

ROMA RIGHTS REVIEW

Human Rights. Analysis. Activism. | The Definitive Watchdog on Antigypsyism

Summer 2026



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Roma Rights in a 'State of Acute Crisis'
Institutional Racism in European Law Enforcement
Antigypsyism & the European Far-Right
How States Fail Romani Women & Children
Europe's Silent Forced Evictions Scandal



**ROMA
RIGHTS
NETWORK**

PUBLISHED BY THE ROMA RIGHTS NETWORK

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ABOUT THE ROMA RIGHTS NETWORK

The Roma Rights Network is a strategic coalition of **34** member organisations from **18** countries across Europe. Convened and coordinated by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), the Network brings together leading grassroots and national advocacy groups and individual activists dedicated to combating antigypsyism, ending discrimination, and securing the fundamental rights of Romani people.

The Network operates through collaborative litigation, policy advocacy, strategic research, and public mobilization. Its members work at the intersection of legal defence, community organising, and political engagement to challenge systemic racism and promote the full inclusion of Roma as equal citizens.

Albania:	Roma Women's Rights Center	N. Macedonia:	Macedonian Young Lawyers Association;
Austria:	Romano Centro		Roma Resource Center Skopje;
Belgium:	Romnja Feminist Library		Ednakva Pravda;
Bulgaria:	NGO Organisation Drom;		Women's Rights Initiative
	Equal Opportunities Initiative Association	Portugal:	SOS Racismo
Czech Republic:	Forum for Human Rights	Romania:	Asociatia Juristilor Romi
	Romea		ROMAJUST
Finland:	The Finnish Roma Association	Serbia:	Vojvodjanski Romski Centar;
France:	La voix des Rroms		Group for Children and Youth
Germany:	Rom e.V. ;		Indigo
	RomaniPhen	Slovakia:	eduRoma
Greece:	Greek Helsinki Monitor	Spain:	Fundación Secretariado Gitano;
Hungary:	TASZ (Hungarian Civil Liberties Union);		Asociación de Juristas
	AMRITA		Gitanos
Ireland:	Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre	Sweden:	Civil Rights Defenders;
			Trajosko Drom
Italy:	Associazione 21 Luglio;	Turkey:	Romani Godi
	NAGA	Ukraine:	ICO Roma Women Fund
			Chiricli;
			VESTED

Coordinator: European Roma Rights Centre

ABOUT THE ROMA RIGHTS REVIEW

The Roma Rights Review is the authoritative source on the state of Roma rights in Europe. It is a bi-annual publication that combines consolidated data with direct expert commentary from activists and human rights experts working to combat antigypsyism across the continent.

This publication marks the relaunch of a historic legacy, as the successor to the Roma Rights Journal, which stood as the first and oldest academic human rights journal dedicated to Roma in Europe from 1996 until 2017. Reimagined for the current political climate, the Review is designed to be a usable and actionable tool for anyone seeking to learn about and improve the state of Roma Rights in Europe in the present situation.

Compiled primarily through the direct input of the Roma Rights Network's member organisations, the Review moves beyond abstract analysis to provide consolidated data, legal victories, documented cases of abuse, and strategic insights from those on the ground. In an era where human rights watchdogs are targeted and defunded, and narratives are increasingly distorted by rising fascism, this publication serves as a critical network-driven source of truth. It provides evidence, amplifies local struggles on an international stage, and offers a unified counter-narrative to the erosion of democracy and the normalisation of discrimination.

Through this publication, the Roma Rights Network reaffirms its commitment to the fundamental role of activists as watchdogs for the state of rights and democracy, ensuring that vital documentation continues even as the political landscape grows darker.

Methodology & limitations

This report relies on data, case studies, and legal documents provided by the member organisations and activists of the Roma Rights Network, supplemented by media reports, court rulings, and official government statements available up to June 2026.

The incidents documented herein represent only those cases brought to the attention of our members or discovered through targeted monitoring. Given the pervasive climate of fear, the lack of trust in state authorities, and the systematic underfunding of civil society watchdogs, it is undeniable that the true scale of anti-Roma violations significantly exceeds the figures presented. Many attacks go unreported, many victims remain unnamed, and countless injustices occur in the shadows of communities excluded from public view.

The absence of a specific country or region from certain sections of this report does not indicate an absence of human rights abuses. Rather, it reflects the limitations of current documentation capacity and the uneven distribution of resources among partners. We urge readers to understand these figures as a minimum baseline, with the understanding that the reality on the ground is most certainly far more severe.

ROMA RIGHTS IN A 'STATE OF ACUTE CRISIS'

On 8 June 2026, the Roma Rights Network issued a stark warning that the human rights situation of the Romani people has entered 'a state of acute crisis.' In a joint declaration, the coalition, comprised of 33 member organisations from 18 countries, warned of systemic attacks on Europe's largest ethnic minority amidst rising fascism, securitization, and the dismantling of the rules-based order.¹

The statement followed the Roma Rights Network's annual meeting in Paris, where members assessed the threat and collective responses to a rapidly deteriorating landscape defined by the rise of far-right governance, the erosion of democracy, and the systematic removal of protections for racialised minorities.

The activist coalition asserted that the persecution of Roma is no longer a matter of policy failure or neglect, but a deliberate political project which has caused the securitization of Romani communities to accelerate in a short period of time. Anti-Roma political rallies and vigilante groups are tolerated in [Hungary](#). Mass ethnic profiling and militarized police raids take place on a weekly basis in [Greece](#). Anti-Roma security laws criminalizing motherhood have been passed in [Italy](#). Anti-Roma legislation in [Slovenia](#) allows mass surveillance and police raids on whole communities.

The declaration follows in full on the next page.

WE ARE WITNESSING A DELIBERATE
DISMANTLING OF THE PROTECTIONS THAT ONCE SHIELDED THE
MOST VULNERABLE...THE SECURITIZATION OF OUR COMMUNITIES
AND THE DEFUNDING OF OUR DEFENDERS ARE STRATEGIC
CHOICES, NOT ACCIDENTAL POLICY ERRORS, MADE BY
GOVERNMENTS THAT HAVE EMBRACED EXCLUSION.

ĐORĐE JOVANOVIĆ

EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTRE



1. ERRC Press Release, Roma Rights in State of Crisis, Declare 33 Human Rights Organisations. 8 June 2026. Available [here](#).

Across the continent, Romani people are increasingly framed not as citizens with rights, but as internal security threats. This is compounded by a coordinated effort to delegitimize civil society and strategically defund anti-racist movements, as governments prioritize military spending over social welfare.

Simultaneously, the shift from a framework of state obligations to one that falsely ties rights to "responsibilities" has undermined the very foundation of human rights. Rights and responsibilities are not conditional on one another; every person possesses inherent rights regardless of their ability to 'integrate' or fulfil state-defined duties, likewise every citizen bears responsibilities independent of their rights. By conflating the two, political actors have used the language of responsibility to justify stripping away specific legal mandates and dedicated funding for Roma. Coupled with the political "mainstreaming" of rights strategies – which dilutes targeted protections into generic social goals – this approach has rendered Roma invisible in policy. With the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034 threatening to eliminate ring-fenced support for Roma equality, the EU risks abandoning its most vulnerable citizens to the discretion of nationalist governments.

**WE WILL NOT ACCEPT A EUROPE
WHERE CITIZENSHIP IS CONDITIONAL ON ETHNICITY. OUR FIGHT IS
FOR THE UNIVERSALITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS, AND WE WILL
CONTINUE TO HOLD THESE GOVERNMENTS TO ACCOUNT,
REGARDLESS OF THE POLITICAL COST.**

The Roma Rights Network calls on EU institutions, Member States, and international donors to:

- **End Securitization:** Repeal legislation that criminalizes Romani communities and halt the deployment of military-grade tactics against civilian populations.
- **Protect Civil Society:** Ensure sustainable funding for anti-racist activists and safeguard the operational space for human rights defenders.
- **Enforce Accountability:** Investigate and prosecute hate crimes and state-sponsored discrimination, including the actions of hate groups operating with impunity.
- **Preserve Specificity:** Maintain explicit Roma equality objectives and ring-fenced funding in the post-2030 EU budget, rejecting the dilution of rights into generic "social inclusion" targets.

The attack on Roma rights is a precursor to the erosion of rights for all. The Roma Rights Network stands united in its commitment to defend the universality of human rights and the rule of law.



A STARK WARNING FOR OUR TIMES

This publication is a sign of the times. It includes grim and graphic detail of the violence inflicted upon, and the hate directed against, Europe's largest ethnic minority. But it is also testament to the power of solidarity and resistance in combating racism by state and non-state actors.

The report covers responses to police violence against Roma, and recent strategic litigation successes. These victories in national and European courts not only deliver some kind of redress to the victims, but by way of jurisprudence add further heft to the assertions of the activists and civil society organisations of the Roma Rights Network, that there is nothing new about police violence against Roma and the collusion and complicity of state institutions. But what is relatively novel, and increasingly evident after decades of advocacy and litigation, is the growing recognition by international bodies that when it comes to policing Roma, the scale of abuse goes well beyond a few 'bad apple' deviants in uniform, and a growing acknowledgment that systemic racism demands systemic responses.

What we demand is nothing more, nothing less than human-rights compliant policing of Romani communities in Europe: an end to racial profiling and a clear zero-tolerance policy for racist abuse by law enforcement; an end to excessive force, inhumane treatment, and collective punishment of Romani communities by law enforcement; and an end to impunity: we demand effective independent investigations and just remedy for victims of police abuse, with guarantees that victims and witnesses are protected from retaliation by police officers.

As the Roma Rights Review shows, there was no let-up over the past 18 months in the decades-long battle against forced evictions. Based on the evidence housing remains, and for the foreseeable future is likely to remain, the least successful policy area in the EU framework for Roma inclusion.

