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Hon. Benjamin L. Cardin, Chairman
Hon. Alcee L. Hastings, Co-Chairman
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HELSINKI COMMISSIONERS CONDEMN VIOLENCE AGAINST ROMA

WASHINGTON—Bipartisan Members of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission) today voiced strong concerns for growing violence against the Roma – Europe’s largest ethnic minority group.

At a briefing examining the growing prejudice against Roma in Europe and subsequent acts of violence against Roma across Europe, Co-Chairman Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL) expressed concern for the treatment of Roma, who have been victimized in their own homes – from the killing of elderly to young children burned by fire bombs.

“Governments must act with a sense of urgency in combating the pernicious racism that has contributed to the social, economic, and political marginalization of Roma, resulting in the gruesome and deadly attacks on Roma in recent months,” Co-Chairman Hastings said. “But beyond the violence, the continual dislocation of Roma most recently from their historic home in Sulukule, outside Istanbul, Turkey, shows a disregard for minorities and further sends a signal of exclusion. I call on all European countries to reverse this troubling trend.”

Chairman Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD) added: “In the wake of the recent European Parliamentary elections, we are seeing growth of political parties who espouse anti-immigration, anti-minority, and anti-Semitic policies. I urge governments across Europe to respect Roma human rights. They should fully integrate the continent’s largest ethnic minority group, do away with segregated schooling, and when crimes are committed, thoroughly investigate and hold criminals accountable for their acts of hate.”

Helsinki Commissioner Congressman Joseph R. Pitts (R-PA) added: “Some people have compared the firebombing and other attacks on Roma in the Czech Republic and Hungary to the sniper attacks that took place in the area a few years ago. For Roma, who are the singular targets in this case, we can only imagine the fear that grips those communities. I urge the Czech and Hungarian Governments to do everything possible to bring the perpetrators of those attacks to justice and to ensure that they are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”