



**24 April 2009**

Mr. Jan Fischer, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic,  
Mr. Václav Klaus, President of the Czech Republic  
Mr. Vladimír Špidla, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

**RE: Ministry for Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities and the Anti-Discrimination Law**

Honourable Sirs,

In response to reports that the Ministry of Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities may be dissolved,<sup>1</sup> the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is writing to encourage the new government of the Czech Republic to keep this Ministry intact. Being aware of the current situation in the field of human rights in the Czech Republic, especially recently increased levels of anti-Romani violence, neo-Nazi marches in Romani communities and racially motivated attacks, the importance of the Ministry cannot be doubted.

The ERRC acknowledges the immediate reaction of the police and political representatives to ensure any anti-Romani violence is suppressed and punished. We are concerned, however, that the discrimination Roma face is not only manifest in physical violence, but unfortunately influences all spheres of their lives demanding a more complex approach from the side of authorities.

Therefore we would like to urge the government to immediately adopt the comprehensive anti-discrimination law transposing EU Council Directive 2000/43/EC, which is already prepared. The Czech Republic is the only EU Member State which has yet to transpose this Directive as it was obliged to do by 1 January 2004.

We echo the concerns already expressed by the Czech Ombudsman Otakar Motejl,<sup>2</sup> who said that if the law is not passed before the early elections, the whole legal norm will have to be redesigned from the beginning. The Ministry for Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities should be one of the chief advocates for, and implementor of, the law. Abolishing the Ministry would send the wrong signal to the country and the EU, and could be interpreted to mean that, in times of economic crisis, human rights are expendable.

With the Czech Republic's Presidency of the European Union, it is an appropriate time to lead by positive example in promoting and protecting human rights. The ERRC urges that the government to make all efforts to pass the anti-discrimination law before the early elections to prevent further delays,

<sup>1</sup> See a report by the Czech Press Agency. 5 April 2009.

[http://www.ctk.cz/sluzby/slovni\\_zpravodajstvi/vseobecne/index\\_view.php?id=369575](http://www.ctk.cz/sluzby/slovni_zpravodajstvi/vseobecne/index_view.php?id=369575).

<sup>2</sup> E.g. in: "Zrušit post ministra pro lidská práca by byla chyba, varují odborníci", iDnes.cz. Available at: [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/zrusit-kocabovo-ministerstvo-by-byla-chyba-varuji-odbornici-p5x-domaci.asp?c=A090411\\_112558\\_domaci\\_jw](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/zrusit-kocabovo-ministerstvo-by-byla-chyba-varuji-odbornici-p5x-domaci.asp?c=A090411_112558_domaci_jw)

to retain the Ministry of Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities, and to take all necessary steps to prosecute those responsible for anti-Romani violence.

Sincerely,



Rob Kushen  
Managing Director

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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.

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