

The ERRC combats racism and discrimination against Roma and to empower Roma to defend their own rights.

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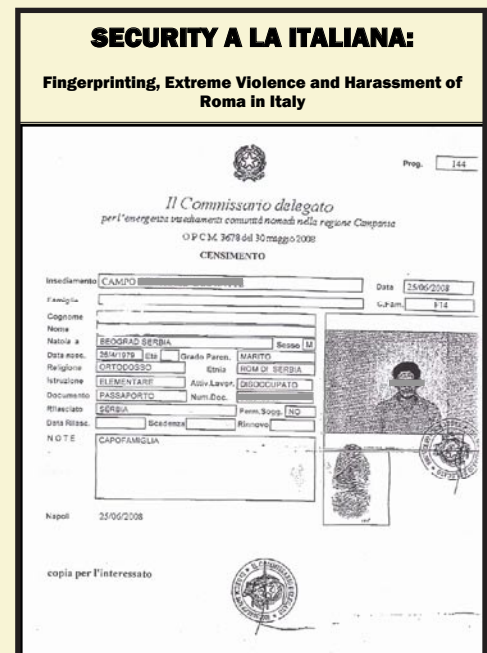
Support the ERRC

Coalition report identifies anti-Romani practices and policies in Italy:

“Security a la Italiana”

IN THE PAST several months, Italy has been in the spotlight of Roma rights and human rights activists for its ongoing anti-Romani crisis, culminating in anti-Romani pogroms in Naples and Milan in May 2008, which kicked off a campaign by the government to fingerprint all Roma. A coalition of NGOs, including the ERRC, the Open Society Institute, the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, Romani Criss and the Roma Civic Alliance of Romania, launched this report on the deterioration of the human rights situation of Roma and Sinti in this country.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations for actions to be undertaken by the Italian government, the Romanian government and inter-governmental actors, in order to end the ongoing human rights crisis in Italy and ensure respect for the rights of Roma in the country.



The full text of the report is available on the ERRC’s website: [View it \(Acrobat pdf format\)](#)!

ERRC and partners publish pioneering book on Roma in Turkey:

“We are Here!”

THE BOOK ENTITLED “We Are Here” was compiled as an outcome of the project “Promoting Roma Rights in Turkey” by the ERRC, the Helsinki Citizen’s Assembly and EDROM. It draws on field research undertaken by the project partners and reflects the experiences gained during the project, the partners’ expertise in

Roma rights advocacy, the promotion of civil society values and the grassroots mobilisation of Romani communities. “We are Here” is an attempt to provide an overview of the situation of Romani communities throughout

Turkey and present human rights issues of particular concern.

The full text of the book is available on the ERRC’s website: [View it \(Acrobat pdf format\)](#)!



Campaigning for Justice

FOR ROMANI WOMEN SURVIVORS OF COERCIVE STERILISATION

Ostalinda Maya Ovalle/ERRC

THE ERRC, women from the Ostrava-based Group of Women Harmed by Sterilisation and the Peacework Development Fund kicked off a global campaign in support of compensation for Romani survivors of coercive sterilisation from 3-9 July 2008 around the 10th annual meeting of the Women’s World Congress in Madrid, Spain. For the organisations involved, being part of this Congress was extremely important because after 5 years of advocacy, the governments concerned have not provided the victims justice in the form of apologies and compensation (although some achievements have been made), and also because it is extremely important to keep the issue in the public eye, particularly in light of advocacy opportunities such as the Czech presidency of the EU in 2009, through reaching out to the global women’s movement.



After successful panel presentation at Madrid world conference – a happy campaign team.

To communicate the demands of the group to all relevant stake holders, the partners organised:

- A postcard and letter campaign, urging the governments of Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia to respond to calls for public apologies and compensation for coerced sterilisation survivors.
- A panel discussion attended by women’s rights activists, academics and politicians in which the

survivors informed them about the coercive sterilisation of Romani women in Central Europe.

