Milosevic era's ethnic cleansing. He noted that these sorts of incidents are occurring with increasing frequency and he expects an explanation for their rise from the federal Minister for Minority Affairs, **Rasim Ljajic**. [[Magyar Szó](#) (Újvidék/Novi Sad), January 15-16, 2005]

December 15, 2004

Newer examples of graffiti inciting to ethnic hatred appeared on the façade of a residential house located at 73 Petöfi Sándor Street in Újvidék/Novi Sad. The message of "Burn 'em, Brother" (in Serbian: *Ma pali brate*)-accompanied by the popular Serbian nationalist acronym of four letter C-s separated by crosses-appeared next to earlier graffiti spray-painted in September and still not removed stating "Death to Hungarians." A police investigation is underway. [[Vajdaság MA — Délvidék Hírportál](#) (www.vajdasagma.info), December 16, 2004; [Magyar Szó](#) (Újvidék/Novi Sad), December 16, 2004]

November 24, 2004

Unknown perpetrators spray-painted swastikas and an insulting message on the Catholic vicarage in Pétervárad/Petrovaradin. The vandals scrawled, *“Catholics go away!”* in addition to the swastikas on the coat of arms and the front door of the Catholic vicarage, and painted three more swastikas on the garden wall. According to BETA (an independent news agency from Belgrade,) the police issued a short report about the incident, stating that an investigation is underway. [[Vajdaság MA — Délvidék Hírportál](#) (www.vajdasagma.info), November 24, 2004]

November 2, 2004

Unidentified perpetrators spray-painted anti-Hungarian graffiti on the wall of a private house at 30 Duna Street in Kamenica/Sremska Kamenica. The text was written in Cyrillic letters, saying: *„Hungarians under the ice!”* and *„We will kill Kasza!”* — the latter referring to **József Kasza**, president of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina. The house is uninhabited, therefore no one filed charges with the police, and it is uncertain who will remove the graffiti. [[Vajdaság MA — Délvidék Hírportál](#) (www.vajdasagma.info), November 2, 2004]

September 28, 2004

In Újvidék/Novi Sad, unidentified perpetrators spray-painted graffiti on two columns of a building located in the projects on Bata Brkic Street in the Újtelep District. One of the texts was written in Cyrillic letters and stated “Death to Hungarians” (in Serbian: “Smrt madjarima”); the other said “Canak is an ustasha,” referring to Nenad Canak, President of the Vojvodina Assembly as being a Croatian fascist. The Serbian acronym with the four C-s separated in four fields by a cross — popular among Serbian nationalists — was also left behind. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/NoviSad\), September 28, 2004](#)]



September 24, 2004

Graffiti stating “Death to Hungarians” (In Serbian: “Smrt Madjarima”) was spray-painted in red, Cyrillic letters on a residential home located at No. 73 Sándor Petőfi Street in Újvidék/Novi Sad. The Serbian nationalist acronym of four letter “C”-s was also spray-painted next to the graffiti. The house belongs to an ethnic Hungarian family living in the so-called “Telep District” where most of the city’s ethnic Hungarians live. Spokesman for the Újvidék police, **Stevan Krstic**, told the local **Radio 021** that an investigation of the case is underway. [[Vajdaság MA — Délvidék Hírportál \(www.vajdasagma.info\), September 24, 2004](#); [Index \(www.index.hu\), September 24, 2004](#)]



September 15, 2004

At night, unknown perpetrators imbedded a 35-cm kitchen knife into the front door of the home of the **Sötét** family of Szabadka/Subotica. Graffiti using Cyrillic letters and stating “Death” and “Drop dead, Hungarians!” was also spray-painted on the house, as well as the well-known Serbian nationalistic acronym “CCCC.” 13-year old **Klementina Sötét** discovered the knife and the graffiti as she was walking to school that morning. She ran back into the house, screaming that there was blood on the door. The family reported the incident to the police, who began an investigation. The police also issued a short statement stating that nationalistic and offensive graffiti — there was no mention of the knife in the statement — appeared on a family home’s walls, targeting members of the ethnic Hungarian minority. The incident came only 12 hours before **Ferenc Mádl**, President of the Republic of Hungary’s official visit to Szabadka as his final destination.





