



Romani CRISS
Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies

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Bucharest, 27th of August 2007

To:

Mr. Jose Manuel Durao Barroso, President of the European Commission
Mr. Hans-Gert Poettering, President of the European Parliament
Mr. Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos, President in office of the OSCE
Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations

In attention of:

Mr. Romano Prodi, President of Council of Ministers of Italy
Mr. Calin Popescu-Tariceanu, Prim-Minister of Romania
Mr. Adrian Cioroianu- Minister of External Affairs of Romania
Mr. Cristian David-Minister of Interior and Administrative Reform of Romania

YOUR EXCELLENCIES,

On the night of 10th to 11th of August, in a camp near Livorno, Italy, a fire occurred and four Romanian children of Roma ethnicity – age between 4 and 10) died. During the investigation, the Italian authorities arrested the parents of the minors under the accusation of negligence and non-provision of assistance in emergency situations. The parents denied the accusations and reported they had been attacked by unidentified persons and that the fire has been started intentionally.

On 17th of August, an extremist group, GAPE – Armed group for ethnic cleansing, claimed responsibility for fire, including for the death of the four children and gave an ultimatum to the Roma in Italy: “We give the Roma 20 days, starting with August 25, to leave the Italian soil and evacuate the nomad camps all over the country. In case they don’t, there will be a new attack, each month in other camp, with more serious consequences than in Livorno”.

Romani CRISS requests the Italian authorities to carry out a thorough, impartial, effective investigation, which would lead to sanctioning the guilty people, moreover as, since the beginning, there had been indications that the death of the four children could be the result of a racist criminal action.

In regard to the public reactions towards these events, Romani CRISS protests publicly to the insinuations or open accusations against the Roma, according to which the tragic events in the last period, including the death of the four minors, are the fault of the Roma community; we protest against the ideas disseminated by the Romanian society in the last period that try to justify these extremist acts through a so called delinquent “behaviour” of the Roma, as follows:

1. Immediately after the claim of the extremist group GAPE, the Minister of External Affairs in Romania, Mr. Adrian Cioroianu, declared that the Roma had committed numerous crimes and had drawn upon themselves the hate of some western people. Mr. Cioroianu advised the Romanian

citizens to adopt a “dignified behaviour”, thus to avoid possible hostile reactions. He also added that the involvement of the extremist group hadn’t been established yet for certain.

Regarding this statement of Mr. Cioroianu upon the western people’s hate towards the Roma crimes, we remind the Minister that the European Court of Human Rights itself showed that to treat racially motivated violence in the same manner with situations that don’t imply racist aspects means to shut the eyes to the specificity of these acts extremely destructive for fundamental rights.

2. In regard to the same events, the former consul of Romania in Italy, Mr. Mircea Gheordunescu said *“it is necessary to make a distinction between the Roma and the Romanians, as it is well known that those who don’t respect Italian laws don’t respect the Romanian laws either”*.

We invite the representatives of Romanian diplomacy to informed, objective reactions and to a “dignified behaviour” towards these incidents, because the involvement of the racist element in the Livorno incident, either the Armed Group for ethnic cleansing was the author of the fire or not, was real, extremely severe and without precedent in the post-war history of Europe.

In a democratic society, justice is done by competent authorities and not by groups of people (extremist of not).

In the past months, discrimination against Roma has known a constant growth and, despite the protests of various actors, including Roma associations, submitted to European institutions, an articulated policy of preventing, condemning, combating and sanctioning this state of fact lacked and is still lacking.

In September 2006, the European Commission requested Romania *“to prove, at all levels, that the State applies a zero tolerance policy towards racism against Roma or any other minority of group and that this policy is implemented effectively”*.

