

17 June 2010

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Honourable Minister Dačić and Mr Radojković:

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)<sup>1</sup> and the Minority Rights Centre (MRC)<sup>2</sup> are writing to express deep concern about the anti-Roma violence in Jabuka, Pančevo municipality, and to urge full investigation and prosecution of all responsible perpetrators.

According to the ERRC and MRC investigation and national media reports, the violent protests have involved 300-500 local non-Romani residents, shouting violent racist threats like “Kill Gypsies” and “Gypsies must not exist”. Almost every evening since 10 June 2010 local residents have protested and attacked the Romani community with bricks and, at some times, arson. A 5-year-old Romani girl was treated in hospital for injuries sustained during the attacks, a nine-month-old baby was hurt by broken glass from a window and at least one house was razed, leaving 7 Roma without shelter. Some Roma have left the town, while the remaining Romani residents are unable to attend school, go to work or venture out for necessary food and medicines for fear of attack.

The ERRC and MRC welcome the fact that Pančevo municipal officials have condemned the attacks and provided meals to the Romani residents stranded in their homes. The ERRC and MRC also note that while not present on 10 June when the most violent attacks took place, police have since guarded the Romani houses every night. Furthermore, the ERRC and MRC welcome reports that the Ministry of Interior arrested 5 protesters suspected of instigating national, racial and religious hatred and intolerance. However the police presence was reportedly passive, they were not preventing or responding to continued acts of intimidation and violence.

According to both the international and domestic legal frameworks, Serbia is obliged to protect the life and personal integrity all of its citizens: Article 24 of the Serbian Constitution stipulates that “human life is inviolable;” Article 25 guarantees the inviolability of physical and mental integrity of the person; and Article 49 prohibits inciting racial, ethnic and religious hatred. The criminal code and domestic law carry serious penalties for such actions. As a party to the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Serbia is bound to ensure that all citizens can exercise their right to liberty and security of the person.

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<sup>1</sup> The ERRC is a public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma through strategic litigation, research and policy development, advocacy and human rights education. For more information see: [www.errc.org](http://www.errc.org).

<sup>2</sup> The MRC is a public interest law organisation devoted to the improvement of the status of Roma in Serbia. For more information see: [http://www.mrc.org.rs/index\\_e.php](http://www.mrc.org.rs/index_e.php).

The ERRC and MRC urge your offices to undertake further measures to reduce the tension and end violence in Jabuka. The presence of police patrols must be increased in order to adequately ensure the safety of the residents at all times and to prevent any further attacks. It is imperative that a thorough investigation into the violent protests be conducted to identify and prosecute all perpetrators of violence, destruction of property or incitement to hatred. The ERRC and MRC call on you to ensure:

- That ongoing investigations into this incident are independent, impartial and thorough;
- That the possible racial motivation of the crime is investigated fully;
- That all those responsible are brought to justice in fair proceedings;
- That the scope, methods and findings of the investigation are made publicly available; and
- That all victims receive an adequate remedy for their suffering, including compensation and re-housing.

We respectfully request to be informed of any and all actions undertaken by your respective offices in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Robert Kushen  
ERRC Managing Director

Andrea Čolak  
MRC Executive Director