In August, a group of ethnic Serbian youth assaulted 19-year old **Denisz Sötét** at a bus stop near the Hotel Patria in downtown Szabadka and he suffered numerous bruises and injuries (see report of August 22, 2004 in Section I). Since he has gone public with his story, Sötét's mother, Slavica, told reporters that during the daytime a black car drives around their home and sometimes stops at the house, revving its engine. On September 17, the five-member family abandoned their home and left Vojvodina seeking political asylum in neighboring Hungary. Only the Sötét's eldest son has remained in Szabadka. This development came unexpectedly after both **József Kasza**, Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina President, and Hungarian

President **Mádl** visited the family, urging them to remain in Serbia. Currently, the Sötéts reside in one of Hungary's three refugee camps, awaiting Hungarian authorities to grant them political asylum. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), September 16, 18-19, 2004; *Népszabadság* (Budapest), September 18, 2004]

August 25, 2004

A group of 15 supporters of the Obilić (Belgrade) football team set fire to the Hungarian national flag in Újvidék/Novi Sad during a game between the Obilić and Vojvodina (Novi Sad) teams. They also held up a banner with the slogan: "*Temerin, revenge, warriors*" which they put aside when the police came. The police escorted the instigators to the police station where misdemeanor charges of misconduct were filed against two: **Mihajlo Milenović** (aged 21) and **Dalibor Marinović** (aged 26). Each paid a fine of 700 Dinars (approx. \$US 11). Further court proceedings are expected regarding the flag burning incident as this constitutes a crime in Serbia and not merely a misdemeanor according to the penal code. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), August 27, 2004]

July 25, 2004

Temerin City Council Chairman, **József Milinszky**, issued a statement informing the public about a flag-burning incident. At 3:15 a.m., a local police officer on downtown patrol saw three flags burning in front of the First Local Community's headquarters. The Serbian, Hungarian and local flags had been put on display the previous day as part of a festival. A police investigation is underway. The desecration of national symbols is prohibited under the penal code. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), July 26, 2004]

July 21, 2004

In Nagybecskerek/Zrenjanin, graffiti offending sexual minorities was spray painted on the wall of the local educational center. The slogans said: "*Go for a Serbia without homosexuals*" (in Serbian: "*Za srbstvo bez pedera*") and "*Homosexuals are not humans*" ("*Pedery nesu ludy*"). A human rights activist working for a civic organization housed in the building, who requested anonymity, said this was the first such offensive incident. Members of the association include a variety of religious, national, sexual and other minorities. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), July 22, 2004]



July 15, 2004

In Újvidék/Novi Sad, a large anti-Hungarian graffiti appeared by dawn on a concrete fence in front of a residence on the Ernő Kiss Street. The epithet was spray painted with red colors, stating “*Okay, okay Hungarians — a deep mass grave awaits you.*” Police have begun an investigation. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), July 16, 2004](#)]



May 2, 2004

Nationalistic and anti-Semitic graffiti appeared again on several downtown buildings in the capitol of Vojvodina Province, Újvidék/Novi Sad. Inscriptions such as “*Serbia belongs to Serbs,*” “*Out with Hungarians,*” as well as anti-Israel slogans and crossed out Stars of David were found. **László Galambos**, Vice President of the local chapter of the Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina told reporters that such incidents occur daily in the city. [[Krónika \(Cluj/Kolozsvár, Romania\), May 6, 2004](#)]

April 19, 2004

Citing a statement issued by the Újvidék/Novi Sad Police, the **Beta News Agency** reported that graffiti instigating against Hungarians appeared on the pavement in front of the house at 34 Népfront Street in Temerin. [[Vajdaság MA — Délvidék Hírportál \(www.vajdasagma.info\), April 19, 2004](#)]



“*Let’s Slaughter Hungarians*” (in Serbian: “*pobijmo madjare*”) was the message spray painted on a train and highway bridge in Újvidék/Novi Sad. Mayor **Borislav Nosakovic** condemned the incident, promised to remove the graffiti and called on authorities to apprehend the perpetrators. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), April 20, 2004](#)]

