



European Roma Information Office

Human rights abuses and discrimination against Roma

July – September 2013

This publication includes snapshots that are illustrations of human rights abuses and discrimination against Roma in EU member states and candidate countries. The period covered is July-September 2013.

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Czech Republic

Neo-Nazis demonstrate against Roma

On 24 August, neo-Nazis in the Czech town of Ostrava organised a demonstration against Roma, with 600-800 people estimated to have participated. During this demonstration, the neo-Nazis chanted 'Let's go get 'em (sic)', and signed a petition entitled "*For the rights of the decent citizen of the Czech Republic*". Following the demonstration, the group began to march against Roma. Initially, the march was calm, however an anti-Roma pogrom was soon attempted by the demonstrating neo-Nazis. Rocks were thrown at a residential hotel in which Roma live, and Roma were threatened by the demonstrators. By the end of the day, 60 demonstrators were arrested, with injuries reported both to police and neo-Nazis. It was also reported that buildings and vehicles were damaged during the course of the day's events.

On the same day anti-Roma marches also took place in the towns of České Budějovice, Duchcov, Jičín, and Plzeň. In České Budějovice, where it is estimated that there were approximately 300 anti-Roma demonstrators, it was reported that some of the neo-Nazi participants were giving the Nazi salute, and that the demonstrators were shouting anti-Roma statements.

Sources:

<http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-republic-hundreds-of-rampaging-neo-nazis-attempt-pogrom-against-romani-people-in-ostrava>

<http://praguemonitor.com/2013/10/21/anti-roma-rally-held-ostrava>

<http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-republic-real-time-coverage-online-of-more-than-five-simultaneous-anti-roma-hate-marches>

France

Public denigration and hate speech of Roma by politicians and the media

A number of instances of public denigration of and hate speech towards Roma occurred during the period from July to September in France. These statements are representative of a wider discriminatory context present in France towards Roma.

On 21 July, Gilles Bourdouleix, mayor of the French town of Cholet, was recorded stating 'Maybe Hitler didn't kill enough of them' after a confrontation with Roma. Despite his words

being recorded by journalists, Bourdouleix defended his comments, claiming that he was simply repeating a statement made by a journalist.

On 22 August, French right-wing weekly magazine *Valeurs Actuelles* (Current Values) published its new issue with the headline 'Roma Overdose: Handouts, crime ... The things we don't have the right to talk about' (Roms: l'overdose: Assistanat, délinquance ... ce qu'on n'a pas le droit de dire). Below this headline was a picture of a caravan in a red circle with a line through it, implying that caravans should be prohibited or forbidden. The contents of the article included claims of the 'incivility' and 'criminality' of Roma, and also reported on the results of a survey in which 70 per cent of French residents stated that they were concerned about the presence of Roma in France.

Finally, on 24 September Interior Minister Manuel Valls made a derogatory and stigmatising comment about Roma migrants in which he stated that 'The Roma should return to their country and be integrated over there ... It's illusory to think that we can resolve the problem of the Roma population solely via insertion (into French society) ... There is no other solution than dismantling these camps progressively and deporting (the Roma)'. Following criticism even from within his own Socialist Party, Minister Valls defended his comments, stating that 'To quote Michel Rocard (a former Socialist prime minister), 'France's role is not to welcome all the world's misery''. These statements received wide support from the French public, with an opinion poll indicating that 77 per cent of respondents agree with Minister Valls comments.

Sources:

<http://www.neurope.eu/news/wire/french-lawmaker-defensive-after-recorded-saying-maybe-hitler-didnt-kill-enough-gypsies?>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/10259277/Roma-overdose-magazine-cover-sparks-outrage-in-France.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/10333466/Roma-should-go-home-says-Frances-interior-minister.html>

<http://www.france24.com/en/20130928-77-france-roma-manuel-valls-romania-bulgaria-immigration-integration-assimilation>

Hungary

Roma targeted by football fans and town authorities

On 3 August in the town of Ódz, authorities turned off 27 public water pumps supplying free water to inhabitants who do not have access to running water in their own homes. While this decision affects both Roma and non-Roma who do not have access to running water within their own homes, the mayor of Ódz stated that the decision was necessary due to the 'misuse' of the public water supply by Roma. This statement makes clear that Roma were targeted by authorities through this decision. Roma in two settlements in the town are now forced to travel over 1.5 kilometres to reach the nearest water pump.