- Meetings with other organisations that fight for the rights of Roma to seek their support for the campaign.
- Media coverage in Czech Republic, Hungary and Spain to reach the widest possible audience.

Within the framework of the campaign, postcards were sent to Hungarian, Czech and Slovak governments to support the Romani survivors of coerced sterilisation. The postcards demanded a public apology and compensation for the victims of coercive sterilisation.

Initially, the campaign resulted in activists from more than 40 countries signing and sending hundreds of postcards and letters to the relevant governments. Media outlets and networks were responsive to our call and our message was spread around the world from Brazil to India. Although the launching of this campaign has been successful, to

keep it going may require an even greater effort, and it may be particularly difficult to highlight this cause when the list of human rights violations committed against Roma in Europe is growing fast.

During the first phase of the campaign, the message that the representatives of the group communicated to the world could be heard loud and clear: “We will keep on fighting.” Our message as human/Roma rights activists should be equally clear: “In this struggle, you are not alone.”



A Kényszersterilizáció Áldozataivá Vált Roma Nők. Csoportja egy kórház előtt tüntet a csehszlovákiai Ostravában (2006. augusztus). A transzparensen ez áll: „Sterilizáld az uborkákat, ne a nőket!”

The Group of Women Harmed by Sterilisation protesting in front of a hospital in Ostrava, Czech Republic, August 2006. The banner reads: “Sterilise cucumbers not women!”

El Grupo de Mujeres Dañificadas por la Esterilización protesta frente a un hospital en Ostrava, República Checa, agosto de 2006. La pancarta dice: “Steriliza pepinos no mujeres!”

To support this campaign please click: [**Justice for survivors of sterilisation.**](#)

NGOs Establish Working Group to Monitor Roma Rights in Hungary

THE EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTRE and a group of human rights NGOs operating in Hungary, including the Chance For Children Foundation (CFCF), the Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKI), the Roma Parliament, the RPA (Roma Civil Rights Foundation), independent legal experts and advisors of MEPs have established an informal working group to regularly review pressing issues in the field of Roma rights in Hungary. Numerous and almost daily extreme racist developments targeting Roma (and other minorities), as well as continuing institutionalised discrimination against Roma, in areas such as education, housing and others – call for periodic joint action.

The working group members aim to identify specific opportunities for group action while the organisations individually continue to pursue their own strategy and actions.

The group addressed Hungarian authorities prior to Budapest's Gay Pride Parade in July asking for measures to protect the equal dignity of people participating in the march - a call also supported by other civil liberties organisations and leading advocates such as the Kurt Lewin Foundation, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ). The current call for cooperation of the group addressed to the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs asks for active involvement in a consultation process regarding the pending review of the Hungarian social aid scheme.

Romani Children Face Problems in Accessing Quality Education in Ukraine

ON 1 AUGUST 2008, the ERRC addressed the Ukrainian Minister of Education and Science, Mr Ivan Vakarchiuk, to express deep concern regarding the denial of equal access to quality education for Romani children in Ukraine.

During research missions in Ukraine since 2006, a variety of forms of racial segregation of Roma in education have been identified. They can be described as: (a) separate classes for Roma in a separate school building; (b) geographically segregated schools in predominantly Romani neighbourhoods; (c) schools where Roma predominate or where they are only students; (d) classes for children with mental disabilities where Roma are overrepresented; and (e) schools at risk of becoming segregated when non-Romani parents decide to take their children to other schools allegedly due to the health problems of Romani children who live in very poor conditions.

Most Romani children either graduate illiterate or leave school at an early stage. In addition, most of the predominantly Roma schools are in poor physical condition with no cafeteria or dining hall, no sport facilities, with no indoor toilets or running water, with minimal furniture in various stages of disrepair and lacking the facilities necessary to educate students adequately, such as computers and

laboratories. Even the most basic equipment is inadequate or altogether lacking.

