



Canadian Association of University Teachers
Association canadienne des professeures et professeurs d'université

May 13, 2021

BY E-MAIL: marc.garneau@international.gc.ca

The Honourable Marc Garneau, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0G2

RE: Support for Dr. David Scheffel

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the 72,000 academic staff members of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), we write to express grave concern over the detention and imprisonment in Slovakia of Dr. David Scheffel, a permanent Canadian resident and scholar.

Dr. Scheffel, an anthropology professor of nearly 30 years at Thompson Rivers University, was arrested in Prešov, Slovakia in 2017 on the charges of sexual exploitation and child pornography. He was undertaking anthropological research into Roma sex work and the local sex trade. His lawyers claim that the charges brought against Dr. Scheffel are likely an attempt to undercut his advocacy for Slovakia's vulnerable and marginalized Roma population. Dr. Scheffel received full ethics clearance from his University to conduct this research and his detention and denial of a fair trial violates international human rights and widely accepted principles of academic freedom.

While in detention, he was subjected to harsh conditions while also being denied access to the research materials necessary to mount a fair and full defense. During his trial, the presiding judge took into consideration only the testimonies provided without the presence of Dr. Scheffel's lawyer. Dr. Scheffel's lawyer was also not provided the opportunity for cross-examination. On February 24, 2021, the Regional Court in Prešov sentenced Dr. Scheffel to seven years in prison. His lawyer has requested an investigation of the case to the Slovakian Supreme Court.

CAUT is monitoring this case and has concerns about his health, having been informed that Dr. Scheffel contracted COVID-19 in prison. We call on your government to intervene to provide support to Dr. Scheffel, including petitioning the Slovakian government to grant conditional

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freedom while a reassessment of his case is underway, and to uphold international human rights and principles of academic freedom.

Sincerely,



Brenda Austin-Smith
President



David Robinson
Executive Director

/mmp

cc. Heidi Hulan, Embassy of Canada to Austria and Slovakia (brtsv@international.gc.ca)
Dr. Koumbou Boly Barry, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education
sreducation@ohchr.org