

Financial Times—October 24, 2014 12:45 am

Western values and real Hungarian values are the same

Sir, A few days ago the US government, based on corruption charges, issued a ban on a number of high-level Hungarian officials. These individuals, whose names are not unveiled yet, may not enter the US. This is an extremely serious action and unprecedented among Nato members. Washington would not have taken this measure unless the US administration considered national security interests to be threatened.

A few weeks ago President Barack Obama made some very strong remarks about the undemocratic nature of the Orbán regime. The president stated bluntly that “from Hungary to Egypt, endless regulations and overt intimidation increasingly target civil society”.

Ever since he took office in 2010 Viktor Orbán has openly and proudly waged a war against western “colonisers” because he is convinced that the west is “falling” and that it is time to build “illiberal democracy”. Indeed, Mr Orbán considers Russia, China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and other eastern authoritarian regimes to be “strategic allies”. His government continues to nationalise private companies, and fights against financial institutions, a free press and NGOs, calling them “foreign agents” that undermine Hungarian national interests. As a result, Hungary’s legal environment is unstable and unpredictable, the economy is stagnating, the standard of living is declining and the country is becoming more and more isolated in the international community. It is fair to state that Mr. Orbán is building an authoritarian regime that has three major pillars: a constitution that has eliminated checks and balances, state capitalism, and law enforcement agencies that serve at the sole pleasure of Mr Orbán. Indeed, Mr Orbán could not have won every election in the past five years if democratic opposition in this country had not been fragmented and weak. That is, however, one thing. We on the democratic political side know what our homework is: to provide a credible, attractive and feasible political alternative. It is a huge challenge but we must and will face it.

Western values and real Hungarian values are the same. We have to fight for democracy and freedom every day. In the past century we have learnt the lesson that whenever and wherever our common values are challenged we must act together. In this community of liberal democracies we are tied together. We are friends and partners. If any of us fail, it will start a domino effect. Do not let this come about!

Viktor Orbán is not Hungary, even though he is strong at the moment. Hungarians have always wanted to belong to the west. And we democrats, no matter where we live on this globe, must fight for our common principles together because our alliance cannot be stronger than its weaker link.

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<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/4276b2bc-5948-11e4-a33c-00144feab7de.html#axzz3H2ZYRp2o>