The ERRC urged Minister Vakarchiuk to use the full powers of his office to ensure equal access to quality education for Roma before the academic year 2008/2009 begins and requested that:

- Steps are taken to ensure that all children attend an integrated school with adequate facilities and appropriate resources;
- A free pre-school programme for Romani children is designed and implemented;
- Preparatory courses and other support for students are offered for taking the exam allowing them to transfer to mainstream schools;
- Steps are taken to provide all Roma with necessary identification and necessary medical documents;
- Policies are designed and implemented to enable all children to study in schools that meet their needs, reflect their identity and prepare them for participation in the wider society;
- A comprehensive nationwide desegregation programme is adopted; and
- That data about the number of Romani children in segregated facilities, types of segregated facilities, and their location is made public.

European Court of Human Rights Fails to Find Discrimination Against Roma in Education in Croatia

IN a setback for the Roma rights movement, the European Court of Human Rights ruled on 17 July 2007 that Croatia's segregation of Romani children in separate classes does not breach European human rights standards.

The judgment in the case of *Oršuš and Others v. Croatia* held that the applicants – 14 Romani children attending primary school – were not subjected to discrimination in

access to education. As a result, the Court found no violation of Article 3 (prohibition against inhuman and degrading treatment) or Article 2, Protocol 1 (right to education) of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), in connection with Article 14 (non-discrimination), or of Article 13 (effective domestic remedy).

The Court found that the government of Croatia had violated Article 6(1) of the ECHR (right to due process and fair trial) as the proceedings before the Constitutional Court in Croatia lasted more than four years. The application was filed by the European Roma Rights Centre, in partnership with the Croatian Helsinki Committee and Croatian attorney Lovorka Kusan. The ERRC is currently considering an appeal of this judgment.

For the full text of the ERRC Reaction to ECHR Judgment in Croatian Education Discrimination Case see: [ERRC Reaction](#).

For the full text of the ECHR judgment, see: [ECHR judgment in Oršuš and Others v. Croatia](#).

ERRC staff met with the applicants in Cakovec on 23 July 2008 to inform them about the Court's decision and to discuss possible further steps.



ERRC Challenges Greece in Two Housing Cases

ON 1 JULY 2008, the ERRC, together with the Greek Helsinki Monitor, filed two applications to the European Court of Human Rights challenging violations of the housing rights of Roma.

The first case concerns the inhuman living conditions faced by Roma of Albanian citizenship, legally residing in Greece, as well as their eviction from their settlement in the Votanikos area in downtown Athens, in early June 2007. In their application, the ERRC/GHM claim that the living conditions of the Roma, together with their eviction (which was not accompanied by the provision of alternative accommodation), are in violation of Articles 3 (freedom from inhuman / degrading treatment), 6 (right to a fair trial), 8 (right to private / family life) and Article 1, Protocol 1 (right to property), alone or in conjunction with Articles 13 (right to an effective remedy) and 14 (non-discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The second application concerns the relocation of the Romani community of Spata to an allegedly organised settlement, located five kilometres from the last houses of the Spata Municipality, on a remote hill top, which to this day has not been provided with electricity or running water. Evidence of the precariousness of the living conditions was brought to the fore in February 2004, when the settlement was snowed in and cut off due to a heavy blizzard for four days, with the Roma concerned having no food or running water.

In their application, the ERRC/GHM allege that the living conditions of the Roma, together with their relocation to a remote location, are in violation of Articles 3 (freedom from inhuman / degrading treatment), 6 (right to a fair trial) and 8 (right to private / family life) of the Convention, alone or in conjunction with Articles 13 (right to an effective remedy) and 14 (non-discrimination) of the Convention.

