

Ms. Annamaria Cancellieri, Minister of the Interior
Mr. Vincenzo D'Antuono, Prefect, Pescara
Mr. Nicola Trifuoggi, Prosecutor, Pescara
Mr. Luigi Albore Mascia, Mayor, Pescara
Mr. Guerino Testa, President, Pescara Province
Mr. Carlo Maggitti, Chief of Local Police, Pescara

18 May 2012

Re: Violence against Roma in Pescara

The European Roma Rights Centre, an international human rights organisation defending the rights of Roma, is writing to ask Italian authorities to protect Romani citizens in Pescara who are being targeted with threats of vigilante violence.

Massimo Ciarelli, an Italian Romani man living in Pescara, is suspected of having killed Domenico Rigante, a 24-year-old supporter of the Pescara football team on 1 May 2012.¹ According to reports from the community, there had previously been fights between the two men.² Since then, the Romani community in the city has been targeted with violence and anti-Roma statements.

On the night of the murder an unknown perpetrator threw two petrol bombs at Mr Ciarelli's home, where he lives with his family.³ On 3 May, an unknown perpetrator threw stones at the same house. On 5 May, Mr Ciarelli turned himself into the police. On the same day the funeral of Mr Rigante was held, and this became a focal point for anti-Roma sentiment. Many of those who attended the funeral shouted death threats and other verbal attacks against Roma, including calls to expel Roma from Pescara.⁴ An online petition calling for the "Expulsion of Gypsies from Pescara" was started.⁵

On 6 May a demonstration against Roma, attended by thousands of people chanting slogans against Roma under a banner saying "Hunt Roma for Five Days", took place in the city. Some of the demonstrators tried to go to Rancitelli, a district in Pescara where many Roma live, but were

¹Ultrà ucciso, arrestato il ricercato. Minacce ai rom: "vi cacteremo", 5 May 2012, available at http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2012/05/05/news/funerali_tifoso_ucciso_pescara_tensione-34507988/.

²ERRC telephone interview with local community member: 12 May 2012.

³"Dopo le molotov lanciati sassi contro la casa degli zingari", 4 May 2012, available at: http://www.iltempo.it/abruzzo/2012/05/04/1338236-dopo_molotov_lanciati_sassi_contro_casa_degli_zingari.shtml?refresh_ce.

⁴"Ultrà ucciso, arrestato il ricercato. Minacce ai rom: "vi cacteremo", 5 May 2012, available at: http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2012/05/05/news/funerali_tifoso_ucciso_pescara_tensione-34507988/

⁵Online petition available at: www.petizionionline.it/petizione/espulsione-degli-zingari-da-pescara/6929.

stopped by police.⁶ Pescara's mayor, Mr Luigi Arborio Mascia met with protesters;⁷ he did not denounce the protest or ask the protestors to take down the anti-Roma banner. Since that time, there have been ongoing threats of violence and intimidation, and local Romani individuals have been scared to leave their homes or visit local shops.⁸ Some Romani children have been kept home from school, and in one case a Romani schoolgirl became involved in a fight after being called a 'thug, like all the Gypsies'.⁹

During a short meeting with local authorities, members of the Romani community were asked to "isolate the criminals". In the meantime, law enforcement officers have informally warned Roma not to leave their homes because of the threat of violence¹⁰ and Paolo Passamonti, the Officer in charge of the Pescara Police Force, stated publicly that many Roma have "disappeared, many are locked in the house, others are leaving the city."¹¹ Police and other authorities have not taken sufficient measures to ensure that Romani individuals feel safe.

The climate of hatred against Roma is extremely damaging for the entire community. Vigilante groups are threatening and scapegoating an entire Romani community for a crime committed by an individual. According to international law, Italy is obliged to protect the life, personal integrity and private life all of its citizens. As a party to the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Italy is bound to ensure that all citizens can exercise their rights to liberty, security of the person and private and family life.

The ERRC therefore calls on you, within the capacity of your respective offices, to:

- Deploy an adequate number of police officers and take all necessary steps to adequately protect Romani individuals from violence in Pescara as a matter of urgency;
- Start a dialogue with Roma, especially Romani activists and NGOs present in Pescara, and involve them in any policies targeting Roma and social cohesion;
- Fully investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of all acts of violence and intimidation against Roma in Pescara; and
- Denounce every instance of anti-Roma violence and other kinds of hate crimes.

We respectfully ask to be informed of any and all actions undertaken by your offices in a timely manner,

Sincerely,

Dezideriu Gergely
Executive Director

⁶ "Bloccato corteo ultrà diretto verso il quartiere rom", 6 May 2012, available at: <http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2012/05/06/news/pescara-34541675/>.

⁷ "Pescara, tensione a manifestazione ultrà", 6 May 2012, available at: <http://video.repubblica.it/cronaca/pescara-tensione-a-manifestazione-ultra/94476/92858>.

⁸ Radio interview with Carmine Di Rocco, 14 May 2012, available at: <http://www-2.radioradicale.it/scheda/352428/presentazione-della-fondazione-romani-alla-federazione-nazionale-della-stampa-italiana-a-roma-interviste-a>.

⁹ "Rom cacciata dai compagni di scuola, La professoressa: «Una ragazza intelligente. Per fortuna è tornata»", 15 May 2012, available at: http://www.iltempo.it/abruzzo/2012/05/15/1340422-cacciata_compagni_scuola.shtml.

¹⁰ ERRC telephone interview with local community member, 12 May 2012.

¹¹ "Bloccato corteo ultrà diretto verso il quartiere rom", 6 May 2012, available at: <http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2012/05/06/news/pescara-34541675/>.