

# Orban Government Evicts Central European University

By Don Sutherland

In perhaps the starkest sign yet that the government of Viktor Orban is taking Hungary down an increasingly intolerant authoritarian path, that government has expelled the widely-respected Central European University from Hungary. Beginning next year, the University's primary campus will be relocated to Vienna.

The Orban government's move is an unequivocal rejection of academic freedom. It is an assault on a liberal education (classical definition of the term). It is an attack on personal liberty. Individual freedom is rooted in the intellectual realm but extends far beyond it to all aspects of life.

*The Washington Post's* story on this disturbing development can be found [here](#).

The Orban government's naked assault on the principles and institutions that define liberal democratic governance and free societies must not go unchecked. The European Union (EU) should hold Hungary to full account for the Orban government's decision, even if that means Hungary's suspension from the benefits of the political and economic union. Otherwise, the Orban government will pocket its latest political gain and be emboldened to continue down the authoritarian path it has embraced.

In his *On Tyranny* (2017), Yale University History Professor Timothy Snyder observed:

*The twentieth century saw earnest attempts to extend the franchise and establish durable democracies. Yet the democracies that arose after the First World War (and the Second) often collapsed when a single party seized power in some combination of an election and a coup d'état. A party emboldened by a favorable election result or motivated by ideology, or both, might change the system from within. When fascists or Nazis or communists did well in the elections in the 1930s or '40s, what followed was some combination of spectacle, repression, and salami tactics—slicing off layers of opposition one by one.*

In expelling Central European University, the Orban government is now 'shaving the salami.' Left to its own ideological ends, much worse may yet follow. That outcome is still avoidable, but only if the European Union and Hungary's other partners make clear that the Orban government has adopted an intolerable course that they will not accept.