ERRC Demands Adequate Investigation of Hate Crimes Against Roma in Ukraine

ON 17 JULY 2008, the ERRC wrote the Ukrainian Minister of Interior, Mr Iurii Lutsenko, to express its deep concern about the failure of the Ukrainian justice system with respect to serious breaches of the fundamental human rights of Roma in Ukraine. Referring to two separate cases of racially-motivated violence against Roma in 2002 and 2006, the ERRC cited jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights in recent cases concerning racially-motivated violence against Roma and the obligations of state authorities to adequately and effectively investigate such cases and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The ERRC urged Minister Lutsenko to use the full powers of his office to ensure justice for Romani victims of racially-motivated violence in Ukraine and requested:

- That the investigations in the above mentioned cases be re-opened and that adequate, impartial

and effective investigation of the events take place in a reasonable time, leading to the identification and punishment of those responsible;

- That the racist motives of the offences are duly taken into account during the investigation as an aggravating circumstance of the crime;
- That the victims are informed about their rights; that the legal representatives of the victims in the above noted cases are permitted to consult the pre-trial investigation file;
- That the controlling and monitoring functions for respect of human rights are implemented in the activities of the Ministry of Interior regional/local departments; and
- That the fundamental human rights of Ukrainian citizens of Romani ethnicity are upheld.

The full text of the letter is available here: [View it \(Acrobat pdf format\)](#)!

ERRC Summer Workshop Brings 17 Young Romani Activists from 9 Countries for Intensive Training in Budapest

For the first time since 2005, the European Roma Rights Centre, assisted by funding from The Sigrid Rausing Trust, held its in-house training and capacitation Roma Rights summer workshop aimed at capacity-building for Romani activists and students in the field of Roma Rights Advocacy. The ten day workshop was held from 4-14 July 2008 and was attended by 17 participants from Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia,

grapple with the concept of effective advocacy and with how to ensure that their actions would have a longer lasting impact for the people and interests that they were supposed to be representing. It is widely believed by supporters of the aforementioned rights-based approach that this method is more effective in addressing the numerous cases of violations that Romani communities face across the region.



ERRC Summer Workshop participants (left to right): (1. row) Kadrije Krasniqi, Sabina Idrizi, Victorina Luca, Gabriela-Ionela Danciu, Dinók Henriett, Orsós Anna, Elisabetta Vivaldi; (2. row) Fedor Kondur, Naomi Taylor, Eke Dóra, Mihai Bica, Kjani Musstafowski, Oana Mihalache, Maryana Borisova, Mimoza Gavrani, Juliana Sullam; (3. row) Timothy Arthur Jones, Iuire Caldarari, Larry Olomoofe, Gheorghe Ispas, Irfán Martez.

Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. The diverse backgrounds of the participants was useful in terms of providing a vast pool of experiences of what Romani people encounter in different regional, as well as national, contexts. This allowed for a wide range of comparison and similarity of experience amongst the participants that was particularly unique to this year's workshop.

The workshop addressed the fundamental distinctions in terms of approaches to Roma rights advocacy and activism by focusing the participants attention on the major differences between "rights-based" and the "needs-based" approaches to advocacy. Throughout the duration of the workshop, the participants had to

The workshop organisers employed the methodology of group-work where the participants were divided into individual groups and handed a number of worksheets and instructed by facilitators to discuss topics amongst themselves. This allowed the topics to be examined in greater detail and provided the participants with the opportunity to acquire a more nuanced understanding of the rights-based approach and how Romani issues fit within this paradigm.

The primary purpose of the workshop was to develop the capacity of a new generation of Romani leaders and human rights activists, and to use domestic, regional and international human rights instruments and mechanisms to advance the rights of Romani communities across the Central and Eastern Europe region, both domestically and internationally.

The main objectives of the Summer Workshop were to enable participants to:

The main objectives of the Summer Workshop were to enable participants to:

- Analyse issues and situations affecting Roma in their respective countries based on internationally accepted human rights values and principles;
- Develop the skills to use domestic mechanisms (such as national legislation) and international human rights instruments (i.e., United Nations treaties,

the European Court of Human Rights, etc.) to protect and promote the rights of Roma;

- Strengthen skills in monitoring and reporting human rights violations and racial discrimination, as well as advocacy skills;



Larry Olomoofe, Human Rights Trainer of the ERRC, lecturing during one of the sessions of the Summer Workshop.

- Examine the phenomena of hate crimes and hate incidents in both the local domestic and European settings;
- Increase their capacity to apply their learning within their organisations and their societies; and
- Explore opportunities for networking and developing partnerships with NGOs and government officials to further advance the cause of Roma rights throughout Europe.

