



4 February 2011

Naphegy tér 8
Hungary – 1016 Budapest
Office Tel: +36 1 413 2200
Office Fax: +36 1 413 2201
E-mail: office@errc.org
www.errc.org

Pavel Louda
Mayor of Nový Bydžov
Masarykovo náměstí 1
50401 Nový Bydžov
Czech Republic
Fax: +420 495 703 985

RE: Promotion of Anti-Romani Sentiment

Dear Mr Louda,

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and Equality are writing to you to call for an end to the collective criminalisation of Roma and to articulate our support for a peaceful resolution of interethnic conflict in Nový Bydžov and other Czech municipalities.

The situation between Roma and non-Roma in Nový Bydžov, triggered by a crime of rape that occurred at the end of 2010, is very tense and puts many individuals at a threat of verbal and physical violence. The ERRC and Equality deplore this crime, like all crimes of violence, and urge vigorous investigation and prosecution of anyone implicated in it by responsible police and prosecuting authorities. We oppose the use of private entities under contract to engage in law enforcement activity, including the monitoring of criminal activity, as has recently occurred in Nový Bydžov at the instigation of the municipality.

Unfortunately, you have responded to the rape by blaming Roma as a group and publicly making racist comments. You have also been quoted in the media as preparing to mobilise neighbouring municipalities against Roma at a meeting on 14 February.¹ As Romea.cz has reported,² since your public statements on this matter, neo-Nazi groups have reportedly begun planning a gathering in Nový Bydžov. In addition, the ultra-right Worker's Party of Social Justice, known to be anti-Romani, has expressed its approval of your efforts and we have appreciated that you rejected their offer for assistance.³

Your recent statements and the measures you are proposing may be in violation of a number of national and international law provisions, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which bans racial discrimination by public authorities⁴ and the Czech Criminal Code which bans incitement to racial hatred at Article 356.⁵

¹ As reported by Lidove noviny. Article available at http://www.lidovky.cz/novy-bydzov-svolava-obce-k-reseni-romske-otazky-o-pomoc-zada-i-johna-113-/ln_domov.asp?c=A110107_112540_ln_domov_hs. (Last accessed on 1 February 2011).

² Article available at http://www.romea.cz/index.php?id=detail&detail=2007_9030. (Last accessed on 1 February 2011). Nový Bydžov was also discussed at the neo-Nazi discussion forum stormfront.org at <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t760518/>. (Last accessed on 1 February 2011).

³ As reported by Parlamentní listy. Article available at <http://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/arena/monitor/185772.aspx>. (Last accessed on 1 February 2011)

⁴ Article 2(1) states, "States Parties condemn racial discrimination and undertake to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and promoting understanding among all races, and, to this end: (a) Each State Party undertakes to engage in no act or practice of racial discrimination against persons, groups of persons or institutions and to ensure that all public authorities and public institutions, national and local, shall act in conformity with this obligation."

⁵ Article 356 of the Criminal Code, Act 40/2009, available at <http://www.mvcr.cz/soubor/sb011-09-pdf.aspx>. (Last accessed on 1 February 2011).

We request that you refrain from making statements which collectively characterise Roma in a negative light and inflame public opinion against them.

According to information provided to the ERRC, Nový Bydžov municipality previously supported inclusion measures such as a community centre and a community social work programme from the municipal budget. We strongly encourage you to undertake further inclusion measures in the town, making use of available national and EU funds, to improve the situation of and relations between Roma and non-Roma.

We endorse the efforts of the leaders of the Romani community in Nový Bydžov to ease tensions and ensure the peaceful coexistence of Roma and non-Roma in the town and we call on you to do the same. We encourage you to identify partners from within the local Romani community and cooperate in designing strategies to fight crime and to promote a safe community for all residents of Nový Bydžov, regardless of ethnicity. Numerous Czech municipalities have implemented community policing programmes together with NGOs, including Romani police assistants, which have yielded positive results.

We request the opportunity to participate at the meeting of municipalities on 14 February 2011. We would also be happy to facilitate contacts on individuals and organisations able to assist in addressing the social exclusion of Roma.

Sincerely,

Rob Kushen
Executive Director
European Roma Rights Centre

Lucie Fremlova
Head of Programmes
Equality

CC:
Jaromír Jech
Chair of the Association of Municipalities
Svaz měst a obcí ČR
5. května 1640/65
140 21 Praha 4
Czech Republic
Fax: +420 234 709 786

Petr Nečas
Prime Minister
Úřad vlády České republiky
nábřeží Edvarda Beneše 4
118 01 Praha 1 - Malá Strana
Czech Republic
Fax: +420 257 531 283

Martin Šimáček
Director of the Department for Social Inclusion in Romani Communities
Ředitel Odboru pro sociální začleňování v romských lokalitách
Úřad vlády České republiky
nábřeží Edvarda Beneše 4
118 01 Praha 1 - Malá Strana
Czech Republic
Fax: +420 257 531 283