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Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis
General Secretariat of the Prime Minister's Mansion
Maximos Herodes Atticus 19 10674 Athens
primeminister@primeminister.gr

CC:

Mr. Takis Theodorikakos
Minister of Citizen Protection
4 P. Kanellopoulou St., GR-101 77, Athens
kepik@mopocp.gov.gr

Brussels, 27 October 2021

Police killing of an 18-year-old Romani man on Saturday 23rd October in Perama

Dear Prime Minister Mitsotakis,

The European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI) and the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) are writing to you concerning the arrest of seven Athenian police officers charged in relation to the fatal shooting of an 18-year-old Romani man early on the morning of Saturday 23rd October in Perama.

The ARDI exists to promote racial equality, counter racism, and educate about non-discrimination in the work of the European Parliament. The ERRC is a Roma-led international public interest law organisation which monitors and protects the human rights of Roma in Europe and provides legal defence in cases of human rights violations.

According to media reporting and monitoring provided by Greek human rights activists to the ERRC, three young Roma (two minors, aged 15 and 16, and the deceased, aged 18) from the region of Aspropyrgos in Attica were involved in a police chase while driving a stolen vehicle. The vehicle was likely driven by a minor who was attempting to escape the police officers who were riding motorbikes. While trying to escape (in reverse gear) the vehicle hit the police motorcycles, who despite being ordered to break off the chase had continued to pursue the stolen vehicle. In the course of the altercation, seven police officers allegedly opened fire on the vehicle. Between 30 and 40 shots are clearly audible in video of the car chase taken from a distance by a bystander. The gunfire killed the 18-year-old and seriously injured one of the minors. All three of the young Roma were unarmed. A [recording of the radio conversation](#) between

the police operational centre and the attending officers shows that the officers were aware that the occupants of the vehicle were three Roma.

The [police press release](#) after the incident mentioned injuries to the seven police officers, that the deceased was 20 and had a criminal record, and that the minor who was shot only had light injuries. These were all later proven to be false – no police officers were injured, the victim was 18 and without a record, and the 16-year-old boy was seriously injured.

The ERRC and ARDI are concerned that potential racial bias on the part of the perpetrators in the commission of this crime will not be considered in the charges brought against them. We urge the competent authorities to investigate the possibility of racial motive, and that the severity of the response relative to the threat (30 – 40 shots at three unarmed boys) be treated as an indicator of possible racial bias.

Already the news coverage of this incident has triggered a wave of anti-Roma sentiment in Greece, particularly on social media. The lawyer representing the accused officers has even publicly [referred](#) to Roma as “a social menace”. A strong and swift response from the competent authorities to this crime would send a message that hate speech is unacceptable, demonstrate the primacy of the rule of law in Greece, and reassure Romani communities that Greek authorities do not permit impunity within law enforcement when they commit crimes against ethnic minorities.

Honourable Prime Minister, we call on you to make a public statement against antigypsyism and call for a fair and objective investigation into the case, including asking all state officials and the media to refrain from characterising the victims and further stigmatising Romani people. The focus should remain on the adequacy of the police response or lack thereof leading to the death of this young Romani man.

We look forward to your response by email to jonathan.lee@errc.org or by post to the European Roma Rights Centre, Avenue de Cortenbergh 71, 4th floor, Brussels 1000, Belgium.

Yours sincerely,

Dorđe Jovanović, President, ERRC

Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup:

MEP Romeo Franz, Co-President, Greens/EFA

MEP Cornelia Ernst, Co-President, the Left

MEP Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, Co-President, Greens/EFA

MEP Peter Pollák, Vice-President, EPP

MEP Milan Brglez, Member, S&D
MEP Dietmar Köster, Member, S&D
MEP Salima Yenbou, Member, Greens/EFA
MEP Michael Bloss, Member, Greens/EFA
MEP Miguel Urbán Crespo, Member, the Left
MEP Özlem Demirel, Member, the Left
MEP Sira Rego, Member, the Left
MEP Manu Pineda, Member, the Left
MEP Anna Júlia Donáth, Member, Renew
MEP Konstantinos Arvanitis, the Left