



Press release

Beware of women and children!!!

Her name is C.B., she is 54 and, on 7th September 2006, in the afternoon, she was sweeping in the front yard of her house when a Special Force policeman shot her in the back. A Special Force policeman who, along with the other policemen (less than 15, in total) “**defended themselves in order to avoid being seriously injured or even lynched**”, as Mr. Vasile Blaga, the Minister of Administration and Interior declared in the newsletter no. 613/ 19.09.2006.

As result of Police and Special Forces’ intervention in Reghin, Apalina neighborhood inhabited mainly by Roma, there are 36 Roma and 1 non-Roma victims. **Seventeen (17)** of them are women and **five (5)** minors. Twenty-two (22) persons have been shot and 15 hit or gun threatened.

Everything has started with a simple invitation from the Police to two persons, for the day of 8 September. Initially, the Police have stated they had gone in the community “to identify the people who physically abused a police officer”, then that they had gone in the community “for investigations” and, later on, the reason was to “hand out citations”.

At September 11, 2006, the head of Police statement was that “both parties are guilty”, thus implying that they’ve acknowledged the needless use of force, but also saying that the Roma were guilty too, for attacking the policemen.

The Minister of Administration and Interior shows that the “Police have done their duty and respected the legal framework and the event, although regrettable, cannot be reproached to the law enforcement officials which had to defend themselves from a violent mob, of over **150 people**”. However, versus an over 150 people mob, the 7 police officers and the 7 Special Forces policemen have successfully managed to “defend themselves”: according to the Reghin Police’s initial press release, two policemen had been injured. Few days later, at the meeting of the MEPs with the local authorities in Reghin, the Police representatives declared that six policemen had medical certificates to attest their injuries.

Except for this little incoherence in declarations, the Romanian Police’s ability to handle, even when few policemen involved, a “violent mob” is commendable. They probably managed to do that with the weaponry they’ve used: tear gas (spray), tear grenades, rubber sticks, guns and pistols with rubber small shots and bullets. And even guns with regular bullets, because at least one regular bullet was identified at the scene. But there is an explanation for all this: “The use of force and endowment weaponry was determined by the citizens’ brutal reaction; it was self-defense”. And is

this explanation valid when more than half of the victims were women and children? How brutal could older women and children from community be? So brutal that to be shot, even in the back? Or perhaps the C.S.'s broom has provoked the police officers' self-defense reaction?

Please note that the policemen's reaction had absolutely nothing to do with the community members' appurtenance to a certain ethnicity. Because, as Minister Vasile Blaga declared: "**From our point of view, delinquency has no color, race, nationality or religion**". But the statistics published by the weekly "Mures Newspaper", 16-22 September 2006, writes that "this year, 318 persons have been investigated and prosecuted against and 100 of them are Roma from Apalina". If delinquency has no colour or race, why do Police statistics include such mentioning of ethnicity? Maybe with the purpose of applying the law in a non-discriminatory manner?!?!

There might be some questions left unanswered: How come were the Roma waiting for the policemen armed with clubs, forks and axes, if they hadn't known the policemen would come in the community? And based on which evidence does the Ministry of Administration and Interior state so confidently that the "Police have respected the legal framework"? Only based on the testimonies of the involved policemen .. or did they also take into consideration also the Roma testimonies or of other people?

But we are relaxed because "the Ministry of Administration and Interior makes efforts, in permanence, to improve the relations with the Roma community", according to the Minister Vasile Blaga's letter to MEPs Viktoria Mohacsi and Katalin Levai. And, exactly from this point of view we know why Roma in Apalina (including the shot and injured women and children) "**defended themselves in order to avoid being seriously injured or even lynched**". Unfortunately, not all of them succeeded. Not C.B., who was not even involved in the incident.

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