



## EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTRE

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**Honorable Ferenc Gyurcsány**

Prime Minister  
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**Honorable Tibor Draskovics Dr.**

Minister of Justice and Law Enforcement  
Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement  
1055 Budapest  
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**Honorable József Bencze Dr.**

Head of Police  
Police National Headquarters  
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03 March 2009, Budapest

Dear Gentlemen,

The European Roma Rights Centre, a public interest law organization headquartered in Budapest, is writing to express its concern over the recent brutal murder of two Hungarian citizens, Robert and Robika Csorba, of Tatarszentgyörgy.

Media reports of the incident suggest that officials initially attributed the killings to an accident, a view that was quickly discredited by the evidence that the Csorbas' house was intentionally set ablaze and that the two victims were shot. Given the Roma origin of the victims and the climate of anti-Roma sentiment in Hungary, we urge that these crimes should be assumed to be hate crimes and investigated as such. The purpose of such a designation and prosecution under Article 174 B of the Hungarian Criminal Code (as well as other relevant articles dealing with ordinary crimes) is to express societal revulsion of hate crimes and hopefully to serve as a deterrent to future hate crimes through the application of severe penalties.

Unfortunately, the record of law enforcement with regard to investigating and prosecuting crimes committed against people of Roma origin is generally poor. Moreover, there appears to be a reluctance to use Article 174 B, a reluctance that was

recently noted in the report by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (“ECRI”) published on February 24, 2009. We urge the Hungarian Government to address this deficiency in the implementation of existing hate crimes law. We urge the Hungarian police to develop and implement a systematic training program to capacitate police officers, at all levels to identify and manage the investigation of possible hate crimes. In addition, we echo ECRI’s recommendation that Hungarian law be amended to add ethnic or racial animus as an aggravating factor to ordinary crimes against person or property. Like ECRI, we also call on the Hungarian Government to ensure careful monitoring of hate crimes and hate speech.

The result of these deficiencies in the approach of Hungarian state actors and law enforcement to crimes of violence against persons of Roma origin is to create a culture of impunity that encourages more criminal activity. Successful prosecution of the perpetrators of the murders in Tatarszentgyörgy, together with the other steps outlined above, will help send a message that such actions will not be tolerated.

We welcome any information that your office can provide on the status of the investigation of this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Robert Kushen', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Robert Kushen  
Managing Director  
European Roma Rights Centre