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**20 August, 2010**  
**Bucharest**

## **PRELIMINARY INFORMATION REGARDING THE REPATRIATION OF 61 PERSONS FROM FRANCE**

In the afternoon of August 19<sup>th</sup> 2010, 61 Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity were repatriated. They came by plane, on Baneasa and Otopeni airport, in Bucharest. It was the first group of repatriated Romanian citizens after the announcement of the French authorities in July that they would initiate a campaign aiming at dismantling the Roma camps (approximately 300) and expelling them in the origin countries, namely Romania and Bulgaria. Romani CRISS and TRUST Association were present, at both airports and discussed with the repatriated Roma people.

The Roma persons' coming back to Romania followed the voluntary repatriation procedure of the Office Francais de l'immigration et de l'integration (the former ANAEM). Therefore, each adult received 300 Euro and each minor 100 Euro, as humanitarian aid. In administrative and legal terms, the procedure is unchanged<sup>1</sup>, as the voluntary repatriation program is not, literally, an expelling procedure. This program aims at people who are legally on French territory and who cannot be expelled according to the French and European legislation. Thus, these people are returned in the origin countries through the voluntary repatriation program. Apparently humanitarian, the program serves the main purpose of the French authorities, which is to remove these people, which are legally staying on French soil.

The Roma were expelled from Grenoble-Lyon region, south of France. According to information in mass media, 61 people were repatriated, out of 79 planned (18 of them didn't come, after all). The repatriated persons come from various areas of the country, especially Ardeal and Muntenia, both from rural and urban environment. In the same time, adults and families with minors were repatriated.

The discussions with the repatriated persons revealed that they chose to come back to Romania because they had not managed to find a place to work in France and to earn money or didn't have money to come back in the country. Thus, the financial aid provided by the French state was the reason for the Roma to come back to Romania.

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<sup>1</sup> Actually, the French authorities announced they work on a project to modify the legislation regarding the expelling of foreign citizens. For a more detailed presentation, see the press release of the French Presidency, at <http://www.elysee.fr/president/les-actualites/communiqués-de-presse/2010/juillet/communique-faisant-suite-a-la-reunion.9381.html>

A repatriated person said that, in the area he used to live, only tree camps are still standing. The Roma from the dismantled camps moved to other camps. The people also said that the French copied their identity papers, that they had to sign certain documents written in French language and that they heard that approximately 700-800 people from all over France were to be expelled. Several Roma mentioned that the French authorities informed them, verbally, that their right to come back to France had been banned. A person also mentioned that he was told that "the president of France doesn't want Roma people anymore and he is dismantling the camps".

Some of the Roma showed their intention to go back to France as they did not have the means to earn a living in Romania.

The preliminary documentation was more difficult to realize because the Roma wanted to get back to their homes and because the number of the journalists present was very large.