In order to achieve these objectives, the ERRC human rights trainer devised an integrative training manual for use by the participants throughout the duration of the workshop. The manual (alongside the input from facilitators) ensured that the participants were fully engaged in all the exercises since they had to complete the tasks themselves. The workshop also incorporated a number of presentations by external experts such as Ms Madi Sharma (European Commission), Mr Timothy Jones, a British barrister who works extensively with the European Convention on Human Rights, and Mr Michael Simmons, an African-American human rights activist and consultant based in Budapest. The method of combining presentations such as these and the integrative approach allowed for greater focus by the participants on the various topics that were covered during the training and was a significant improvement on previous meetings of the summer workshop.

The training programme was planned in such a way that the activities complemented each other. Therefore, each day's activity was the basis for the following day's activity thereby allowing for an incremental development of material and knowledge by the participants. This was especially so in the case of the sessions devoted to presentational skills, i.e., Effective Debating and the Moot Court.

The workshop ended with an extensive evaluation session where follow-up initiatives were presented and discussed by each participant, and the intention to continue future collaborative work with each other was expressed.

Women's Rights Workshops in Serbia

IN partnership with two local women's organisations – Bibija from Belgrade and Women's Space from Nis – the ERRC organised two training workshops in Serbia in June 2008. Around thirty Romani women activists from all over Serbia, as well as local municipal coordinators for Roma affairs, discussed the practical application of the Concluding Comments regarding Serbia issued last summer by the UN Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

As a follow-up to the trainings, throughout the summer the activists who attended the training will conduct field research on the situation of Romani women in twelve municipalities in Serbia. The results of this research will be used in advocacy activities, slated for the fall of 2008, wherein local activists and the ERRC will lobby the municipal and national authorities for the implementation of the relevant Committee recommendations.

Previously, in 2007, the ERRC and its partners supported the CEDAW review of Serbia by submitting a shadow report on the human rights of Romani women in Serbia.



Romani women activists from southern Serbia enjoying their coffee break at the Nis workshop with the ERRC trainer Tatjana Peric.

Savelina Danova/Roussinova is appointed Acting Executive Director



The ERRC Board of Directors has appointed Savelina Danova/Roussinova to serve as Acting Director pending the appointment of a new Executive. From 2002 to February 2008, Ms Danova was Research and Policy Coordinator at the ERRC. She previously served as Executive Director of the Human Rights Project in Bulgaria.

She has a Masters degree in English Philology from the Sofia University, Bulgaria, and an M.A. in Human Rights from the Central European University in Budapest. Ms Danova has authored or edited numerous reports and publications on Roma rights issues.

Back in Action: Tatjana Peric joins the ERRC team as Senior Research Coordinator



In July 2008, Tatjana Peric (re)joined the ERRC as Senior Research Coordinator. Tatjana is a human rights professional focusing on Roma and other ethnic minorities in southeast Europe. An alumna of the Religion, Human Rights and Religious Freedom Program at Columbia University in New York, she earned her MA in Theory and Practice of Human Rights at the University of Essex, UK. Previously she was an ERRC employee from 1998-2001.

She has worked in association with a number of UN and governmental agencies, as well as both international and grassroots NGOs. Tatjana has also authored or edited over thirty reports and publications on human rights topics internationally.

ERRC invites applications for the post of Executive Director

The ERRC is in search of a new Executive Director. The Executive Director is responsible for providing the strategic and management leadership necessary to enable the ERRC to fulfill its mission of promoting respect for and the protection of the fundamental human rights of Roma across Europe. The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors, and is responsible for the hiring and management of staff.

Applicants should send a letter of interest (up to 500 words) indicating why they are ideally qualified for the position, a full CV, and the names of two referees who may be contacted before interviews are held. Candidates are encouraged to submit their documents in electronic form.

For full job description and other information related to the vacancy, please refer to the [ERRC website](#).