On this issue, the Council of the European Union was unambiguous: member states' failures to eradicate housing segregation and to improve infrastructure in terms of essential services have perpetuated *"the vicious circle of intergenerational poverty and violations of human rights. This limits life expectancy and impedes social cohesion."* As is evident from the report, this is symptomatic of the wider issue of environmental racism that has exiled and displaced entire communities of impoverished Roma to subsist in close proximity to landfills or toxic sites in spatially segregated so-called 'settlements'.²

The State of Hate section of the report provides an account of anti-Roma racism by state and non-state actors within the wider context of the rise of the far right. One of the most worrying developments has been the normalisation of far-right extremism, which continued apace across Europe. As we have noted, the resurgence of anti-democratic forces, the cross-border networking of nationalist and authoritarian political parties, and the exchange of 'best practices' between political and militant extremists, has blurred the lines between nominally constitutional parties, street movements, and criminal paramilitary extremists.

Between the blurred lines is where fascism creeps in, presaging a steady erosion of civility, the shrinking of common ground, punctuated by the constant search for scapegoats and enemies. The lived experience of Europeans past and present, is that this creep can quickly accelerate into a full-blown authoritarian surge.

Across Europe in 2025-26, the ever-growing far-right mobilisation against 'ethnic replacement', multiculturalism and minorities, meant that Roma continued to be singled out for collective blame and punishment by nativist politicians and neo-fascist mobsters. Beyond the hard core of haters, anti-Roma hate speech continued to contaminate the public sphere in a manner designed to inhibit any sense of solidarity or empathy from the wider society.



2. Council of the European Union. Conclusions on measures to ensure equal access to adequate and desegregated housing for Roma. 22 September 2033. Available [here](#).

Roma Rights Network member, **Fundación Secretariado Gitano**, has called for effective enforcement of the EU's Digital Services Act to prevent and punish the spread of anti-Roma hate speech on social media platforms, spaces where anti-Roma sentiment is, in their words, "all too often amplified and normalised." They have also urged the adoption of a State Pact against hate speech in Spain to coordinate action between administrations, media, digital platforms, and civil society. Without such enforcement, the regulatory architecture intended to curb online hate remains a dead letter while the human toll mounts.

In an age of monetised online hate, the gap between the word and the deed has narrowed, viral incitement and calls for action against racialised communities are often swiftly followed by mob violence, with Roma often in the firing line.

One particularly sinister aspect of racist mob violence against Roma has been the premeditated and public nature of many of the incidents.

Recent events in the EU and the UK mark a new and dangerous escalation in extreme-right street violence, including pogrom-like attacks on individuals and families, the fire-bombing of homes, businesses and places of worship. With the return of racist street terror and ethnic expulsions, the message right here, right now, is simple: it's not enough to be non-racist, anti-racism must be the starting point; and those who choose to remain silent stand accused of complicity. The contents of this report remind us that days like these call for active resistance to fascism and racism.



INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN EUROPEAN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Police review 2025 — 2026

Monitoring, advocacy and litigation concerning police violence against Roma, by Roma Rights Network members since 2025, confirmed that on the one hand old and brutal habits die hard, and bore testimony to the persistence of anti-Roma racism within law enforcement, and the collusion and complicity of official institutions in their denial of that racism; widespread official indifference to the plight of targeted Romani communities, and the fate of victimised individuals; and the embeddedness of a culture of 'omerta' and impunity among law enforcement agencies when it comes to 'operational excesses' in policing Roma.

On the other hand, our collective action yielded a spate of victories in courts over the past year. These victories not only provided some sense of redress to individuals whose rights were violated, but added to the growing body of jurisprudence which makes it increasingly difficult for authorities to ignore the fact when it comes to justice and policing, the problem that must be addressed is one of deeply-embedded institutional racism.

As the European Commission's 2020–2025 anti-racism action plan put it: *"The conflict between our values of equality and the reality of ingrained racism cannot be ignored"*, and called on Member States to *"step up efforts to prevent discriminatory attitudes among law enforcement authorities."*³ The subsequent EU Anti-Racism Strategy 2026–2030 emphatically states that:

*"Accountable law enforcement that ensures equal protection and fair treatment for all is a key pillar of democracy and the rule of law. Yet, the findings of the FRA report '[Addressing Racism in Policing](#)' illustrate that racism in policing includes discriminatory profiling practices, inappropriate racist communication and excessive use of force."*⁴

The Commission reported that stakeholders consulted for this strategy underlined the need for comprehensive training programs for law enforcement authorities and greater transparency and accountability within law enforcement agencies; but as far as ensuring equal protection and fair treatment for all, between now and 2030, the Commission's own ambitions will only stretch to compiling *"a compendium of good practices to prevent discriminatory profiling practices."*



3. European Commission, Communication – A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020–2025. Available [here](#).

4. European Commission, Communication – A Union of equality: EU Anti-Racism Strategy 2026–2030. Available [here](#).

The evidence suggests that the policing of Roma and other racialised minorities across Europe demands a more substantive EU-level policy response. Recently, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) stated that institutional racism against Roma goes way beyond isolated cases of police brutality, and deplored the fact that *“violent raids and attacks against Roma villages and settlements as well as ethnic profiling, harassment, marginalisation and provocation, are part of daily life for many Roma and Travellers.”*

In a motion passed unanimously by the PACE Standing Committee, the parliamentarians noted that despite these repeated findings, and years of recommendations addressed to States to end

such practices, police brutality remains a constant. The motion stressed the systemic nature of this discrimination against Roma, and deplored the culture of impunity concerning *“inhuman and degrading treatment, torture, excessive use of force, and violence resulting in some cases in the victim’s death.”*⁵

In its conclusions, PACE summed up the institutional racism of law enforcement authorities towards Roma and Travellers, *“as a terrible discriminatory imbalance: on the one hand, Roma and Travellers are very often subject to excessive surveillance, controls and use of force by members of law enforcement authorities, which violate their rights; on the other hand, when these populations are victims of criminal offences (whether committed by persons holding public authority or by private individuals), the responses provided are very often inadequate.”*⁶

The evidence compiled in this report confirms that while the *“terrible discriminatory imbalance”* remains undiminished, it will never go unchallenged. However, the capacity of rights defenders to hold states to account has, over the past year, been drastically undermined by swingeing cuts in funding support. This development prompted the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Michael O’Flaherty to call on European states to support the work of rights defenders, and redouble their efforts to *“ensure that human rights and democracy do not wither under financial pressure.”* He stressed the need for coordinated action to protect the *“international human rights architecture”*, and warned that *“without viable alternatives, it will be impossible to avert a further intensification of the backlash against equality we are witnessing.”*⁷

If there were any doubt about the intensity of the backlash we are facing, and the terrible discriminatory imbalance that prevails in law enforcement, the ERRC and its Roma Rights Network partner the Greek Helsinki Monitor have recently uncovered the largest campaign of police harassment and ethnic profiling of Roma that we have documented anywhere in Europe for decades. [NEXT PAGE]



5. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Institutional racism of law-enforcement authorities against Roma & Travellers, Draft Resolution and Explanatory Memorandum, Prepared by Mr. Jean-Pierre Grin, rapporteur. Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, 10 November 2023. Available [here](#).
6. *Ibid.*
7. ERRC News, Age of Extremes: Human Rights Commissioner calls on Europe to step up after USAID freeze. 25 February 2025. Available [here](#).

DRONES, DOGS, & DAWN RAIDS

The Police War on Greece's Roma



By Jonathan Lee

Since late 2025, the Greek state has mobilised hundreds of police officers to conduct weekly, militarized raids on Roma-majority neighbourhoods in the name of combatting organised crime. The joint investigation by the ERRC and GHM into these raids exposes **Operation ENTOS**: a systematic campaign of collective punishment disguised as 'preventive policing' that shows no evidence of organised, widespread criminal activity beyond minor infractions such as irregular electricity connections in communities beset with racialised poverty.

In November 2025, the Greek state broadcaster ERT reported the launch of a dedicated policing plan focused specifically on Roma-majority neighbourhoods. The report described an initiative involving intensified surveillance, expanded police presence, and targeted interventions in communities classified by authorities as "hotspots of illegality." Between September 2025 and July 2026, at least 105 documented raids have been tracked by Roma the ERRC and the Greek Helsinki Monitor. Most of these have occurred since April 2026, with near daily raids now occurring across Greece.

While the Hellenic Police (ELAS) press releases refer to raids targeting "socially homogeneous groups", this seemingly neutral phrase is understood by the media to mean Romani neighbourhoods. Police statements never refer directly to ethnicity, but local reporting frequently fills in the gap. As Panayote Dimitras from the Greek Helsinki Monitor said

"After each 'neutral' police press release, scores of Greek media promptly report the news with the word 'Roma' added to the official release. It is an open secret that police send journalists an SMS to tell them that the most recent raid concerned Roma. The government wants positive public opinion and they do this by letting the public know that they are 'combatting Roma criminality'." ⁸

8. ERRC News, Drones, Dogs, and Dawn Raids: The Police War on Greece's Roma. 25 May 2026. Available [here](#).

Perhaps the most striking feature of the ENTOS operations is the gap between the scale of the police deployments and the offences ultimately reported afterward. The operations themselves are frequently militarised. Tactical units participate alongside organised crime personnel. Entire neighbourhoods are subjected to saturation policing involving checkpoints, mass identity controls, home searches, and extensive stop-and-search operations. Surveillance drones and K-9 units are routinely deployed.

Yet the overwhelming majority of alleged offences concern relatively minor infractions linked directly to entrenched poverty and exclusion. The most common are irregular electricity connections, followed by administrative violations, traffic offences, identification document issues, and outstanding warrants.

THE PRACTICE TARGETS SPECIFIC SOCIAL GROUPS AIMING TO CONTROL AND INTIMIDATE THE ROMANI POPULATION LIVING UNDER EXTREME POVERTY...THE RESULTS RAIDS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES, MINOR CRIMINAL FINDINGS AND A HUGE WASTE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES THAT COULD HAVE BEEN USED FOR SOCIAL POLICY MEASURES.

