



Open Letter: Re Solidarity with Szombathely, Hungary

July 1, 2026

To:

President Tamás Sulyok & Prime Minister Péter Magyar of Hungary

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen

European Council President António Costa

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola¹

Dear President Sulyok, Prime Minister Péter Magyar, Hungarian and European officials,

We are reaching out to you in our capacity as representatives of asbestos victims, occupational health and safety campaigners and medical experts from Europe, Asia, Australia and Latin America to express our distress at the unfolding health emergency in the Hungarian town of Szombathely.

The long-term use of more than 100,000 tonnes of asbestos-containing aggregates in road construction in Western Hungary has led to “dangerously high levels of airborne asbestos fibers — up to dozens of times above health limits...”² According to international agencies including the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, the International Agency for Research on Asbestos and others, all types of asbestos are human carcinogens and there is no threshold below which exposures are safe.³ Every year more than 300,000 people die worldwide from asbestos-related diseases; thousands of these deaths are caused by environmental exposures.⁴

Many asbestos companies disposed of unwanted waste by giving it away. As a result, communities in the Netherlands, Belgium Poland, Brazil, Italy and Australia were contaminated. One of the worst-affected communities was in the former asbestos mining town of Wittenoom in Western Australia. Asbestos tailings were used to pave roads, school playgrounds and other leisure facilities such as the local race track as well as to fill children’s sandboxes. Commenting on the effects of these practices, the CEO of the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia (ADSA) Melita Markey said:

“Of the 13,000 people who lived in Wittenoom, 7,000 were children. Our Society was founded by Wittenoom exiles, many of whom were ill. Those affected were not only the people who worked in the infamous mine and mill, but were also civil servants, policeman and schoolteachers stationed in this isolated outback town. Unfortunately, in recent decades we have seen more and more Wittenom children presenting with symptoms and dying of diseases contracted through environmental exposures experienced during their childhood in

¹ All replies should be sent to Laurie Kazan-Allen, Coordinator of the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS), by email to: lkaz@btconnect.com

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European Council President: António Costa; email: press.president@consilium.europa.eu

European Parliament President: Roberta Metsola, email: president@ep.europa.eu

² According to laboratory tests, the asbestos found in the samples included high levels of tremolite and actinolite fibers. *Roads Contaminated with Asbestos Must Be Dug Up and Removed*. May 27, 2026.

<https://hungarytoday.hu/roads-contaminated-with-asbestos-must-be-dug-up-and-removed/>

Health Emergency in the West: Asbestos-Laced Crushed Stone Found in Residential Streets. April 15, 2026.

<https://hungarytoday.hu/health-emergency-in-the-west-asbestos-laced-crushed-stone-found-in-residential-streets/>

³ International Ban Asbestos Secretariat. *Asbestos Policies of Major International Agencies*. Accessed June 24, 2026.

https://ibasecretariat.org/ika_asb_polic_maj_int_agencies.php

⁴ Takala, J., Hamalainen, P., et al. *Comparative Analysis of the Burden of Injury and Illness at Work in Selected Countries and Regions*. 2017.

https://www.icohweb.org/site/images/news/pdf/CEJOEM%20Comparative%20analysis%20published%202023_1-2_Article_01.pdf

Wittenoom. I am extremely disturbed by the scenario currently unfolding in Szombathely. As we have learned to our cost in Western Australia, the price for government inaction will ultimately be paid by those who succumb to these avoidable diseases.”⁵

The signatories of this open letter are unanimous in urging that immediate and effective action be taken to eliminate the asbestos risk posed to all those affected by this catastrophe in Western Hungary. Neither people in the residential community of the Oladi plateau in Szombathely nor others in the extended danger zone have the luxury to wait for negotiations between Hungarian and Austrian officials to run their course. Every day brings more toxic exposures. On June 25, 2026, Szombathely resident and campaigner Dániel Holdosi informed us that parking lots covered with asbestos aggregates have reopened; carcinogenic fibers are once again being liberated as cars drive over the toxic surfaces.⁶

The situation is time critical. The health of nearly 1,500 local residents as well as ~1,000 people living in the surrounding streets is being endangered every single day, with children at the highest risk of contracting asbestos-related cancers and diseases!

This is not a political issue; it is a humanitarian emergency. Failure to eradicate the contamination will have dire consequences for decades to come. We urge Hungarian and EU officials to stand in solidarity with Szombathely and protect the health of all those at risk from this man-made disaster.

Sincerely,

Laurie Kazan-Allen, International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS), UK
Sugio Furuya, Asian Ban Asbestos Network (ABAN), Japan
Eliezer João de Souza, Brazilian Association of the Asbestos-exposed (ABREA)
Nicola Pondrano, Italian Association of Families and Victims of Asbestos (AFéVA)
Melita Markey, Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia (ADSA)
Kim Brislane, Asbestos and Dust Diseases Research Institute (ADDRI), Australia
Akira Suzuki, Ban Asbestos Network of Korea (BANKO)
Yeyong Choi, Asian Citizens' Center for Environmental Health (Eco-Health), Korea.
Hyeon-Seok Noh, Korean Network for Environmental Health
Surya Ferdian, Local Initiatives for OHS Network (LION), Indonesia
Muchamad Darisman, Indonesian Ban Asbestos Network (INA-BAN)
Liz Darlison, MBE DL, Mesothelioma UK
Kimberley Stubbs, June Hancock Mesothelioma Research Fund (JHMRF), UK
John Flanagan, Merseyside Asbestos Victim Support Group (MAVSG), UK

Further Information

Information about the groups which issued this press release can be accessed at:

- International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS)
website: <https://ibasecretariat.org>
- Asian Ban Asbestos Network
email: Sugio Furuya, Coordinator: 2009aban@gmail.com
- Brazilian Association of the Asbestos-Exposed
website: <https://abrea.org.br/>
- Italian Association of Families and Victims of Asbestos (Associazione Familiari e Vittime dell'Amianto)
website: <https://www.afeva.it/>

⁵ Email from Melita Markey. Received June 28, 2026.

⁶ Email from Dániel Holdosi. June 25, 2026.

- Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia
website: <https://asbestosdiseases.org.au>
- Asbestos and Dust Diseases Research Institute, Australia
website: <https://addri.org.au/>
- Ban Asbestos Network of Korea (BANKO)
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- Asian Citizens' Center for Environmental Health (Eco-Health), Korea
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- Korean Network for Environmental Health
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- Merseyside Asbestos Victim Support Group, UK
website: www.mavsg.org