On 5 September, a bus full of football fans en route to a game stopped outside of the village school in Konyár, at which most students are Roma. According to police reports, the football fans simply sang songs and smoked, and following police checks of their IDs the fans returned to their bus and departed. However, eye witness and media reports contradict this official account. Non-official accounts suggest that the football fans threatened Romani children at the school, shouted anti-Roma statements such as 'Dirty gypsies, we will come back soon', and made gestures implying a threat to cut the children's throats. It is possible that the school was deliberately targeted by the football fans due to the presence of a former teacher from the school on the bus. This teacher had been dismissed from the school earlier in the year after making racist statements about Roma in which he alleged that they were primitives, dirty, smelly, only understand physical punishment, and should have their spines broken. These comments were recorded on video.

Sources:

<http://www.errc.org/article/hungary-local-authority-disconnects-public-water-supplies-in-high-temperatures-blames-roma-for-misuse/4178>

<http://www.errc.org/article/hungary-police-fail-to-act-against-racist-violence-as-football-fans-target-romani-schoolchildren/4189>

Italy

Public authorities and police discriminate against Roma

On 29 July, public authorities in the town of Torino turned off the water supply to a public fountain that was the only water source for an estimated 300 Roma living in a nearby camp. This decision was made in the name of 'public order'. It was allegedly taken after complaints

from non-Roma who were apparently uncomfortable at the frequent sight of Roma lining up to use the fountain for drinking water or washing.

Following complaints made by a number of NGOs, Italian Carabinieri (a law enforcement agency) decided on 8 August to change discriminatory complaint template forms that were developed for citizens to report thefts. On these templates, complainants were able to report that Roma were the culprits of the alleged crime by ticking a box labelled 'gypsy'. This was the only ethnicity provided on the form as an option for the alleged culprit. The use of these forms was uncovered in Liguria, however the template forms were in use in all Carabinieri offices in Italy.

Sources:

<http://www.errc.org/article/italy-torino-municipality-shuts-off-water-supply-near-roma-camp/4183>

<http://www.errc.org/article/theft-victims-in-italy-asked-to-tick-gypsy-box-%E2%80%93-ngos-win-change/4181>

Netherlands

'Anti-social' Roma family moved to police supervised accommodation

A Roma family in Amsterdam has been forcibly relocated from social housing to a police supervised accommodation site due to reported 'anti-social' and 'nuisance' behaviour. The accommodation site consists of housing in containers, and is located on the outskirts of the city on 'wastelands'. The sites are monitored by police and social workers around the clock, and have very limited access to services. The mayor of Amsterdam, Eberhard van der Laan, has stated that the container homes are for all 'extreme ... problem families' who are identified as 'nuisance neighbours'. The Dimitrov family, who identify as Roma, have been the first family moved to the site, with van der Laan stating that 'The family has been causing problems for years and has a history of vandalism, noise nuisance and threatening behaviour'. However, the Dimitrovs allege that their relocation was the result of 'pure racism' and discrimination on the part of the mayor. Further, the Dimitrovs have compared the accommodation site to a concentration camp, and criticise the mayor for publicly commemorating the Holocaust while he discriminates against Roma.

Sources:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/netherlands/10288262/Roma-family-accuse-Amsterdam-of-racism-after-being-sent-to-scum-village.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/netherlands/9719247/Amsterdam-to-create-scum-villages.html>

Poland

Facebook page calling for Roma to be banished receives 1,500 likes in 24 hours

Following an incident in which a 16 year old Roma individual allegedly assaulted a non-Roma ('Polish') teenager in the town of Andrychów, a Facebook page entitled 'The Anti-Roma Movement of Andrychów' was created. Within 24 hours of its inception, the page had over 1,500 likes. The page called for Roma to be banished from Andrychów. Roma account for 140 of the town's 20,000 residents, live in dilapidated housing, and are considered to be the most significant 'social problem' by the majority of residents in Andrychów. Facebook administrators promptly shut down the anti-Roma page, however another page was soon created and quickly received 2,000 likes.

The Polish Attorney General is investigating the incident in order to discover if a racist crime can be identified.

Source:

<http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/146217,Southern-Polish-town-wants-rid-of-Roma-community>

Romania

Public officials make anti-Roma statements and forcibly evict Roma

In the town of Baia Mare on 5 August, 15 Roma families were rendered homeless following their forced eviction from 'unauthorized' dwellings. Only three days warning of their impending eviction was provided to the families. The residents were assured that if they left their homes, they would be allowed to build new dwellings in the town, however no alternative accommodation has been provided to these families following the demolition of their previous homes. Further, the affected families have explained that they are extremely hesitant to build new homes in case they are once again demolished.

On 20 September, the Secretary of State for Minorities in the Ministry of Education made an anti-Roma statement with regards to education in the Romanian newspaper *Ring*. Minister András György Király was reported as having said that 'We must also understand the fact that

parents want school units where there is order, where there is discipline and where one may also do some learning. It is a general problem, and in relation to those schools where the number of Roma is significant, if there is indifference, if there is disarray, of course I would not allow my child to attend that school'. This statement appears to support or justify segregation of Roma in the education system despite a commitment by the Romanian government to eliminate ethnic segregation practices.