ALEXANDRA KARAGIANNI

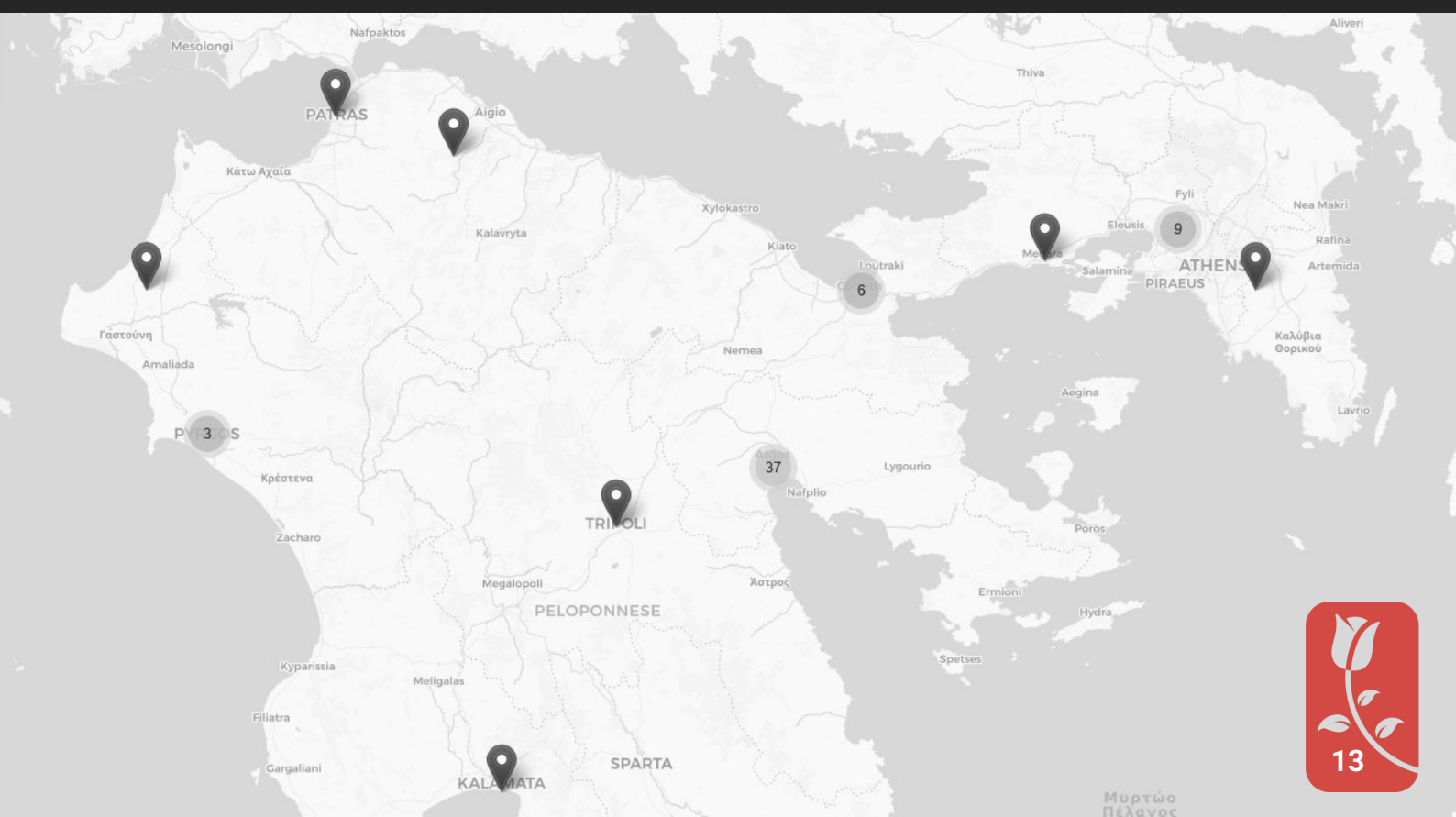
GREEK ROMANI HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER

What emerges from the documented cases is not evidence of sprawling organised criminal networks embedded across entire settlements, but rather a policing model based on collective suspicion. Entire neighbourhoods are repeatedly subjected to raids because they are understood by authorities as inherently criminogenic spaces.

The Tracker: The ERRC and Greek Helsinki Monitor have built an interactive map tracking every single raid under Operation ENTOS.

You can explore the data, see the hot-spots, and read the official police reports that evidence this state-sanctioned campaign, [here](#).

For the full investigative piece see [here](#).





WINNING IN COURT, JUSTICE OF A SORT

2025—2026

Katarína Kuruová in interview with the ERRC, December 2022

26 March 2026

Victory in European Court for Romani sisters detained and beaten by Slovak police

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) **ruled** that the beating of two Romani sisters by Slovak police, their detention in a toilet and cleaning cupboard, and a deeply flawed investigation violated both the prohibition on inhuman treatment (Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights) and the prohibition of discrimination (Article 14 of the Convention). The Court ordered Slovakia to pay a total of €28,560 for the violations.

In the case, brought by the ERRC and represented at a domestic level by lawyer Michal Zálešák, evidence was heard that in the incident which occurred in 2019, one sister, Katarína, was grabbed by the hair, dragged across a bridge, struck multiple times, and had her hand twisted behind her back with such force that she sustained a fractured finger.

The other sister Helena, was pushed with a baton, kicked in the back, and slapped in the face. Both women were verbally abused by officers, who called them "cigáni" [Gypsies] and "morons." Upon arrival at the police station, Katarína was slapped again. The two women were then detained in a cleaning cupboard and a men's toilet respectively for most of the night. No depositions were ever taken from them.

The subsequent domestic investigation was found to be deeply flawed, for failing to properly resolve the contradiction between the applicants' consistent and medically corroborated accounts and the denials of the officers involved; and for wholly ignoring the racist abuse that came with the physical assaults on the women.⁹

The ERRC's interview with Katarína is available to view [here](#), and the interview with Helena [here](#).

9. ERRC Press Release, Roma Women Win European Case Against Slovakia for Police Violence and Discrimination 26 March 2026. Available [here](#).

11 March 2026

Roma Win UN Case Over Confiscation of Passports and Travel Bans in North Macedonia

The ERRC welcomed the [decision](#) that was communicated by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UN CERD) concerning the confiscation by police officers of passports from Romani citizens who were returned from EU countries. The UNCERD found that North Macedonia violated several provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The applicants consisted of seven persons from two family groups, all North Macedonian citizens of Romani origin, who were forcibly returned from Germany in April 2014, following rejection of their asylum claims.¹⁰

17 February 2026

European Court rules in favour of Romani couple tortured by Serbian police

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled in favour of a Romani couple, Marko and Sandra Stalović, who were tortured in a Belgrade police cell in 2017 after reporting their car stolen. The court heard how Marko was made to kneel in a room surrounded by eight officers, who repeatedly slapped him across the face, racially abused him and kicked him to try to force him to confess to stealing the car himself and to insurance fraud. They put a plastic bag over his head, lashed his hands with a leather whip, threatened to electrocute him.

One of his interrogators cocked his gun, pointed it at him, and told him he would shoot him in the hand to give him "a memory that would stay with him for a lifetime".

When Marko asked to call a lawyer, he was told by an interrogating police officer: "*this isn't Vienna, this isn't Austria, you don't make any demands here.*" The officers threatened to take his two young daughters to an orphanage and send him and his wife to prison. Within earshot, in a nearby room, drunken officers harassed and verbally abused Sandra, and similarly denied her request to see a lawyer.

The European Court found that Marko had suffered torture and inhuman and degrading treatment at the hands of the police officers (in violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights). Additionally, the Court found that the authorities including police and the public prosecutor had failed to effectively investigate the crimes committed against the Romani couple (a procedural violation of Article 3 of the Convention). The state authorities were ordered to pay Marko and Sandra non-pecuniary damages amounting to €7500 (€3750 per applicant). The costs for legal representation were covered by the ERRC, and the case was represented before domestic courts by human rights lawyer, Aleksandar Olenik.¹¹

After the judgement, Marko [told](#) the ERRC:

“OUR FAITH AND OUR TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS, ESPECIALLY THE POLICE, IS FOREVER GONE NOW. MORE THAN THE BEATING AND THE THREATS TO MY LIFE, WHAT I FEARED MOST WAS THE THREAT THAT THEY WOULD TAKE OUR CHILDREN AWAY, BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW HOW MUCH POWER THEY HAD AND WHAT THEY COULD DO. MY MESSAGE RELATING TO THIS WHOLE ORDEAL IS THAT IN THE END JUSTICE HAS WON, BECAUSE THE TRUTH HAS FINALLY COME OUT, AND THE TRUTH IS THAT WE ARE THE INNOCENT ONES AND WE DID NOTHING WRONG. ”

10. ERRC Press Release, Roma Win UN Case over Confiscation of Passports in North Macedonia, 11 March 2026. Available [here](#).

11. ERRC Press Release, Roma Tortured by Serbian Police Win Case at European Court. 17 February 2026. Available [here](#).



26 June 2025

Roma Win European Court Victory Against Slovak Police Over Covid Lockdown Attack

A father and son won a [judgment](#) from the European Court of Human Rights against Slovakia after suffering a violent attack by the police during the first COVID-19 lockdown in April 2020 in Bardejov. The Court found that the violence used by the police officers (which included severely beating the Roma with batons, fracturing the skull of one and concussing the other) was disproportionate, and that the investigation into the police brutality and subsequent legal proceedings were inadequate. Slovakia was ordered to pay €16,500 in damages plus €6,410 in legal expenses. The case was represented by the ERRC.

Several witnesses, whose statements were corroborated by video evidence, described how police brutally attacked both men on the evening of 12 April 2020. The son was set upon and brutally assaulted by three officers for briefly lowering his face mask outdoors due to feeling nauseous. When his father later arrived at the scene of the assault, another officer knocked him to the ground and batoned him about the torso and head, fracturing his frontal bone, causing contusions on his brain, and severe bleeding which required hospitalisation. The police officers refused requests to call an ambulance, and instead bundled him into a police car.

