

1 August 2011

Prime Minister, Emil Boc
Minister of Interior, Constantin Igaş
President of the National Council for Combating Discrimination, Csaba Asztalos
Racoş Police Chief, Petre Balaceanu

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CC: Racoş Mayor, Gáspár Tamás

Dear Excellencies,

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), an international human rights law organisation combating anti-Roma racism and discrimination, is writing to express concern about the employment of private security forces by the Municipality of Racoş, Brasov County, to monitor local residents.

According to media and reports from local Romani organisations, a private security firm employing former soldiers has been conducting patrols in Racoş throughout July 2011. The security firm was invited and contracted by Racoş authorities using municipal funds following conflicts between Romani and non-Romani residents of the town, which is home to about 2,000 ethnic Hungarians and 1,000 Roma. Thirty security guards are reportedly equipped with truncheons, bullet-proof vests and guard dogs, patrolling the town day and night. The head of the security firm informed the ERRC that it was contracted to monitor all residents of the town.¹ However, an activist from the Rhoma Heart - Illo Rrom Organisation in Brasov reported that the security guards are monitoring many Romani people, checking identification documents and the contents of their bags.² There are also reports of security guards physically assaulting local Roma, bringing them to the police station for alleged thefts and fights, and intervening in matters taking place in the local school such as quarrels.

According to international and domestic legal frameworks, Romania is obliged to protect the life and personal integrity of all its citizens. The Romanian Constitution guarantees the right to life as well as physical and mental security.³ As a party to the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Romania is bound to ensure that all citizens can exercise their rights to liberty, security of the person and private and family life, in a manner which is free from discrimination.⁴

The ERRC is particularly concerned about the use of public funds to pay for activities which may target, threaten and intimidate Roma. We urge your offices to publicly denounce the actions of Racoş authorities, to bring a swift end to the private patrols in the town and to protect Roma from any intimidation and harassment by private firms employed by municipal authorities. We also urge Romanian police to swiftly intervene to prevent and investigate any violent acts or other actions in violation of Romanian law.

We respectfully request to be informed of any and all actions undertaken by your respective offices in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Robert Kushen
Executive Director

¹ ERRC telephone interview with a representative of BGG Security Company: 1 August 2011.

² ERRC telephone interview with a representative of Rhoma Heart - Illo Rrom Organisation: 28 July 2011.

³ Constitution of Romania, Article 22.

⁴ European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Articles 5 and 8. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9 and 17.