



## EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTRE

1386 Budapest 62, P.O. Box 906/93, Hungary  
Phone: (36-1) 413-2200; Fax: (36-1) 413-2201  
E-mail: [office@errc.org](mailto:office@errc.org)  
<http://errc.org>

24 November 2008

Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek  
Government of the Czech Republic,  
nábřeží Edvarda Beneše 4,  
118 01, Prague 1  
Fax: +420-224-810-231

Mr Ivan Langer, Minister of Interior  
Ministerstvo vnitra České republiky  
Nad Štolou 3  
poštovní schránka 21  
170 34 Praha 7  
Fax: +420 974 833 582

Ms Olga Šebková  
Supreme Public Prosecutor's Office  
Nejvyšší státní zastupitelství  
Jezuitská 4  
660 55 Brno  
Fax: +420 542 512 227

Mr Otakar Motejl  
Ombudsman  
Veřejný ochránce práv  
Údolní 39  
602 00 Brno  
Fax: +420 542 542 772

### **RE: Anti-Romani Riots and Hate Speech in the Czech Republic**

Honourable Sirs,

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is writing to express concerns regarding the recent violent clashes between the police and anti-Romani protesters and the increase of anti-Romani hate speech in the public sphere in the Czech Republic.

The ERRC acknowledges the forceful police action that prevented the rioters from reaching Litvinov's predominantly Romani neighbourhood Janov on 17 November 2008, thus preventing the rioters from starting an intended pogrom against Roma, and we express our gratitude to all who participated in the action, particularly those who were injured in the line of duty. Ensuring the physical security of all persons within the borders of the Czech Republic is of paramount importance to the protection of human rights.

The ERRC is concerned, however, that the weight of the charges brought against the persons arrested in the course of the riot are not commensurate with the gravity of the events. As has been reported by iDNES.cz on 18 November, those arrested in connection with the riot have been charged with

infringing public order and rioting.<sup>1</sup> The weight of these charges do not reflect the racial motive of the rioters or their full intention – to violently assault the Janov Romani community.

The ERRC urges you to engage the full powers of your respective offices to ensure that all those who participated in the riot are prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Significant jail sentences for those promoting or involved in racist violence or illegally possessing weapons will serve to deter those who might try to repeat such attacks. We also request that, in accordance with its obvious intention, the racist march reportedly being planned for 6 December<sup>2</sup> be monitored and immediately disbanded if any laws are violated and that all efforts necessary are undertaken to ensure that the Janov Romani community is protected against further violent assaults.

There is no doubt that Delnicka strana (Workers' Party) played a central role in the events of 17 November and otherwise by promoting anti-Romani hatred. Indeed, the Workers' Party has already renewed its call for attacks on Romani communities. The ERRC requests that your respective offices act forcefully against the Workers' Party up to and including disbanding it as provided for by Czech law.<sup>3</sup> Any renewed attempts by the Workers' Party or its followers to attack Roma must also be addressed by a strong law enforcement response.

As the Czech Republic assumes the Presidency of the European Union, ERRC calls on the Czech government to respond to these recent violent events by placing Roma issues squarely on the EU agenda and leading the call for the development of an EU Framework Strategy on Roma Inclusion. The ERRC would be happy to support the Czech Government in this effort.

Sincerely,

Rob Kushen  
Managing Director

\*\*\*\*\*

The ERRC is an international public interest law organisation which combats anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma through strategic litigation, international advocacy, research and policy development and the empowerment of Romani activists through human rights education.

---

<sup>1</sup> See: [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/policie-obvinila-za-bitvu-o-janov-dvanact-extremistu-p0k-krimi.asp?c=A081118\\_152622\\_krimi\\_klu](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/policie-obvinila-za-bitvu-o-janov-dvanact-extremistu-p0k-krimi.asp?c=A081118_152622_krimi_klu).

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://tn.nova.cz/zpravy/domaci/cesku-hrozi-obcanske-nepokoje.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Article 4 of Act 424/1991 Coll. on associating in political parties and political movements stipulates that "political parties which:

a) violate the constitution and laws or whose objective is to obviate democratic roots of the state; [...]  
d) the programme or activities of which are a threat to morality, public order or rights and freedoms of citizens; cannot be established and cannot conduct activities."