Paramedics who arrived on the scene insisted on treating him there and then, before police could take him into custody. He was later released from custody because the court found his detention to be unlawful, and subsequently required hospitalisation. The father was criminally convicted and fined for assaulting an officer.¹²

4 June 2025

European Court Rules Criminal Investigation Flawed in Serbian Police Brutality Case

The ECtHR ruled that an investigation into a case of police brutality against Matija Nikolić, a 17-year-old Romani boy, in 2012 was inadequate and lacked impartiality. The Court noted that the initial investigation was conducted by the Bački Petrovac Police Station, whose officers were alleged to have brutalised the Romani boy in the first place by beating him until he was unconscious and required hospitalisation. The Court ruled that Serbian authorities must pay the Romani applicant €1800 plus taxes as well as €2100 in costs and expenses for the legal proceedings before the Court. The case was represented before the Court by the ERRC.

On 7th February 2013, 17-year-old Matija Nikolić lodged a criminal complaint with the Novi Sad Basic Public Prosecutor's Office, alleging that he was severely beaten on 16th November 2012 while being questioned at the Bački Petrovac Police Station about alleged thefts. He alleged that officers threatened to stab him in the stomach with scissors, racially abused him, slapped him, and beat him in the head repeatedly until he lost consciousness and fell to the ground.

12. ERRC Press Release, Roma Win European Court Victory Against Slovak Police Over Covid Lockdown Attack. 26 June 2025. Available [here](#).

One officer is alleged to have kicked him in the stomach so hard that he was later hospitalised and required an operation for an incarcerated hernia.

In its ruling, the European Court stated that it is not disputable that on 16th November 2012 Matija Nikolić entered Bački Petrovac Police Station in good health for police questioning, and that he later left there in an ambulance for immediate surgery. The Court noted that this fact, together with medical evidence and the detailed account of the events by Matija Nikolić, in which he claimed that he had been kicked in the stomach and hit in the head by police officers, raises at least a reasonable suspicion that his injuries could have been caused by the use of force by the police. The Court also found that Matija Nikolić's right to an effective investigation had been violated by the authorities (a procedural violation of Article 3 of the Convention).¹³

27 January 2025

European Court Rules Against Greek Police Who Beat and Tortured Three Roma in 2016

The ECtHR found in favour of three Romani men, who were brutally beaten and tortured during their arrest, transfer and detention by Greek police back in October 2016, and awarded them a total of €52,240 in damages. In the Case of Panayotopoulos and Others v. Greece, the applicants, who were represented by Roma Rights Network member the Greek Helsinki Monitor, also complained that the relevant authorities failed to carry out an adequate investigation into the incident and that the police attacks on them were motivated by racial prejudice. The ERRC intervened as a third party in the proceedings to argue that the Romani men's treatment by the police was characteristic of widespread institutional antigypsyism present in Greek law enforcement.

"The judgment is of great importance because it contains very detailed documentation on why both the successive disciplinary investigations, and the handling of the criminal case by prosecutors and judges were completely unacceptable ... It is also very important that the European Court ruled that the impunity was racially motivated" said Panayote Dimitras from the Greek Helsinki Monitor.

On 8 October 2016, following a car chase which ended in a collision, the police set upon the three men who were passengers, kicking and punching them in the head and all over their bodies as they lay on the ground. In his testimony, the first applicant said he could not remember how long the assault had lasted, as *"he had been only half-conscious after the beating and had vomited blood. Then someone had grabbed him by the hair and had dragged him and the others down the stairs."* The men denied resisting arrest, and said that during the assault, the police officers had shouted threats and insults including racial slurs. The kicking and beatings continued during transfers between police stations, and one officer used a pen to inflict injury on the genitals of one of the victims. The men remained in police cells after the beating until they were taken before an investigating judge the next day.

The applicants stated that the police used this violence in an unsuccessful attempt to force the men to confess to criminal offences and to give up the name of the driver who had escaped. On 10 October 2016, the first applicant was transferred to an intensive care unit for 10 days with a reported heart attack and wounds to his genitals. The Court found that all the reports drawn up by the domestic authorities in the subsequent administrative and criminal investigations *"failed to provide adequate explanations for the applicants' injuries and particularly the injury sustained by the first applicant, which the hospital ascribed to the first applicant having been struck by a 'pointed instrument' in the scrotum."*¹⁴

13. ERRC Press Release, European Court Rules Criminal Investigation Flawed in Serbian Police Brutality Case. 4 June 2025. Available [here](#).

14. ERRC Press Release, European Court Rules Against Greek Police Who Beat and Tortured Three Roma in 2016. 27 January 2025. Available [here](#).



ON THE RECORD

Patterns of Police Violence 2025—2026

15 April 2026

Why Hungary's Roma still can't trust the police

In its [opinion](#) published in March 2026, the Council of Europe body charged with the protection of national minorities expressed its concern at the prevalence of incidents of discrimination, misconduct, and ill-treatment of Roma by the police in Hungary. It stated that practices of racial profiling can result in institutionalised racism, and called for effective investigation of such allegations, noting that such practices tend to stigmatise the targeted groups in the eyes of the general public, *"generating feelings of humiliation, injustice and resentment amongst these communities, and undermining trust in the police."*

In light of a group of judgements of the European Court of Human Rights against Hungary, concerning the authorities' failure to effectively investigate possible racial motives behind violent incidents involving the police, the Advisory Committee on the Protection of National Minorities called for *"further efforts to expand and improve the provision of targeted and practical training."*

In its January 2026 submission to the Committee of Ministers, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) accused the Hungarian authorities of failure to take the necessary measures to prevent police ill-treatment and *"introduce any meaningful legislative or policy reforms to address the systemic problems surrounding police ill-treatment to ensure effective accountability."* The HHC concluded that *"the structural deficiencies identified by the European Court of Human Rights more than a decade ago continue to undermine accountability and deny victims effective access to justice."*¹⁵

12 February 2026

Italian Police Officers Sentenced in Case of Disabled Romani Man Who 'Fell' from Window During Raid

In the Hasib Omerovic case, the Court of Rome sentenced one police officer, acquitted another, and sent the case of a third agent for trial. In July 2022, Hasib Omerovic, a disabled Romani man, allegedly 'fell' from a second-floor window during a violent police raid on his home in the Primavalle district of Rome.

15. ERRC News, 16 years of broken promises: Why Hungary's roma still can't trust the police. 15 April 2026. Available [here](#).

The judge sentenced agent Alessandro Sicuranza to one year and four months for forgery, and acquitted agent Maria Rosa Natale of the same charge. The trial of police officer Andrea Pellegrini, accused of torture and forgery, was set for 2nd November 2026. A fourth policeman who had previously pleaded guilty received a sentence of 11 months and 16 days. The family were represented by lawyers from Roma Rights Network member Associazione 21 luglio.

In the immediate aftermath of the raid, the police officers claimed in their initial statement that Hasib Omerovic, *"threw himself from window falling into the internal courtyard of the building, where he was then rescued by the 118 who transferred him to the Gemelli hospital"*.¹⁶

This was completely at odds with Hasib's sister's account of what happened:

I OPENED THE DOOR AND A WOMAN AND MEN DRESSED NORMALLY ENTERED, THE WOMAN CLOSED THE DOOR OF THE HALL, ASKED FOR HASIB'S DOCUMENTS, TOOK THE PHOTOS, THEY BEAT HIM WITH THE STICK, HASIB FELL AND THEY STARTED PUNCHING AND KICKING HIM... HE RAN INTO HIS ROOM AND SHUT HIMSELF UP ... THEY BROKE THE DOOR ... THEY PUNCHED AND KICKED HIM, TOOK HIM OFF HIS FEET AND THREW HIM DOWN.



16. ERRC News, Italian Police Officers Sentenced in Case of Disabled Romani Man who 'fell' from window during Raid. 12 February 2026. Available [here](#).

12 August 2025

ERRC & Vojvodina Roma Center call for action after violent police arrest in Serbia leaves Romani basketball player with a broken arm

Roma Rights Network members, the ERRC and Vojvodina Roma Center Citizens' Association, filed a complaint on 12 August with the equality commissioner after Dragan Vasić, a 25-year-old former Metalac basketball player and talent scout, sustained a broken arm during a police arrest for an unpaid traffic ticket in Valjevo.

Vasić was accosted by the officers as he left his family home and presented with a warrant. As is common practice, he offered to pay the fine on the spot, but the police were having none of it.

According to Vasić's lawyer, the brutality continued even after his arm was broken. When the officers realized his injury was serious, they called the Emergency Service, but still handcuffed his broken arm behind his back, putting him in excruciating pain all the way to the Emergency Centre. *"The handcuffs were removed only when the doctor at the Emergency Center requested it, which indicates continuous abuse"* according to the lawyer, who also raised the question as to whether the violence against Dragan Vasić was racially motivated.¹⁷

1 July 2025

ERRC & Amnesty International call for investigation into racist motivation behind police raid in Slovakia

On 28 June 2025, according to publicly available information, including footage circulated on social media, Slovak police fired warning shots, used physical violence, and carried out what appears to be a collective and punitive police response against the Romani community in Veľká Ida, Slovakia. Women, children, and elderly residents were reportedly caught up in the operation.

The Slovak Inspection Service (ÚIS) confirmed that it is investigating suspected abuse of power by police officers involved in the incident.

The President of the Police Force has also ordered a review, and the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities stated that, according to initial information from witnesses, the police used various enforcing measures in an inappropriate manner.¹⁸

16 January 2025

ERRC demands independent investigation over fatal police action in Hungary

"WE STAND BY OUR POLICE!" in bold caps, was the social media response of the local police chief to calls for an independent investigation after the death of a 40-year-old Romani man following a struggle with arresting officers in east-central Hungary.

The ERRC issued a complaint to the National Chief of Police and the Hungarian Equal Treatment Authority following the death of József Zsákai while being apprehended by police officers on 22 December 2024 in the town of Zagyvarékas. In a video of the incident, a police officer can be heard shouting "Stop, you motherfucker!" which shows the police pursuing, grappling with, and handcuffing the man, who can be heard shouting *"I'm sick, I can't bear it"*, to which the police shout *"give me your hand"*. The man then lost consciousness, and neither the police officers nor the paramedics who arrived nine minutes later were able to resuscitate him. The video footage broadcast on national TV was heavily edited by the police.

