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20 June 2012

TO:

Mr Viktor Pshonka, General Prosecutor
Mr Vitaliy Zakharchenko, Minister of Internal Affairs
Mr. Sapko, Konstantin, Chief of Kiev Police

CC:

Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, Director, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

RE: Violence against Roma in Kiev

The European Roma Rights Centre¹ is writing to express concern about the recent attack on a Romani settlement in the city of Kiev.

According to media reports, on 31 May 2012 a Romani settlement was burned to the ground by unknown perpetrators in Kiev.² The settlement, which was home to about 70 people, was located on Bereznyakovska Street near railroad tracks that connect the cities of Kiev and Kharkiv. Residents of the settlement reported that during the attack they were ordered by their assailants to “disappear from Kiev.” The perpetrators also threatened to shoot the residents. As a result, many Romani individuals lost valuable personal documents, including passports, and have had to move in with friends and relatives.

Since the attack, sources quoted in the media have claimed that law enforcement officers were ordered to “sweep” the settlement, ie. get rid of it.³ A spokesperson for the Kiev police stated that “according to preliminary information police were not involved” in the 31 May incident, but said that law enforcement is continuing to investigate reports about the involvement of police officers in the attack.⁴

This incident was a violent assault upon the safety, security and dignity of Roma in Ukraine. According to international law to which Ukraine is a party, and which constitutes a part of national law⁵, Ukraine is obliged to protect the life and personal integrity, and provide safety and security, to all of its citizens.⁶

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

- Ensure that the investigation in this case is thorough, effective and transparent;

¹ The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is an international public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma.

² Global Voices Online, *Ukraine, a Roma Camp Burned Down in Kyiv*, 6 June 2012, available at <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/06/06/ukraine-a-roma-camp-burned-down-in-kyiv/>.

³ «Євро-2012»: ромам не місце у Києві?, 6 June, available at: <http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,16003945,00.html>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Constitution of Ukraine, Article 9.

⁶ Articles 2,8 of the European Convention of Human Rights; Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

- Ensure full prosecution of any and all persons found to be responsible for the attack;
- Provide full assistance to the affected Romani families, including helping them restore personal documents and helping them access alternative accommodation; and
- Publicly denounce every instance of anti-Roma violence, and provide law-enforcement with the relevant trainings on how to deal with the instances involving attacks on national minorities.

We respectfully ask to be informed about the status and results of the investigation in this case as it proceeds.

Sincerely,

Dezideriu Gergely,
Executive Director