



Romani CRISS, together with O Del Amenca Roma Cultural Center Association, Eltera Association, Florist Association in Romania, Gypsy Eye Association, Roma Journalists Association, Romano Butiq Association, Romano Suno Association, Equal Opportunities Association, Counseling and Social Inclusion Center for Xoraxaj Roma, Young Roma Association for Unity, Solidarity and Transparency and Zurale Romnia- Health Mediators' Association

Bucharest, 1st October 2011

Press release **„Me sem Rom, me sem Romni!” Dignity march**

Over 500 people from all over the country (from the counties of Brasov, Braila, Cluj, Constanta, Dolj, Galati, Giurgiu, Iasi, Ialomita, Salaj, Tulcea, Vrancea) celebrated today the pride of being Roma at the „Me sem rom, me sem romni” Dignity March organized in Bucharest.

Throughout today’s action, the organizer requested equal rights for all the people living in Europe, in one word, dignity. It was also sending a message of solidarity with the Roma people from Bulgaria who are facing racist actions against them these days. The message of his Excellency, Mr. Mark H. Gitenstein, US Ambassador in Bucharest, was the following: *„The dignity march is an extraordinary way of proving the pride of belonging to the Roma community. The Roma should be celebrated for their unique history and in the same time, they should be accepted as members of the Romanian community with full rights.”*

Those taking part at the event were Roma from various nations, both traditional and non-traditional, adults and children, Roma and non-Roma. After an emotional debut of the action, when Rodica Tudor sang *a capella* the Roma anthem, the participants chose different ways (older or more modern ones) to express their identity: the flash-mob of the Gypsy Eye Association, short speeches and an artistic moment held by children. The international artist, Vadim Kolpakov, from Via Romeni band in USA, supports the involvement of children in identity assertion: *„the children must have enough information about the history and contribution of Roma in order to be proud and for them to grow as representatives of the Roma community.”*

Also present at the march, the actress Doinita Oancea declared to be proud of her ethnicity. *“I was never ashamed to declare my ethnicity, even if sometimes this caused me troubles. During the census that will take place this month, I hope you and your families will declare yourselves as Roma”*. The message was reinforced by George Soros, who declared to be very pleased to show his support in this day *“of celebration of the cultural heritage of the Roma”* and encouraged us to *“Si mishto te aven Roma! (Be proud to be Roma!)”*

The event was European and it was organized all over the continent by Roma leaders and antiracist European civil society leaders.