April 9, 2004

“*Death to Hungarians*” (in Serbian: “*Smrt madjarima*”) was the graffiti spray painted on a store and bakery located at the corner of Tito Marshall and Dusan Guconja Streets in the center of Bácsföldvár/Backo Gradiste. The officially approved Serbian-Hungarian bilingual road sign was also removed and replaced with a Serbian-language one. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), April 10-12, 2004](#)]

April 2, 2004

Anti-Hungarian graffiti appeared in the town of Zenta/Senta stating “*Death to Hungarians*” and “*This is Serbia.*” The graffiti was found on a Hungarian historic monument and two place name signs. Local police and town officials have failed to investigate the incident. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), April 6, 2004](#)]

Anti-Hungarian graffiti was reported on four buildings in Szabadka/Subotica: on the wall of the local sports arena, stating “Hungarians, go to Hungary” (see photo at left), the Hungarian cultural house, Népkör, stating “We will kill you, Hungarians” (see picture at right), the Szent Teréz Cathedral and the Lazar Nešić high school. The writings were all in the Cyrillic alphabet.



[*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 3-4, 2004]



March 8 and 17, 2004

Anti-Hungarian graffiti appeared on a Hungarian decoration in a school in Csóka/Coka. The graffiti stated: “Out from Serbia! This is our home! You do not belong here!” (in Serbian: “Idite iz Srbije ove je nasa zemlja ovde niste dobrodosli”).



A week after the message was removed, new ones appeared stating: “Out from Serbia!” (Idite iz Srbije), “Serbia: Extend to Tokyo” (Srbija do Tokija). Local police and town officials have failed to investigate the incident.



[*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), March 12 and 17, 2004]

October 17, 2003

At the Gynecological Clinic in Újvidék/Novi Sad, personnel insulted an expectant mother, B.B., for speaking in Hungarian. The young woman was sent to the clinic for examinations and escorted by her husband, because she doesn't speak Serbian well. The required examination was high-risk, to be performed only in the 16th week of pregnancy. First, the receptionist at the clinic objected to the husband speaking for his wife and later started yelling at him that “he should have taught her Serbian.” The treatment the young mother received from three examining nurses was the same. They admonished her that “we will teach you Serbian!”. Finally, the nurses yelled so much at the patient that B.B. left the clinic crying and without having the procedure done. Afterwards, the patient’s gynecologist from Szabadka/Subotica, **dr. Slavica Mazak Bešlić**, tried to intervene with the director of the institution, **dr. Vule Višnjevac**. The director's retort was that she should teach her patients Serbian before sending them to the clinic. **Sándor Egeresi**, Vice-President of the Vojvodina Parliamentary Assembly, reported the incident to the Ombudsman of Vojvodina, **dr. Petar Teofilović**. Subsequently, the director of the clinic, dr. Višnjevac was removed, and a new director, **dr. Milenko Bujas**, appointed. However, the central director of the Clinical Center in Novi Sad said that the change did not occur as a result of the above-described incident. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), October 17, 18-19 and 25-26, 2003]

September 10, 2003

Jovan Pejin, historian and member of the Serbian People's Movement, accused Hungarians, Slovaks and Romanians of “occupying” Serbian territory in Vojvodina since the 10th Century. The diatribe was broadcast during primetime over Novi Sad Television during the

“Otkopcano” (Unfastened) program. The Hungarian Alliance of Vojvodina (VMSz) protested this effort to undermine the peaceful coexistence of 26 ethnic groups in Vojvodina. [[Press Release of the Hungarian Alliance of Vojvodina, September 16, 2003](#)]

August 30, 2003

Graffiti, carved into the asphalt, appeared on the main street of Temerin, in front of houses inhabited by ethnic Hungarians. The message said: “*Death to Hungarians*” (in Serbian: Smrt Mađarima) and was signed: “*Serb Chetniks*” (Srpski četnici). The local branch of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina (VMDP) condemned the act and called upon the authorities to take effective measures. [[Press Release of the Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina, September 2, 2003](#)]

June 2003

In mid-June, unknown perpetrators spray-painted graffiti saying “*Serbia is a Pravoslavnic country*” (in Serbian: “Srbija je pravoslavna zemlja”) in Cyrillic letters on the wall of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Zombor/Sombor. [[First-hand Report from the resident minister, Rev. Andor Békássy, dated August 18, 2004](#)]