Relatives dispute the police account, and told TV reporters that the police used excessive force and believed that the man was severely beaten, *"kicked, sat on, squeezed the air out of him and shocked with a taser."* The police chase and arrest operation which ended in death was down to the fact that officers knew József Zsákai was driving without a valid license.¹⁹

17. ERRC News, ERRC and Vojvodina Roma Center Citizens' Association call for action after violent police arrest in Serbia leaves Romani basketball player with a broken arm. 12 August 2025. Available [here](#).

18. ERRC Press Release, Anti-Roma Police Violence in Veľká Ida Must be Investigated for Racist Motivation Says ERRC and Amnesty International. 1 July 2025. Available [here](#).

19. ERRC News, ERRC demands independent investigation over fatal police action in Hungary. 4 February 2025. Available [here](#).



TIME TO END ETHNIC PROFILING & ACTIVELY COMBAT POLICE RACISM

Roma Rights activists' sense that something serious remains awry with policing of Roma in Europe is borne out by ECRI's country reporting in 2025 and 2026 in Croatia, Portugal, Ireland and Romania. Common to all reports were concerns about racial profiling, deep community mistrust, an absence of disaggregated data, and a lack of police accountability.

In Croatia, ECRI found that the authorities “do not seem to have considered the existence of racial profiling as a form of potential institutional racism, nor to sufficiently address the issue in the training of law enforcement officials.” The Committee called on the authorities to introduce legislation clearly defining and prohibiting racial profiling; to organize ongoing training for law enforcement; and introducing an effective system of recording identity checks to detect and address any racial profiling practices.²⁰

Similarly in Ireland, despite ECRI's earlier recommendations, racial profiling is not explicitly prohibited by law in Ireland, and official data is lacking on racial profiling while there are reports that it occurs.

In addition to recommendations on legislation, training, and the collection of disaggregated data, ECRI called on the Irish authorities to develop “strong internal reporting and external police complaints mechanisms in order to ensure that any racial profiling and other discriminatory practices are promptly detected and subject to effective investigations and, where necessary, appropriately sanctioned.”²¹

In Portugal, serious concerns were raised about racial profiling and racially-motivated ill-treatment of Roma and Black people by Portuguese police officers: “The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights was also deeply concerned about allegations of infiltration in some segments of the police by far-right groups and reports of discriminatory behaviours and attitudes of police officers towards persons in contact with them, based on their country of origin or skin colour.” Further, according to many observers, the possibility of racist bias behind ill-treatment and other police abuse is often not duly investigated, and only a small minority of complaints lead to the initiation of suitable proceedings and sanctions.²²

20. Council of Europe, ECRI Report on Croatia (sixth monitoring cycle). Published 16 June 2025. Available [here](#).

21. Council of Europe, ECRI Report on Ireland (sixth monitoring cycle). Published 28 October 2025. Available [here](#).

22. Council of Europe, ECRI Report on Portugal (sixth monitoring cycle). Published 18 June 2025. Available [here](#).

The strongest criticisms were reserved for Romania, where ECRI deplored the fact that “little progress has been made to effectively prevent or counter misconduct by law enforcement officials affecting Roma in particular.” Civil society interlocutors reported that despite ECtHR judgments, investigations into police violence against Roma :

“...continue to be inadequate, racial bias is not duly investigated and the effectiveness of judicial review of such investigations continues to raise questions, with only a minority of cases leading to appropriate sanctions, thereby potentially fostering a culture of impunity among law enforcement officials.”



Noting that instances of racial profiling and excessive use of force, including lethal force, continued to be reported, ECRI stated that it is essential *“to create a culture within law enforcement agencies where racist abuse is regarded as having no place and racism is actively prevented and combated under any circumstances.”*²³

Based on the litigation and advocacy of the Roma Rights Network, the evidence of police brutality against Roma in 2024-25 strongly suggests that the latest ECRI recommendations to the Romanian authorities apply to all European countries with significant Romani populations.²⁴ National authorities must take direct and determined action to counter racism within law enforcement agencies, in particular by:

- introducing a clear zero-tolerance policy for racist police abuse, including racist verbal abuse, racial profiling and discriminatory police action involving the use of force;
- developing suitable, specific and mandatory training sessions for law enforcement officials, both during initial training and as part of ongoing professional development, on preventing and combating racism, notably prejudices and stereotypes against Roma; and
- ensuring greater police accountability by developing adequate internal reporting procedures, including through the adoption of protective measures for whistle-blowers, and by ensuring that all cases involving allegations of racist police abuse are the subject of effective investigations, and all victims and witnesses to such abuse are protected from threats of retaliation by police officers.

23. Council of Europe, ECRI Report on Romania (sixth monitoring cycle). Published 30 October 2025. Available [here](#).

24. *Ibid*

THE STATE OF HATE

ANTIGYPSYISM & THE FAR-RIGHT IN EUROPE

By Bernard Rorke

2025–2026

Academic discussions about the inexorable rise and rise of the far-right in Europe routinely overlook the extent to which anti-Roma racism is integral, and not incidental, to the mobilisation of aggrieved and resentful constituencies, particularly in eastern and central Europe, and the extent to which Romani communities function as an all-purpose scapegoat for the perceived ills of society. This review of anti-Roma racism by state and non-state actors over the past eighteen months, shows that there has been no diminution of one of Europe's oldest hatreds, and serves as yet another reminder that the far-right presents a very real threat to the safety, security and dignity of Roma in Europe.

The defeat of the Orbán regime in Hungary's April 2026 elections, and the landslide victory of Péter Magyar and his Tisza party, dashed the illusion of the invincibility and inevitability of hybrid-authoritarian rule in an illiberal democracy. Jubilation on the streets of Budapest prompted many to speculate about a wider waning of the fortunes of the far-right in Europe. However, when it comes to democratic optimism, a little due diligence and caution is in order before jumping to big conclusions about the supposed decline of the far-right. As Cas Mudde put it, while the far-right has lost its unofficial leader, it is not in decline:

*"The far right is here to stay, and many of its parties are as established as the (former) 'mainstream' parties. And, like other parties, their electoral support fluctuates and is affected by internal and external factors, such as corruption, infighting and crises in government. More importantly, the mainstreaming and normalisation of far-right actors and ideas continue unabated."*²⁵

As mainstream politicians have appropriated many far-right themes, measures once advocated only by those on the political fringe have become policy. Former Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán famously crowed in a ['doorstep statement'](#) before a meeting of the European Council, *"The positions which were once condemned, despised, looked down upon and treated with contempt are becoming jointly held positions."* And until April 2026, it was all too often Hungary that provided the most disturbing examples of the mainstreaming and normalization of far-right ideas, not least anti-Roma racism. While the extremist MPs from Mi Hazánk, campaigned on a mish-mash of conspiracy theories, homophobia, vigilantism and explicit racism, it was the ruling Fidesz party that actually delivered on far-right policy.

25. Cas Mudde, Trump may be a liability and Orbán is gone, but Europe's far right is not in decline. The Guardian, 7 May 2026. Available [here](#).

Orbán – much enamoured with [Renaud Camus's Great Replacement theory](#), and unabashedly overt in his declared contempt for 'mixed-race Europe' – made his conjoined nativism and hostility to Roma explicit when he declared that:

"It cannot happen that in order for a minority to feel at home, the majority must feel like strangers in their own towns, villages, or homeland. This is not acceptable. And as long as I am the prime minister, nothing of the sort will happen. Because this is the country of the natives, our country..."

As [Kenan Malik](#) stated, "arguments that once were the staple of the political fringe now nestle at the heart of mainstream debate." For nativist parties there's always new reasons to be racist, new grievances to be nurtured, and new opportunities to incite mass outbreaks of racially-motivated violence with virtually instantaneous speed.

In the USA, the politics of unreason has taken centre-stage with the current administration's sustained assault on political, civic, and legal efforts to promote racial justice; President Trump's consistent use of inflammatory racist rhetoric; and his transparent pursuit of a white supremacist agenda rooted in racial grievance. This contagion has emboldened the far-right across Europe, where the very notion of inclusion and equity is repudiated by right-wing parties in government and opposition.

As the political centre of gravity lurches rightwards, and novel manifestations of fascism continue to gain ground, the defence of the social and civil rights of Roma and other racialised communities cannot be up for barter on the promise that 'smart inclusion' of Roma will deliver economic returns in a future 'Europe of prosperity and growth'. The political lines have been drawn, and the crusading intent of the far-right is clear. In the face of imminent barbarism, the starting point of resistance must be that human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible.

ARGUMENTS THAT ONCE WERE THE STAPLE OF THE POLITICAL FRINGE NOW NESTLE AT THE HEART OF MAINSTREAM DEBATE.

Defining & Delineating the Far-Right

The term far right encompasses a multitude of individuals, parties and movements, and according to [Hope not Hate](#), this range makes it necessary to make a distinction between the radical and the extremist variants of the far right. For its part, the radical right accepts the fundamental 'rules of the game' vis-à-vis electoral democracy, but rejects much of the liberal content of democracy, such as minority rights, the rule of law, and the separation of powers – a politics of resentment encapsulated by the former British home secretary [Suella Braverman's](#) wail that "*The Britain that I love is being ripped apart by diversity, equality and inclusion.*" The extreme right differs in that it fundamentally rejects democratic principles, and includes among its numbers neo-Nazis and fascists who either condone, advocate or perpetrate violence, even acts of terrorism.

In response to the oft-posed question whether or not we are witnessing the return of fascism, Daniel Trilling insists that today's massive street mobilisations of extremists and ballot box successes for the far-right do not amount to a rerun of the catastrophic mid-20th century. He says that today's far-right "*has a life and momentum of its own, and must be seen as unique to our time. Recognising that is essential if we are to understand its causes, its weaknesses and the specific way it threatens our freedom.*" One crucial overlap Trilling identifies between the fascism of interwar Europe and today's far-right, is the emotive exhortation: purify your nation, and reclaim your pride, security and success by attacking enemies of the nation. ²⁶

26. Daniel Trilling, The impossible promise: are we witnessing the return of fascism? The Guardian, 18 April 2026. Available [here](#).

