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Factsheet: Roma Rights Record

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This factsheet highlights violations of the rights of Roma since the first EU Roma Summit meeting in 2008.

Violence against Roma: In cases brought by the ERRC in **Croatia**, **Bulgaria** and **Macedonia**, the European Court of Human Rights has confirmed that the state is obliged to investigate and prosecute persons who commit violence against Roma, whether they are private actors or state officials. Despite this, most perpetrators of violence against Roma in Europe act with impunity. Since 2008, in the **Czech Republic**, **Hungary** and **Italy**, anti-Romani violence has remained a serious and even an increasing problem; Roma in other countries have also been affected. In **Hungary**, the ERRC registered at least 48 violent attacks against Roma including 9 fatalities since 2008. According to ERRC research only one perpetrator has been found guilty to date (and is appealing). In the **Czech Republic**, at least 16 attacks against Roma were reported: most employed Molotov cocktails, but there were also several cases of mob violence and marches which resulted in anti-Romani aggression. In one attack, a two-year old girl almost died, suffering extensive burns during a fire bombing. Media reports and ERRC research indicate that perpetrators were identified in only six of these attacks. In November 2009, following the huge increase in violence against Roma in **Italy**, a mob of 200-300 people attacked and damaged Romani homes in Alba Adriatica. In April 2009, YouTube viewers could watch a group of **Slovak** police officers abuse and humiliate six young Romani boys in detention. The ERRC is monitoring 9 other cases of violence in Slovakia involving Romani victims, including shootings, group attacks and police violence. According to available information none of the identified perpetrators was sentenced to prison yet. In June 2009 in **Northern Ireland (UK)** a group of Romani families were subjected to a series of violent attacks on their homes in Belfast; the church in which they sought shelter was also attacked. In **Turkey**, around 1000 people attacked Romani neighbourhoods in Manisa's Selendi suburb in January 2010.

Freedom of movement: In July of 2010, **France** announced plans to evict Travellers and Roma from "illegal settlements" in France and to expel from the country Roma from other EU states. French authorities had expelled approximately 8,000 Roma as of September 2010; in 2009 roughly 10,000 Roma were expelled from France. In **Italy**, authorities declared a state of emergency to deal with Roma in 2008 and have aggressively evicted Roma from settlements ever since. Italy has publicly supported the French expulsions and expressed an interest in launching an expulsion program as well. **Denmark** summarily expelled 23 Roma back to **Romania** in July one day after they were detained. ERRC appeals against these deportation orders are pending. **Sweden** expelled 50 Roma to **Romania** in 2010. **Germany** paid more than 100 Roma to return to **Romania** in June 2009, and is returning Roma to **Kosovo**, many of whom fled to Germany during the war. **Finland**, amid public outcries about public security, threatened expulsions in 2010. In many cases, police action is concurrent with statements by public officials that Roma as an ethnic group are predisposed to crime and other antisocial behaviour.

Increasing activity of extremist political parties, politicians and policies: Since 2008, in many EU countries extremist political parties and politicians have sharpened their anti-Romani rhetoric and actions, creating a climate in which rights violations are more likely to occur with impunity. In **Hungary**, the Magyar Garda, a paramilitary organisation with an explicitly racist agenda, continues to operate openly despite a decision by the Supreme Court to ban it in 2009. That same year, Jobbik, an extremist party with an explicit anti-Romani platform, won four seats in European Parliament elections. In **Italy**, the Government has continued to use anti-Romani rhetoric to harden public opinion against Roma and Sinti while strengthening a state of emergency explicitly aimed at Roma and has moved aggressively to evict Roma from their homes and herd them into controlled camps. In **Slovakia** in 2010, the far-right Ludova Strana Nase Slovensko (People's Party Our Slovakia) has been increasingly active with rhetoric

specifically referring to "Gypsy criminality." In November 2008, the **Czech** Workers Party (DS) organised a rally in Litvinov with 500 neo-Nazis and attempted to march on a Romani settlement before being stopped by police after violent clashes. In February 2010 the **Romanian** Foreign Minister made public statements suggesting that Roma are genetically predisposed to criminality and media reported that the President defended the Minister. During the controversy over the summer concerning Roma in France, both **Bulgarian** Prime Minister Borisov and **Romanian** President Băsescu erroneously referred to the Roma as nomads who need to travel; President Băsescu went as far as to say "Nobody stops them from sending their children to school instead of begging".