In August 2007, we request the European Union’s representatives zero tolerance towards the racism of Romanian state’s representatives, towards their declarations:

- 19 May 2007- Traian Basescu, President of Romania, while referring to a journalist: *“How aggressive that stinky Gypsy woman was!”*
- 30 May 2007 - Calin Popescu Tariceanu, Prime-Minister of Romania: *“It’s about the number of Romanians, of Romanian citizens, attention, Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity who constitute a group, in many occasions with delinquent characteristics extremely dangerous that proliferate in Rome”*. *“Because I want you to understand me clearly, if Italy was known in the 20’s for the Mafia, I don’t want Romania to have a bad image because of these groups who commit all possible crimes, starting with thefts, prostitution, drug traffic, paedophilia and the list can go on”*¹
- 18 June 2007-Vasile Dancu, Vice-President of Social Democrat Party: *“we are waiting for a distinction to be made between Gypsism and social-democracy, that’s it ”*.
- 18 June 2007- a member of Parliament, affiliated to the Democrat Party: *“we wanted to avoid the gypsy staff created with the signatures at the meeting “*,²
- 23 July 2007 – Silvia Davidoiu, Romanian Ambassador in Ireland invalidated the affirmations of Roma who live near M50 highway: *“the life in improvised plastic bag tents is a progress in comparison to the living conditions in Romania”* and said that Roma *“cheat and manipulate the Irish public opinion“* and that *“most of the Roma have permanent addresses and own apartments in decent blocks”* [in Romania]
- Adrian Cioroianu, the Minister of External Affairs *“the Roma committed numerous crimes and drawn upon themselves the hate of some western people”*³
- Mircea Gheordunescu, former consul of Romania in Italy: *“it is necessary to make a distinction between the Roma and the Romanians, as it is well known that those who don’t respect Italian laws don’t respect the Romanian laws either”*.⁴

² See Romani CRISS complaint lodged to the National Council for Combating Discrimination.

³ Declaration made after a possible extremist attack resulted in 4 dead children, Livorno, Italia

- 22 August 2007 - Calin Popescu Tariceanu, Prime Minister of Romania: “We cannot tolerate the situation of some people working and some people stealing the products of the work of the others”⁵.

Sincerely yours,

Margareta Matache
Executive Director

Supported by associations and people:

Romania

Media Monitoring Agency
Equal Opportunities association, Vaszi Robert Janos
Equal chances for Women and Children association, Mirela Faitas
A.D.O.S.E.R/S, Varga Alin
Amaro Suno, Ghita Marian
Roma Access Constanta association, Nicu Ion
ARF, Gavris Lingurar, President
ADER – Cluj, Campina Adrian Moldovan, executive director
RAMSES Dej, Caton Musceleanu, social development program coordinator
Mariea Ionescu, Sociology PhD, jurist
Salomeea Romanescu
“For Our Children” Gypsy Women Association, Letitia Mark
AFRR – Roma Women Association in Romania, Violeta Dumitru
European Roma Grassroots Organization, Valeriu Nicolae
ARTISRROMA Cultural Association, Marian Petre
"ROMANITIN" Roma Students and Youth - Iasi, Iulian Dinu
Cristi Mihalache
Hannah Slavik – Diplo Foundation
Roma Alliance from Galati county, Viorica GOTU
Legal Resource Center, Iustina Ionescu

Marea Britanie

Dale Farm Housing Association (UK)
UK Forum of Roma and Travellers
Irish Travellers Movement 2006
Romani Kris/Gypsy Council
Trans-European Roma Federation
Ustiben Newsnetwork
Thomas Acton, M.A., D.Phil. (Oxon.) FRSA, Professor of Romani Studies, University of Greenwich, Patron,
Roma Support Group, London, Secretary, Brentwood Gypsy Support Group

Australia

Romani Association Australia, Lee Fuhler, President RAA.

United States of America

Jack Greenberg, Alphonse Fletcher, Jr. Professor of Law, Columbia University
Ian Hancock, University of Texas
Boulevard Baptist Church, Rev. Ellen M. Sechrest, US Sponsorship Coordinator for Project Ruth

⁴ Idem

⁵ Declaration made after an interethnic tension situation of 21st of August 2007, when approximately 200 Hungarian ethnics, armed with forks, axes and bats, gathered with the intent to burn down Roma’s houses in Apata locality, Brasov.

Republic of Macedonia

Roma Democratic Development Association, Nadir Redzepi, Executive Director
National Roma Centrum, Asmet Elezovski

Romani CRISS – Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies is a non-governmental organisation, which defends and promotes human rights, in general and Roma rights, especially.

Romani CRISS collaborates with State institutions and international organizations for preventing and combating ethnic discrimination, prevention of interethnic violence in local communities and strengthening security of Roma, as person and minority in diaspora, in the OSCE area.