Foregrounding the role of emotions in politics, [Richard Seymour](#) argues that for those who are miserable, insecure and humiliated, the far-right offers a specific remedy in what he terms disaster nationalism: *"It offers the balm, not just of vengeance, but of a sort of violent reset which restores the traditional consolations of family, race, religion and nationhood, including the chance to humiliate others."* For Seymour, the endgame is to channel the resentments of a population into a *"revolt against liberal civilization"*. He describes it as *"a thin, networked civil society base whose energies are wrapped around culture wars that occasionally explode into the meatspace violence of lone-wolf murderers, vigilantes, riots, pogroms, and pseudo-insurrections."* Its elected leaders direct their aggression not at electoral democracy, but at the liberal state, and their aim *"is to effect a constitutional rupture that tilts the balance of rule toward authoritarian democracy rather than outright dictatorship."*²⁷

The common thread uniting the far-right the world over is, according to Seymour, the claim that their nation is under dire threat and disaster is imminent: *"this peril is caused by specific national enemies who can be named, blamed and punished."* The particular scapegoats vary according to context, but share a common logic: *"The national peril is always the fault of a dangerous underclass, combined with the actions of a treacherous elite."*²⁸

Anti—Roma Racism & Far—Right Vengeance, Violence, & Rupture

It is not difficult to see how such energies and resentments, combined with "the chance to humiliate others", have animated anti-Roma racism. In two recent and related rulings in May 2026, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) found that far-right extremist politician Valeri Simeonov deliberately used dehumanising and inflammatory language to *"portray Roma in Bulgaria as prone to crime and depravity, and the overall thrust of his message was that they are immoral social parasites who abuse their rights, live off the Bulgarian majority, and subject that majority to systematic violence and crime without hindrance."*²⁹

Simeonov is the textbook exponent of 'Disaster Nationalism'. In addition to racially disparaging Roma as *"brazen, arrogant and brutalised humanoids"*, he presented them as a threat to the security and viability of the nation. He deemed the Roma to be integral to a sinister political experiment he likened to Bolshevism, which promised political representation and minority privileges, 'without any obligations.' At the heart of this elite conspiracy, 'the root of evil' was the Bulgarian Parliament:

*"Herein lie the fear, pain and tears of our parents and children, the humiliation, grief and feeling of powerlessness of the Bulgarian doctors, policemen, social workers and teachers ... There is no chance, no chance if we do not rely on patriotism, unity and the rage to survive!"*³⁰

As for the mainstreaming of far-right extremism, Simeonov's political fortunes in the intervening years are instructive. In 2017, he led the Patriotic Front, and became deputy prime minister in a coalition government led by Prime Minister Borisov's GERB party (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria). [Borisov](#) appointed Simeonov – who had earlier mused about creating *"modern concentration camps"* – to head Bulgaria's National Council on Co-operation on Ethnic and Integration Issues. The appointment of this *"pronounced supporter of fascist and neo-Nazi ideology"* to such a position; a leader who claimed that *"Bulgaria is facing the abyss of an ethnic crisis – two opposing mutually exclusive worlds are facing each other in our tormented homeland"* provoked outrage in Bulgaria; and warnings from the liberal opposition to the ruling GERB party that its *"toxic national-populism"* can only divide society and heighten the *"risk of stirring up ethnic enmity."* As long as GERB remained in power, the EPP and the European Commission had nothing to say about the Bulgarian ruling party's collusion with far-right extremists.

The blurring of lines between the radicals and extremists, and the impact of politically-orchestrated anti-Roma hate speech by Bulgaria's far-right mobsters in parliament, which ECRI reported became especially pronounced in the run-up to local or national elections, led to an increase in hate crime.

27. Richard Seymour, Disaster Nationalism is the New Fascism. Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 12 July 2024. Available [here](#).

28. *Ibid*

29. European Court of Human Rights, Budinova & Isaev v. Bulgaria. Judgement Strasbourg, 12 May 2026. Available [here](#).

30. *Ibid*

THE STATE OF HATE: ANTIGYPSYISM & THE FAR-RIGHT IN EUROPE

This prompted the observation from the [Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner](#) "that most racist attacks in the country are committed against Roma and that hostility against them has increased in recent years, as indicated by anti-Roma attacks which took place in several localities across Bulgaria, forcing hundreds of Roma to leave their homes and rendering many of them homeless or destitute."³¹

Similarly in Italy, in its 2024 report ECRI noted with "serious concern that Italian public discourse has become increasingly xenophobic in recent years, and political speech has taken on highly divisive and antagonistic overtones."³²

The Committee noted that the targeting of visible minorities including Roma by politicians and public officials, especially during election periods, has led to a form of 'trivialisation' of hateful remarks in public life. The landslide victory for the radical right led by Meloni and her Fratelli, in Italy's 2022 national elections marked the culmination of longer-term socio-political processes, which, according to [Emanuele Toscano](#), led to a progressive radicalisation of the mainstream, and legitimised hitherto "taboo ideas of an extremist matrix ... so much so that today, the Italian mainstream right has become so radicalised that it is extremely difficult even to define what 'radical right' means."³³

Centre—Right Accommodation, Collaboration, & Betrayal

By the time of the ECtHR's 2026 ruling against Bulgaria, twelve years after Simeonov's hate speeches in parliament, and almost four years after Meloni's dramatic electoral victory stunned Italy, the normalisation of far-right extremism continues apace across Europe. Despite the fall of Orbán in Hungary, far-right parties are either ruling, coalescing in government, or leading the polls in opposition in several EU member states. The cordon sanitaire that for decades united mainstream European parties against such collaboration with the far-right has been consigned to the past.

As the crumbling of the cordon sanitaire and the accommodation of far-right ideas by mainstream conservative parties in a number of EU member states accelerates, 'a vicious cycle' kicks in, that according to the academic Tarik Abou-Chadi, doesn't bring the votes back, but does impact on norms and public opinion: "Accommodation normalises and legitimises far-right parties: voting for them is no longer a transgression. Second, opinion shifts: if mainstream parties say something is really important, people tend to believe it."

As opinion shifts further right on issues such as immigration and minority protections, the mainstream centre parties lurch ever rightwards, but rather than capture those votes, the process of accommodation merely results in their being 'cannibalised' by the far right.

According to Abou-Chadi, far-right parties benefit electorally when mainstream parties collaborate with them. "We've seen it time and time again," he said. "Even signalling a willingness to cooperate strengthens them."³⁴



31. Council of Europe, ECRI Report on Bulgaria (sixth monitoring cycle). Published 4 October 2022. Available [here](#).
32. Council of Europe, ECRI Report on Italy (sixth monitoring cycle). Published 22 October 2024. Available [here](#).
33. E. Toscano, The Evolution of a Radicalised Mainstream: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Far-Right Shift in Italy. In: Sponholz et al. (eds) Radicalising the Mainstream in Western Europe. Palgrave Macmillan. 2025. Available [here](#).
34. Jon Henley, 'Vicious cycle': how far-right parties across Europe are cannibalising the centre right. The Guardian, 1 February 2025. Available [here](#).

Analysis shows that overall, far-right integration into the EU's political system is already well advanced and continues to grow. The member parties of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), in particular, are now treated as normal political actors in many areas: in the European Council, in the Council of the EU, in the European Commission and as part of changing majorities in the European Parliament. This normalisation is down to the European People's Party, as is the extent of far-right influence, and the question which faction of the far-right will prevail within the EU system. In the long-term, according to Max Becker, this ought to present the EPP with a political dilemma:

"The EPP will have to decide whether and to what extent it wants to carry on playing its tactical game of utilising shifting majorities across the political spectrum. But if the EPP wants to remain loyal to the pro-European camp, it will have to abandon sooner or later its pursuit of an increasingly con-tradictory course of value-based position-ing, on the one hand, and selective major-ity-building with far-right actors, on the other." ³⁵

In the immediate term, the EPP has shown itself to be completely unbothered and unhindered by such ethical dilemmas, and as the folks at the Good Lobby has demonstratively shown, the EPP continues to rely on the far-right to pass legislation or secure short-term political wins. ³⁶ Their tracking of EPP votes alongside the far-right prompted their warning that:



“

THE EPP IS NOT SIMPLY FLIRTING WITH THE FAR RIGHT – IT HAS INSTITUTIONALISED A TACTICAL ALLIANCE OF CONVENIENCE.

...THESE ALLIANCES MAY DELIVER SHORT-TERM PARLIAMENTARY WINS. BUT THE LONG-TERM PRICE IS IMMENSE:

EROSION OF DEMOCRATIC SAFEGUARDS, WEAKENED CLIMATE AMBITION, COMPROMISED TRANSPARENCY, AND A DANGEROUS LEGITIMISATION OF FORCES THAT THRIVE ON DIVISION AND EXCLUSION.

”

35. Max Becker et al. The Creeping Integration of Far-right Parties in Europe, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. 19 September 2025. Available [here](#).

36. The Good Lobby, The EU Far-Right Tracker: Exposing when the EPP sides with the Far Right. Available [here](#).



The Institutional Hollowing Out & Budget Risks Post—2028

The erosion of political norms described previously finds a dangerous parallel in the structural weakening of the financial frameworks designed to protect marginalised communities. In their critical position paper regarding the European Union's long-term budget plan (Multiannual Financial Framework 'MFF' 2028–2034), the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) and the European Network on Roma Inclusion under EU Funds (EURoma) warn that the proposed budget architecture threatens to decouple EU funding from its social mission precisely as political support for Roma inclusion fragments.

The Commission propose integrating the European Social Fund (Europe's principal funding mechanism for investing in people) into broad National and Regional Partnership Plans. By dissolving dedicated structures for investing in human capital into larger, less transparent pots, the proposal risks diluting the specific focus on social inclusion.

Without clear, ring-fenced funds for this purpose, Member States, many of which are now governed or influenced by parties

accommodating far-right rhetoric against minorities, are likely to prioritise infrastructure and competitiveness over targeted interventions for the most disadvantaged groups. This shift effectively allows political accommodation of xenophobia to translate directly into fiscal neglect.

The stakes are not abstract. In Spain, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano currently operates its EqualTreatment Programme, funded by the European Social Fund Plus, employing eleven Roma lawyers specialised in antigypsyism to defend victims of discrimination across the country. It stands as an innovative model of what dedicated ESF+ funding can deliver for Roma rights when it is ring-fenced and purpose directed. It is precisely this kind of targeted programme that the proposed dissolution of the ESF into generic Partnership Plans puts at risk.