Systemic segregation of Romani children in education continues: The European Court of Human Rights reaffirmed that school segregation of Romani children (in schools for children with disabilities and in separate schools or classes in mainstream schools) constitutes illegal discrimination in its March 2010 judgment in the case **Oršuš and Others v Croatia** (dealing with separate classes based on alleged language deficiencies). Despite three unequivocal rulings by the Court since 2007, educational segregation of Romani children is systemic in many European countries: **Bulgaria**, the **Czech Republic**, **Greece**, **Hungary**, **Romania** and **Slovakia** are noteworthy, with credible reports of segregation in **Macedonia**, **Northern Ireland (UK)**, **Portugal** and **Spain**. Romani children complete school at much lower rates than their non-Romani peers. The response of Governments has been wholly inadequate: In the **Czech Republic**, the Government has recognised the problem but its action plan contains no clear timeline or targets for addressing it. In **Bulgaria**, successful integration pilots exist but have not been incorporated into a scaled-up Government programme after more than a decade. In **Slovakia**, in 2010 the former Prime Minister suggested further segregation of Roma in boarding schools as the appropriate policy.

Widespread residential segregation plagues Roma: An October 2009 report of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights found that "segregation is still evident in many EU Member States, such as **Bulgaria**, the **Czech Republic**, **Greece**, **Spain**, **France**, **Cyprus**, **Hungary**, **Italy**, **Lithuania**, **Poland**, **Portugal**, **Romania**, **Slovenia** and **Slovakia**, sometimes as a result of deliberate government policy". In **Italy**, the placement of Roma and Sinti in "nomad camps" constitutes an official policy to segregate Roma and Sinti from the Italian majority. Roma living in segregated settlements may be more susceptible to violent racist attacks. Eviction without alternative accommodation violates human rights law. In February 2010 the European Committee of Social Rights found **France** in violation of the European Social Charter because of its practice of evictions of Travellers and other violations of the right to housing. Since 2008, evictions of Roma in violation of international law have continued in **Bulgaria**, **France**, **Italy**, **Macedonia**, **Serbia** and **Slovakia**. **Italy** has been particularly active; in Milan alone, authorities report having carried out over 100 evictions which effected more than 3,600 people (a portion of this group are repeatedly evicted persons) so far in 2010.

Trafficking in human beings: Low socio-economic status, low educational achievement and high levels of unemployment, compounded with high levels of discrimination and racism place Roma at an inordinately high risk of human trafficking. A 2010 US State Department report discusses the overrepresentation of Roma as victims of trafficking and their high vulnerability to sexual exploitation, forced labour and child begging in nearly half of European countries covered. ERRC research in **Bulgaria**, **Hungary**, the **Czech Republic**, **Slovakia** and **Romania** during early 2010 with police, NGOs and anti-trafficking experts found that Roma are perceived to represent 50-80% of victims in Bulgaria, 40-80% in Hungary, 70% in Slovakia and up to 70% in parts of the Czech Republic.

Denial of access to health care and social assistance: Discrimination remains a barrier to health care and social assistance for Roma in many Member States. In 2009, the European Committee of Social Rights found **Bulgaria** in violation of the European Social Charter twice by failing to ensure that Roma have adequate access to the health care system and to social assistance, prompting the Government to amend the law on social assistance. In **Kosovo**, lead contamination of IDP camps housing Roma in Northern Mitrovica is considered one of the biggest medical crises in the region. Despite significant international and EU attention, Roma continue to live in the camps after more than 10 years, exposed to lead contamination which is reported to have resulted in dozens of deaths.

Coercive sterilisation of Romani women continues: In **Hungary** the ERRC has documented sporadic cases, most recently from 2008. **Czech** cases have also been reported as recent as 2007. In 2009, the Czech Government expressed regret to the victims of this practice and the Hungarian Government compensated one victim, but no government has adopted a comprehensive plan to compensate all victims or reformed health care law regarding consent, as required in Hungary. Although cases have been reported in **Slovakia**, there has been no government response.