

**English translation of the speech of judge Tamás Matusik given at the Demonstration for
judicial independence organized by Hungarian Association of Judges (MABIE)
22 Feb 2025**

The judges have independence as long as they can and are willing to stand up for it.

Dear Demonstrators! The judiciary is an independent branch of power. But it does not exist for its own benefit. If the independence of the judiciary is lost, every person will feel it on their own skin, because anyone at any time could be in the need of an independent court. This is now under serious threat, and that is why we are here today.

Dear Colleagues from the Courts! Waiting in silence, the caution of keeping quiet to avoid trouble, and the method of sweeping things under the carpet, may work as an individual survival strategy for a while at most, but if the entire judicial community acts this way, it will not do any good, and will be treated accordingly. I know that it is often difficult to take the perceived or real risks, to be true to the principles, to speak our views and to stand up for the truth, but we have already taken the first steps successfully. If we only look back at the recent past, the previous NJC did it by fighting its own battles. Since then, we have done it when thousands of us protested in writing against the quadripartite agreement signed with heads bowed. When we did not let it pass without a word that the Kúria was also being separated from the judiciary by a separate financial deal. When we raised the issue of the President of the Kúria questioning the very existence of the independent Service Courts. In the meantime, we have also reached the point where the President of the Kúria is now setting out in the organizational and operational rules the legal interpretation requirements for judges. And the district court reform, which would turn the large number of judges into vulnerable, transferable 'mobile judges', is only just coming. We cannot let this happen without a word.

The fact that so many of us gathered here today is a historic milestone for all of us. The President of the Kúria is obviously not happy about this, as he has announced that the judge's place is in the courtroom. Well, we do not need to be sent back to the courtroom, because we have always been there. And we will be there again next week again.

Dear Attendees! We, as judges or judicial employees, who express our views together on the state of the judiciary, we are all different. We have no common ideological background, no common cultural or religious values, no common political preferences. We all have one thing in common. That we believe in judicial independence. We believe in the Rule of Law. And we are able to take action for it. This strength cannot be underestimated or expropriated, it is our common strength.

By standing up for independent courts now, we are starting a new chapter: we are not stepping back from here. Everyone should examine whether they have done enough to promote judicial independence, whether they have done all they can to defend their profession. I have asked myself the same question, and I have concluded that I could have done more. I therefore urge everyone to answer this question for themselves. And then, if possible, do more! At individual level, at collective level, at court level, at association level, at domestic level and in Europe.

We need to unite against the attempts of taking over the control of the courts! To do this, we must find additional tools. In our everyday work, we must also identify the limits of our own integrity. To be willing to comply uncompromisingly only with the law and our conscience, not with others, in whatever judicial role we are acting – in the courtroom, in the administration or in a judicial body. And then we do not need to fear publicity or criticism. Let's show interest in what's happening in our profession! Let's not close the door of the courtroom on ourselves, let's talk to each other about our vocation, about our independence! Let us take this home with us now! And if needed, we will be back here again. Because we were judges, we are judges, and we will keep on being judges.