Roma in the town of Eforie were left homeless after their homes were demolished on 27 September. The 22 dwellings were demolished under the supervision of the town's deputy mayor, who allegedly threatened Roma by stating that 'If you don't come out, we're going to kill you here'. In excess of 100 Roma individuals were left homeless by these demolitions, some of whom have resided in the area for more than four decades. The only alternative accommodation offered to some affected individuals was in an abandoned building without electricity.

Sources:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/roma-families-homeless-romania-2013-08-06>

<http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/romania-letter-concern-hate-speech-30-september-2013-english.pdf>

<http://www.errc.org/article/romania-eviction-leaves-100-people-homeless-in-dangerous-conditions-%E2%80%93-authorities-must-act-urgently/4204>

Serbia

Six nights of racist attacks against Roma settlement

Beginning on the night of 28 August, a number of Roma families living in a settlement in Resnik, Belgrade were targeted by a group of approximately 20 men. Over the course of six nights, the Roma families were faced with intimidation, threats, and violence at the hands of the group. Stones and metal bars were thrown at homes in the settlements, racist insults were shouted at the residents, and threats were also made to set the settlement's residents on fire. The attacks were reported to police by residents, resulting in four of the attackers being arrested during the six nights, however police only stationed a patrol car at the settlement after an intervention from two NGOs. Authorities in charge of operating the camp took a number of days to visit the families after the attacks were reported, and during this visit the authorities told the Roma families that they would have to pay to get a window broken in the attack repaired. Additionally, two employees of the City of Belgrade allegedly called Roma "thieves" and "animals", and also threatened to cut off assistance to the families involved. The settlement in

which these Roma families lived consisted of metal containers, and has previously been targeted for anti-Roma demonstrations.

Source:

<http://www.errc.org/article/racist-attacks-on-resettled-roma-in-belgrade/4186>

Slovakia

Roma home targeted by gunfire and racial abuse

On 30 July in the Slovak village of Hornej Kráľovej u Šali, the home of a Roma family was targeted by gunfire. Media reports allege that at approximately 3am, a number of men in two cars arrived at the home and called out 'Come out you dirty Gypsies'. The men then poured fuel on the entrance of the house, and subsequently opened fire on the dwelling. In total, 22 bullets were shot at the home as well as two cars parked at the house. The family has stated that they hid under the bed during the gunfire. Remarkably, despite the number of bullets fired no family members were injured during the attack. The assailants left the scene before police arrived, however the Roma family has alleged that the men are known to them. Police deny that the attack was racially motivated despite the allegations of racial abuse that preceded the shooting.

Source:

<http://www.romea.cz/en/news/slovakia-romani-home-targeted-by-machine-gun-fire-no-injuries>

14th wall separating Roma from non-Roma constructed

The 14th wall built to separate Roma from non-Roma was erected in Košice in July, following the construction of similar walls by both authorities and private residents in Michalovce, Ostravany, Plavecký Štvrtok and Šarišské Michaľany. The wall in Košice is 30 metres long and two metres high, and it has been alleged that it was built in response to complaints from non-Roma about anti-social behaviour and car thefts attributed to Roma living in the area. The district mayor who was responsible for the construction of the wall denies that it was intended to segregate Roma. However, the mayor of Košice – who denies having any knowledge of the construction of the wall – acknowledged the wall as being targeted at the segregation of Roma. The European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth has urged Slovak authorities to demolish the wall, particularly as Košice is the current European Capital of Culture.

Sources:

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2013/07/slovaks-and-roma>

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/08/roma-see-the-writing-on-the-wall/>

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/headlines/news/2013/08/20130818_en.htm

<http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/slovakia-roma.g9b>

Mentally disabled Roma man kept in police custody for over two months following police raid

Following an extremely controversial police raid on a Roma settlement in Moldava and Bodvou in June, it was discovered that a mentally disabled Romani man was taken into police custody and then forgotten for a period of two and a half months. The investigator assigned to the case was in possession of a report stating that the man did not pose any danger to the public, and in addition, Slovak law states that criminal charges should be dropped for alleged perpetrators with mental disabilities. However, the man was not released from custody until European Roma Rights Centre lawyers intervened. Potential discrimination must be considered in relation to this case due to the allegations of excessive force and discrimination levelled in regards to the police raid during which the Roma man was detained.

