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## **PRESS RELEASE**

The signatory organisations express their concern in regard to the unacceptable manner in which a significant part of the mass media, both in Romania and Italy covered the regrettable event of October 31<sup>st</sup> 2007 which saw an Italian woman killed by a mentally disturbed Romanian of Roma origins.

Blaming an entire community for criminal acts of individuals is a practice which created the premises for the Holocaust and numerous other genocides. The fact that anti-Gypsyism is often shamelessly promoted by a part of the Romanian and Italian media outlets and goes unsanctioned it reflects into the general public's attitude and gives legitimacy to open racist messages transmitted from the highest level of the Romanian and Italian political class.

It is unacceptable that most of the Romanian and Italian mass media sees it normal to create and strengthen the racist reflex of their societies by direct or implicit association of crimes with an ethnic group. It is unacceptable, although legal, that a TV station, such as Romanian Realitatea TV, makes public a racist opinion of a viewer by invoking the right to information.

Law no.677/ 2001 for the protection of people in regard to analysing data with personal character and free circulation of these data stipulates in art.7 that: "Analysing data with personal character in connection with racial or ethnic origin ...is banned". Identifying a person as belonging to the Roma ethnicity in the case of people investigated/ accused of committing crimes is, unfortunately, very frequently seen in Romanian mass media and adds one more brick in creating and strengthening the widespread anti-Gypsyism within the Romanian society.

We are extremely worried by the "compliant" attitude of the Romanian government and of the European Union in general when it comes to anti-Gypsyism and the lack of reaction towards the inept and racist discourses of some Italian politicians. It is unacceptable for the Romanian state to play a "part" in the collective blame cast upon the Romanian citizens and to have a docile approach disguised as diplomacy towards the xenophobe comments of some Italian politicians.

The huge discrepancies between the attention and media coverage of crimes committed by Romanians and of crimes committed by Italians in Italy can't be explained in other way except only by a deep xenophobic feeling which should be sanctioned and not justified by the Government in Bucharest or by the European Union.

It is hard to imagine that any of the crimes committed by Italian citizens in Romania, United States or any other state in this world could lead to media coverage of Italians, in general, as a people of murderers and Mafioso and political leaders of any state could start calling the Italian prime-minister and hold him accountable for it.

The fact that this is possible in case of Roma, proves that being Roma continues to be a social stigma and that there are premises for the repeat at a larger scale of the pogroms at the beginning of the 90's, which climaxed with the pogrom in Hadareni.

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