Furthermore, the proposed framework marks a regression in accountability. Unlike previous programming periods, the post-2028 MFF largely confines references to Roma equality to non-binding recitals or limited performance indicators, removing the explicit objective on Roma inclusion that previously provided some small role as a safeguard.

As FSG and EURoma emphasise, this "mainstreaming" without explicit targets ignores historical evidence that without mandatory recognition and measurable goals, Romani communities are likely to be systematically overlooked.

Compounding these risks is the introduction of provisions allowing unused social funds to be redirected toward "crisis response." In a geopolitical climate where far-right actors successfully frame migration and minority rights as security threats, this mechanism offers a ready pathway to defund anti-discrimination efforts under the guise of emergency management. Additionally, the reliance on short-term, performance-based metrics penalises the long-term, structural work required to combat antigypsyism.

The convergence of these trends creates a feedback loop: as the cordon sanitaire crumbles and mainstream parties normalise cooperation with far-right forces, the political will to defend specific Roma objectives diminishes. Simultaneously, the new MFF removes the bureaucratic and financial guardrails that could have forced investment regardless of political climate. As FSG and EURoma assert, unless the EU reinstates a specific Roma equality objective, guarantees a minimum allocation (proposing 25%) for vulnerable groups, and strictly enforces rule-of-law conditionality, the next decade of EU spending may inadvertently institutionalise the very inequalities that the far-right thrives upon.

Blurred Lines in Hungary : Far—Right Radicals & Anti—Roma Racists



One striking illustration of the blurring of the lines between the radical and extremist strains of the far-right was made clear on the so-called 'Day of Honour' in Budapest in 2026. This event saw a convergence of interests between the ruling Fidesz party, its loyal opposition the extremist *Mi Hazánk*, and the paramilitary event organisers. On Sunday 14 February, neo-Nazis from all over Europe converged on the Castle district in Budapest to commemorate the failed breakout attempt by 28,000 Nazi Waffen SS and Wehrmacht units, and their Hungarian allies, as the advancing Soviet army encircled Budapest in early 1945.

For the first time, this event took place without anti-fascist counter protest. The police banned any such gatherings, citing the 2025 Fidesz legislation which declared 'Antifa' to be a terrorist organisation. The lead organiser of the Day of Honour is the 'national resistance movement', *Légió Hungária*, one in the cluster of far-right paramilitary groups adjacent to the extremist political party *Mi Hazánk*. *Légió Hungária* openly venerates historical fascist figures, engages in violent intimidation targeting the Roma, and maintains links to transnational neo-Nazi networks.

For its part, *Mi Hazánk*, which won seven seats in the 2022 general election on a program which was a mish-mash of conspiracy theories, homophobia, and anti-migrant Islamophobia, is distinctive because of its obsessive anti-Roma racism. In its [election posters and leaflets](#), they pledged to prevent Hungary becoming a "Gypsy country", and stressed "the need to fight against all aspects of Gypsy delinquency" with voluntary self-defence associations.

In Hungary's April 2026 elections, *Mi Hazánk's* support held firm, it secured 345,252 votes (5.63%), winning six seats.

THE STATE OF HATE: ANTIGYPSYISM & THE FAR-RIGHT IN EUROPE

The 2026 election campaign showed that anti-Roma racism was one driving common denominator for the far-right losers. In a shamelessly racist intervention Viktor Orbán openly declaring that while 320,000 Roma have no running water, they will have to hang on and wait, because “first the middle class must be given the opportunity to have their own apartment, because if we start with the lower class, the two classes will turn against each other.” Just days later, his Minister of Construction and Transport, János Lázár, decrying the need for a single migrant in the country, described Roma as Hungary’s ‘internal reserves’ to clean the nation’s ‘shit-spattered toilets’. As the ruling party began slipping behind in the polls, the same János Lázár, publicly called for unity between the ‘pro-sovereignty’ politicians of Mi Hazánk and Fidesz.

Collective Punishment and Mainstreaming Hate

Collective punishment by state and non-state actors has been a recurring feature of anti-Roma racism. Roma were frequently singled out for collective punishment throughout the twentieth century, victims of public cruelty orchestrated with official connivance, targeted because of their pariah status and their ethnicity. Mob violence and collective punishment against Roma persist in our present: ideologically-driven and politically orchestrated, such attacks are often carried out with brazen impunity wherever antigypsyism has been mainstreamed as an ‘acceptable form of racism’.

The dangers of hate speech and incitement to violence, often masquerading as ‘free speech’, have become all too apparent, as racists mass on the streets of European cities, and far right parties make their presence felt in local assemblies and national parliaments across the continent. The seeming impunity enjoyed by those who spread hate speech is especially dangerous, because as [Bhikhu Parekh](#) warned,

“If anything can be said about a group of persons with impunity, anything can also be done to it.

This is because if a group can be treated with contempt, stripped of dignity, dehumanized, treated as belonging to an inferior species, and a moral climate is created in which harm done to it is seen as right and proper and does not arouse a sense of outrage.”

The normalising of the ‘Day of Honour’, coupled with the criminalising of antifascist opposition by the then-ruling Fidesz party, is part of a wider European malaise. The resurgence of anti-democratic forces, the cross-border networking of nationalist and authoritarian political parties, and the exchange of ‘best practices’ between political and militant extremists, has blurred the lines between nominally constitutional parties, street movements, and criminal paramilitary extremists. This annual ‘Day of Honour’ in Budapest provides a stark reminder that we are witnessing a persistent and unremitting normalisation of neo-fascism in 21st Century Europe.



Participants in the 14th February 2026 ‘Day of Honour’ wearing Waffen SS helmets & uniforms.

Growing far-right mobilization against 'ethnic replacement', multiculturalism and minorities, means that Roma will continue to be singled out for collective blame and collective punishment by cynical nativist politicians and neo-fascist mobsters. The shocking outbreak of thuggish racist violence targeting Romani communities in the north of Ireland in June 2025 provided a reminder of the fragility of peace and personal security for racialized minorities in loyalist-dominated towns in the province.

Serious public disturbances followed social media accounts of an alleged rape of a teenage girl by three Romani youths in June 2025 in Ballymena. Within hours, scores of masked and hooded youths and men appeared on the streets among the masses of anti-immigrant protestors.



Photograph: Noémi Bulecza / Mércé

As one eye-witness journalist recounted: ³⁷

“**FIRST CAME THE SHOUTS AS THE CROWD WORKED ITS WAY THROUGH NARROW TERRACED STREETS, PROCLAIMING ITS MISSION TO RID THE TOWN OF ‘SCUM’. THEN CAME THE SHATTERED GLASS AS ROCKS EXPLODED THROUGH WINDOWS. THEN THE FLAMES, LICKING UP CURTAINS AND SPREADING TO SOFAS, CARPETS, BOOKS, AND FRAMED PICTURES UNTIL SMOKE BILLOWED INTO THE SUMMER NIGHT ...THE GOAL WAS EXPULSION, OR IMMOLATION.**”

Three days of mob violence followed, missile and arson attacks, targeting foreign-owned homes and businesses that terrorised immigrants in general but targeted Roma in particular. Rioters, with paramilitary connections, reportedly ordered householders to deactivate doorbell cameras and other devices that might identify those responsible for the mayhem. The Police Federation for Northern Ireland said its members had prevented a pogrom: *“What we saw was totally mindless, unacceptable and feral.”*

Informed sources estimated that two-thirds of the pre-riot Roma population of 1,200 left the town in the immediate aftermath. In [November 2025](#), it was reported that prosecutors, citing *“significant evidential developments”* dropped charges against the Romanian teenagers who were accused of raping a schoolgirl in Ballymena.

A reminder, if one were needed in 2026, that far-right racism was alive and kicking in the Republic of Ireland, came with the targeting of independent Senator Eileen Flynn for racist online abuse by Ireland’s insurgent anti-immigrant extremists (see over). Solidarity statements condemned the *“vile commentary, racist slurs, and attempts to normalise hatred”*, and the National Women’s Council declared: *“If Ireland is serious about equality in public life, then anti-Traveller racism and misogyny cannot continue to go unchallenged, whether online or offline.”* ³⁸

37. Rory Carroll, ‘Where are the foreigners?’: does a facile explanation lie behind Ballymena’s outbreak of hate? The Guardian. 14 June 2025. Available [here](#).

38. ERRC News, Anti-Traveller Racism: Irish Senator Targeted by the Far-Right with Vile Abuse and Threats. 29 April 2026. Available [here](#).

As for the wider collective targeting of Travellers in Ireland, high rates of racial profiling persist: according to the 2025 ECRI report, in the context of stop and search, Travellers recounted experiences of police harassment; threats to abuse power; Gardaí deliberately escalating conflict; and degrading treatment.³⁹

In Slovenia, the death of 48-year-old man Aleš Šutar at the hands of a group of Romani men, in October 2025, provoked a massive reaction: the police occupied Romani neighbourhoods, hate speech spiralled, as did protests against 'Roma criminality', and within two weeks, the government approved the Šutar Act which allows for significant increases in police powers to deal with criminality in society. Despite denials by the Prime Minister that the law was directed against any one ethnic group, the security bill was widely described by Slovenian media as being created to resolve the 'Roma issue.'⁴⁰

One particularly sinister aspect of racist mob violence against Roma has been the premeditated and public nature of many of the incidents. Perpetrators often act with brazen impunity, and as has been noted by international observers, policing is at best lax and plainly inadequate when it comes to protecting Roma and prosecuting attackers.⁴¹

In one such outrage in Serbia, a group of about 20 people descended upon a family home in Serbian village of Tavnik on 3 May 2025 (see next section). The Gaši family was the sole Romani family in the village, and the only returnees from Kosovo who were settled in the region by the Commissariat for Refugees. The mob blocked access to the street, brought bales of hay and set them on fire around the family house in an attempt to start a fire. Family members, including a ten-month-old infant were physically attacked and racially abused. The police then intervened, but failed to apprehend the leader of the mob, who was already a known violent racist.⁴²

The fate of Romani communities in the 21st Century is to be overpoliced and under-protected, and the anti-Roma bias of law enforcement sends clear signals to nativist movements and mobs that Roma remain 'fair game' in this age of extremes.

