

Manuel Valls, Minister of the Interior
Samia Ghali, Senator-Mayor, 15th and 16th arrondissements, Marseille
Jacques Dallest, Prosecutor
Pierre-Marie Bourniquel, Director of Public Safety, Marseille

1 October 2012

Re: Violence against Roma in Marseille

The European Roma Rights Centre, an international human rights law organisation combating anti-Roma racism and discrimination in Europe, is writing to express deep concern about the recent violence against Romani individuals by inhabitants of Marseille on Thursday 27 September. We are calling on authorities to ensure that all citizens can exercise their rights to liberty, security of the person and private and family life, and request that they act immediately to provide safe and secure accommodation for the Romani community who are at immediate risk.

According to media reports, a group of 35 Roma, including 15 children, was forced to leave the piece of land where they were living by local residents on 27 September. Forty people arrived at the land, part of the area of “Les Créneaux” in the northern district of Marseille around 7:00 pm. They forced the Roma to leave the site where they were living with eight caravans and 13 other vehicles.¹

The police witnessed what happened but failed to intervene, claiming that no physical violence or offence was noted.² They did witness verbal insults against the Roma and separated the groups. The Roma fled, leaving some of their belongings behind. The local inhabitants set these belongings on fire, after the police had left the scene. No firefighters were called. The whereabouts of the Roma individuals is now unknown.

The Roma had been living there for four days, after they were evicted from their previous housing on the boulevard Plombière (Marseille).³ On Monday, the police came to the piece of land at Les créneaux to acknowledge their presence, but did not ask them to leave.⁴

The ERRC has been monitoring the systematic evictions of Roma in France and the violent attacks they have faced since 2010. The ERRC highlighted evictions, violence and police abuse in Marseille with a previous letter of concern to authorities in August 2011.⁵ It is very

¹ « Marseille, des riverains excédés chassent des Roms », *Le Point*, 27 September 2012
http://www.lepoint.fr/societe/des-roms-chasses-par-des-riverains-a-marseille-28-09-2012-1511071_23.php.

² *ibid.*

³ ERRC interview with Marseille activist, 28 September 2012.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ ERRC, No Place for Roma: French and Italian Authorities Aggressively Evict Roma, press release, available at: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/france-evictions-of-informal-romani-camps-in-marseille-english-and-french-11-august-2011.pdf>.

worrying that the underlying issues have not been dealt with, and that this violent attack took place with apparent impunity.

The situation described raises serious concerns that French authorities are failing to respect a number of obligations under international law, including the right to liberty and security, and the right to adequate housing and protection from forced eviction.

French authorities are bound by Articles 8 (respect for private and family life and home), and 14 (freedom from discrimination), and Article 1 of the First Protocol (right to property) of the European Convention on Human Rights; Articles 16 (right of the family to appropriate social, legal and economic protection), 30 (protection against poverty and social exclusion) and 31 (right to housing) of the Revised European Social Charter; Articles 5b (right to security of person and protection by the State against violence or bodily harm) and 6 (right to seek adequate reparation or satisfaction for any damage suffered as a result of discrimination) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Article 11 (right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and Articles 2 (freedom from discrimination of any kind), 16 (protection against arbitrary or unlawful interference with individual privacy and family) 27 (right to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development) and 37 (freedom from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The ERRC requests that Marseille authorities apply the following recommendations in order to comply with international legal obligations:

- Provide assistance to the Romani individuals who were evicted and forced to move on;
- Ensure identification, effective investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators of violent attacks against Roma and their property;
- End the practice of evictions and ensure adequate housing to the Romani individuals and families;
- Ensure that no Romani individual is made homeless in the process of eviction;
- Develop sustainable, adequate integrated housing solutions for all Roma and implement complex employment, education and health projects to promote real inclusion of Roma in Marseille.

We request to be informed of any actions undertaken by your offices,

Sincerely,

Dezideriu Gergely,
Executive Director

TO

Manuel Valls, Minister of the Interior

Samia Ghali, Senator-Mayor, 15th and 16th arrondissements, Marseille

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CC

European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muiznieks

OSCE/ODIHR Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues, Andrzej Mirga

European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding

European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, László Andor

Head of the Roma Taskforce and European Commission Director-General for Justice,

Françoise Le Bail

President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek

MEP, Livia Járóka

MEP, Kinga Göncz

MEP, Renate Weber

OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Knut Vollebaek