March 10, 2003

On Monday, March 10, graffiti saying: “*This is Serbia*” (Ovo je Srbija), written in Cyrillic letters, appeared on the walls of the Széchenyi István Elementary School in Szabadka/Subotica. This school conducts its classes in Hungarian and has mostly ethnic Hungarian students. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), March 11, 2003](#)]

March 7, 2003

In Szabadka/Subotica, anti-Hungarian graffiti appeared on the walls of the Hungarian cultural house, *Népkör*, and a private house facing the Újvidék/Novi Sad University’s branch Faculty of Economics. The message read: “*Hungarians leave from here to the beautiful green Hungary!*” (In Serbian: “Mađari, kuš u Mađarsku, lepu zelenu”). In the morning, when the graffiti was spotted, employees of Népkör called the police, who arrived within 15 minutes, and began an investigation. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), March 8, 2003](#)]

January 18, 2003

Residents of the district called “Telep,” a predominantly Hungarian inhabited area of Újvidék/Novi Sad, found a number of flyers on their cars inciting to hatred against Hungarians. The flyers were hand-written and they contained the following text: “*Since we appreciate the good neighborly relations with Hungary we want the green stars [a term for ethnic Hungarians] living in Southern Bácska to go to the lovely green Hungary.*” A clover, the letter “M,” as well as a green-colored five-pointed star were also inscribed on the pamphlets. A police investigation is underway. President of the Vojvodina Parliamentary Assembly **Nenad Čanak** condemned the incident. [[Magyar Szó \(Újvidék/Novi Sad\), January 21, 2003](#)]

V. Vandalism of Multi-Lingual Signs

On August 16, 2003, the official Hungarian National Council of Vojvodina, established in 2002, adopted a resolution governing the use of Hungarian locality names in the province. This act was brought in accordance with the Article 7, Paragraph 1 of the Provincial Assembly's resolution on official use of national minority languages. Accordingly, the Hungarian names of localities can be posted, and the Hungarian language used in public administration, in those communities where the proportion of the Hungarian population exceeds 15 percent. Thus, the common practice and right afforded under the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution — to post multi-lingual signs of all nationalities inhabiting an area — has been restored in the province. The defacement and vandalism of these new bi- or multi-lingual signs is such a widespread occurrence that only a handful of cases are ever reported.



May 15, 2004

Residents of Tiszaszentmiklós/Ostijicevo discovered that during the night unidentified vandals had painted over the Hungarian name of the village on all the bilingual signs identifying the village. The Latin and Cyrillic Serbian versions of the name were left intact. Police have not investigated the incident. [*First-hand report from the Mayor of Csóka, Zoltán Margit, May 16, 2004*]



April 2, 2004

Two of the road signs identifying Zenta/Senta were vandalized during the night of April 2. Vandals spray-painted the text “Smrt Madarima” (Death to Hungarians) on one, and “Ovo je Srbija” (This is Serbia) on the other. A well-known Serbian nationalist acronym “CCCC” is also visible. [*Magyar Szó (Újvidék/Novi Sad), April 6, 2004*]

February 2004

For weeks the sign indicating the entrance to the village of Kisorosz/Rusko Selo has been vandalized regularly. The Hungarian version of the name is painted over during the night, and later reapplied by the locals. [*Magyar Szó (Újvidék/Novi Sad), February 16, 2004*]

February 13, 2004

Unknown vandals spray-painted over the Hungarian name of Magyarkanizsa/Kanjiza on all four road signs identifying the town. Inhabitants are perplexed by the timing of the incident since these official bilingual signs have been posted for several months. [*Magyar Szó (Újvidék/Novi Sad), February 14-15, 2004*]



February 4, 2004

In Temerin, unknown perpetrators broke the bi-lingual sign identifying the local Historical Museum. The museum has been a target for Serb nationalists in the past. Two months ago, someone spray-painted the name of the Serb Radical Party on the museum's door. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/ Novi Sad), February 5, 2004]

March 8, 2003

Unknown perpetrators spray-painted over the Hungarian name of Szabadka/Subotica on both the entrance and exit road signs identifying the town. The graffiti appeared at the northern part of the town, on the road leading to Palics/Palić. [*Magyar Szó* (Újvidék/Novi Sad), March 11, 2003]