Source:

<http://www.errc.org/article/slovak-investigation-bodies-disciplined-after-mentally-disabled-romani-man-forgotten-in-custody/4209>

<http://www.errc.org/article/slovak-authorities-must-investigate-the-police-action-in-romani-settlement-moldava-nad-bodvou/4156>

Sweden

Police compiled ethnic register of 5,000 Roma

It was revealed in September by the Dagens Nyheter newspaper that police in Skåne county had compiled a register of over 4,000 Roma. This register was allegedly compiled in response to a series of crimes that Roma were suspected of committing. The register included the names of individuals, their social security numbers, and their familial ties to other individuals on the list. After originally denying the existence of this first register, Skåne police eventually admitted to its existence, and reported themselves to police. A few days later a second register was discovered, this time containing the names of almost 1,000 Roma individuals. Children as well as adults had been recorded on the registers.

These two registers are possibly not isolated cases, as it was also revealed in September that police in Stockholm had compiled a register of Roma that was maintained until 1996. In this register, Roma were classified according to how much 'Roma blood' they had had ('half' or 'full'). Further, all identified Roma individuals were then assessed as to their behaviour, cleanliness, intelligence, and educational performance. Entries in the Stockholm registry included 'Decent family. On an intellectual level the husband was clearly superior to the wife' and 'She's as black as the night'.

The Equality Ombudsman is investigating if the Skåne county registers were in any way discriminatory.

Sources:

<http://www.thelocal.se/20130924/50400>

<http://www.thelocal.se/20130927/50476>

Turkey

Governor of Bursa uses racist language to refer to Roma

In response to a September request for information from the Turkish Parliament on Roma people living in Bursa, the Governor of Bursa sent a reply that used racist and discriminatory language. In the reply, the Governor stated that:

As a result of both comprehensive studies carried out [in this field] and the complaints submitted by citizens, it has been observed that ... Roma citizens in general lacked any profession or occupation to generate a lawful income, and for this reason they earn their living through drug-trafficking and criminal activities they find suitable for making income such as theft, pickpocketing, purse-snatching, and robbery.

No evidence of a serious and/or reputable study that supports these racist and discriminatory statements has been provided.

Source:

<http://www.errc.org/article/governor-of-bursa-should-apologise-to-roma-community/4194>

United Kingdom

Roma targeted by police for ‘rough sleeping, begging, and associated criminality’

In July police officers in London working in association with Westminster City Council launched an operation that officially targeted ‘rough sleepers, begging and associated criminality within Roma communities’. A group of Romanian Roma had settled in the exclusive Hyde Park/Marble Arch area of London, with local residents and the local business community taking exception to the group’s arrival. It was alleged that the Roma group was responsible for a ‘surge in petty crime, begging and anti-social behaviour’. Further, opposition to the visual presence of the group has also been voiced, with a Westminster City Council member stating that ‘Residents and businesses are fed up with small encampments springing up with the mess and disturbance that follow in their wake’. The police operation saw the immigration status of all individuals checked, with 20 Roma electing to take a free flight back to Romania. In total over 60 individuals were ‘moved on’ from the site by the operation. Media reports suggest, however, that many of the Roma who returned to Romania intended to migrate to the United Kingdom once again, with some media suggesting that the government funded tickets back to Romania were merely a ‘summer holiday in Romania’.

A number of articles published during these raids reveal a significant engagement with discriminatory and stigmatising language, such as *“Park Lane gypsies are sent packing: Police swoop on camp in London and offer Roma free flights home (but only if they fancy it)”* (Daily Mail Online 19 July), *“Park Lane gypsies back with a vengeance just THREE DAYS after being turfed out by police”* (Express 23 July), *“London’s Marble Arch gypsies vow: We will be back”* (Express 29 July), and *“How we are powerless to stop the ‘carousel of career beggars”* (Daily Telegraph 29 September).

Sources:

<http://content.met.police.uk/News/Op-Chefornak--Multi-agency-operation/1400018787840/1257246741786>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-23374241>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/418198/London-s-Marble-Arch-gypsies-vow-We-will-be-back>

Media repeatedly using negative and derogatory language when reporting on Roma

During the period from 1 July – 30 September, various United Kingdom media outlets published a number of stigmatising headlines and articles about Roma. Some of the headlines published during this period include:

‘Children given police escort to school after village goes into 'lockdown' when gypsies threatened parents and 'attacked teachers’ (Daily Mail Online 2 July);

‘Invasion of the pickpockets: Disturbing pictures show Eastern European gangs brazenly targeting victims in broad daylight on Paris streets (and they could be heading for the UK)’ (Daily Mail Online 17 July)

‘Villagers’ 10 days of gypsy hell’ (Express 25 July).

Sources:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2353552/Children-given-police-escort-school-village-goes-lockdown-gypsies-threatened-parents-attacked-teachers.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2367612/Invasion-pickpockets-Disturbing-pictures-Eastern-European-gangs-brazenly-targeting-victims-broad-daylight-Paris-streets-heading-UK.html>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/417226/Villagers-10-days-of-gypsy-hell>