39. Council of Europe, ECRI Report on Ireland (sixth monitoring cycle) 28 October 2025. Available [here](#).

40. ERRC News, Romani activists fear collective punishment & discrimination as Slovenia passes new 'security' bill. 7 November 2025. Available [here](#).

41. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Institutional racism of law-enforcement authorities against Roma and Travellers, Draft Resolution and Explanatory Memorandum, Prepared by Mr. Jean-Pierre Grin, rapporteur. Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, 10 November 2023. Available [here](#).

42. Danas, Roma Voice for Justice: A family of Roma returnees from Kosovo attacked near Kraljevo. 3 May 2025. Available [here](#).

Calendar of Hate 2025—2026

12 May 2026

European Court rules against Bulgaria for outrageous anti-Roma Hate Speech

In two related rulings on Tuesday, May 12, concerning notorious hate speeches by far-right extremist politician Valeri Simeonov, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) stated that it was beyond doubt that they “amounted to extreme negative stereotyping meant to vilify Roma in Bulgaria and stir up prejudice and hatred towards them.” In both cases, the court ruled that domestic civil courts in Bulgaria failed to meet their positive obligation to afford redress to Roma applicants for extreme negative stereotyping statements made by the leader of a political party. The Court rejected the Bulgarian government’s contention that statements made by the politician were “isolated comments” which constituted political speech, meant chiefly to confront his political opponents. Simeonov had described Roma as “brazen, arrogant and brutalised humanoids”, and female Roma as “women with the instincts of street-bitches.” ⁴³

7 May 2026

Ferocious Firebomb Attack on Sleeping Roma Family by Neo-Nazi Terror Group in Hungary

Masked Neo-Nazis broke down the door of a sleeping family in the Hungarian town of Cegléd, shouting “You are going to die now!”

They threw a flaming Molotov cocktail into a room where eight young children, including an infant lay, and mutilated the father with a brush-cutter before fleeing. It was reported that the attackers belonged to an extremist group calling themselves *Peacekeepers*. Among the items later seized by police were swastika-emblazoned knuckle-dusters, as well as several weapons, ammunition, homemade devices, pyrotechnic materials, gunpowder, and firearm components at the suspects’ property. Police launched an investigation for armed trespassing and grievous bodily harm causing permanent disability. The ERRC filed a criminal complaint with the public prosecutor and relevant local authorities to insist that the racist motivation for the attack is taken into account in the ongoing investigation. ⁴⁴

43. ERRC News, European Court rules against Bulgaria for outrageous anti-Roma hate speech. 12 May 2026. Available [here](#).

44. ERRC News, Ferocious Firebomb Attack on Sleeping Roma Family by Neo-Nazi Terror Group in Hungary. 7 May 2026. Available [here](#).

29 April 2026

Anti-Traveller Racism: Irish Senator Targeted by the Far-Right with Vile Abuse and Threats

Independent Senator Eileen Flynn, the first woman from the Traveller community to sit in Ireland's Seanad (Senate), said that the latest wave of abuse and threats, that appeared on X in the wake of her comments about fuel protests and far-right infiltration, was the worst she has ever experienced. In her contribution to a Seanad debate, Flynn had said she would not attend any protests where the Irish tricolour was being flown, because it has become a symbol exploited by members of the far right: *"I will not stand by when our flag is being used to promote hatred, division and anti-migrant remarks. For me, the flag means peace, unity and justice and equality."* The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM), in a statement condemning the abuse against Senator Flynn deplored the *"vile commentary, racist slurs, and attempts to normalise hatred (as) deeply disturbing and completely unacceptable, and that personal attacks, racism, and misogyny have no place in public discourse."* ⁴⁵

31 March 2026

Stoking Ethnic Tension in Pre-Election Hungary as Neo-Fascists March in Kálló

On Saturday 28th March, an estimated 1000 supporters of *Mi Hazánk Mozgalom* (Our Homeland Movement), and members of its affiliate paramilitary groups marched in the village of Kálló, in what the party's chairman László Toroczkai billed as a 'pro-order' demonstration. The rally went ahead after the Cúria (Supreme Court) overruled an earlier ban by the local police department on public safety grounds. Following a confrontation with locals on 13th March, members of *Mi Hazánk* and their racist vigilantes turned tail and beat a hasty retreat from Kálló. Toroczkai then promised thousands would return. Scores of supporters were bussed in from all corners of the country to rally behind the election slogan *"Enough with Crime"*.

Mi Hazánk is an overtly racist party that has pledged to prevent Hungary becoming a "Gypsy country" (Cigányország). This set-piece confrontation in Kálló promised more of a spectacle than Toroczkai's lacklustre stops on his nationwide campaign tour for the April elections.

For this reason, Roma civil organisations and the opposition front-runners Tisza urged their supporters to stay away and deny the far-right the slightest opportunity for any provocation. ⁴⁶

25 February 2026

Roma Targeted Again in Hungary by Far-Right Vigilante Group

Hungarian prosecutors initiated criminal proceedings against the *Bűnvadászok* (Crime Hunters), a vigilante group linked to the far-right *Mi Hazánk* party. The charges, brought after a complaint was filed in March 2025 by Romani complainant József Ferenczik, will likely include group vigilantism and violation of personal freedom. The Crime Hunters represent the latest manifestation of far-right anti-Roma paramilitarism, with its patterns of intimidation, police complicity, and systemic impunity. The complaint alleges that the Crime Hunters' operations show *"an eerie parallel with the SA terror seen at the dawn of the Nazi dictatorship: civilians provoke a crime, then 'pass judgment' with physical violence and intimidation, while the police legitimise the vigilantism through passive assistance."*

The group leader unabashedly admitted to disproportionately targeting Roma (who they frequently describe as *"parasites"* on their social media channels), and continue to operate with apparent impunity, backed by lawmakers from Hungary's far-right *Mi Hazánk* party. ⁴⁷

30 January 2026

Italian Far-Right MEP Dismisses Roma Inclusion as 'Futile' in Racist Rant

In her latest anti-Roma tirade on social media, Lega MEP Silvia Sardone from the Patriots for Europe group, castigated the EU for: *"throwing millions away on an unachievable goal: trying to integrate Roma"*. Citing nine Roma inclusion related projects, she accused the Commission of allocating *"a whopping €2.2 million"* since 2022, and declared, *"Enough with the money wasted on the non-existent integration of Roma."* She described the goal of inclusion as futile, because:

"Roma trample on the law 24/7, with thefts and illegal landfills, adults who don't work and children who don't go to school, unpaid bills, and illegal camps: and the EU, so dear to the do-gooder left, pampers them." ⁴⁸

45. ERRC News, Anti-Traveller Racism: Irish Senator Targeted by the Far-Right with Vile Abuse and Threats. 29 April 2026. Available [here](#).
46. ERRC News, Stoking Ethnic Tension in Pre-Election Hungary as Neo-Fascists March in Kálló. 31 March 2026. Available [here](#).
47. ERRC News, Roma Targeted Again: Hungary's Latest Far-Right Vigilante Group Echoes Dark History. 25 February 2026. Available [here](#).
48. ERRC News, Italian Far-Right MEP Dismisses Roma Inclusion as 'Futile' in Racist Rant. 30 January 2026. Available [here](#).

“THE ROMA ARE PARASITES OF OUR SOCIETY”

EMANUELE LICOPODIO

LEGA MUNICIPAL COUNCILLOR, ROME VI DISTRICT

15 January 2026

The New Face of 21st Century Fascism? Anti-Roma MP Filip Turek Accused Of ‘Adoring’ the Nazis by Czech President

“The fact that a Gypsy was burned should, if anything, be taken as a mitigating circumstance...” This is how politician Filip Turek is said to have commented on the horrific 2009 arson attack by [neo-Nazis in Vítkov, Czech Republic](#), in which the then two-year-old Romani girl Natálka was severely injured, sustaining 70% burns.

Outrage followed this revelation, and in a [public statement in October 2025](#), the ROMEA news organisation declared that Turek’s comment can only be understood “as an open, racist, relativization of the attempted murder of a child.” ROMEA called on the leader of the ANO movement and Prime Minister, Andrej Babiš, not to nominate Turek – the Nazi-adoring honorary chair of the Motorists for Themselves party – as a minister; and should he go ahead with the nomination, ROMEA asked the President of the Republic not to appoint him to the position. Babiš went ahead and nominated Turek, notorious for his anti-Roma, homophobic, misogynistic and racist posts and statements. On 9 January 2026, [President Pavel published a letter addressed to Prime Minister Babiš](#), formally rejecting the Prime Minister’s nomination of Filip Turek to run the environment ministry.⁴⁹

6 October 2025

Fatal Accident in Milan Sparks Hate Speech and Nationwide Eviction Plan Against Roma by the Italian Far-Right

A wave of racist hate speech from Italian politicians followed in the wake of a fatal traffic accident involving a stolen car driven by a young Roma, with statements dehumanising Roma and echoing calls for collective punishment.

Among the first to call for an ‘ethnic reckoning’ was Deputy Prime Minister and Lega leader [Matteo Salvini](#), who demanded the demolition of Romani camps, the arrest of parents, and the revocation of their parental rights: *“She was run over and killed by a stolen car, reportedly driven by Romani minors. If confirmed, it would be outrageous. The Roma camp must be cleared immediately and razed to the ground. After years of thefts and violence, these so-called ‘parents’ must be arrested and stripped of custody. Mayor Sala and the left, where are you?”*

Emanuele Licopodio, a Lega city councillor in Rome declared, *“The Roma are parasites of our society”* in a social media video where he called on the Meloni government to evict the camp in Via Salone.

Roma Rights Network member, [Associazione 21 Luglio](#), immediately filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor’s Office against the Lega representative for incitement to racial hatred.⁵⁰

49. ERRC News, Italian Far-Right MEP Dismisses Roma Inclusion as ‘Futile’ in Racist Rant. 30 January 2026. Available [here](#).

50. ERRC News, The New Face of 21st Century Fascism? Anti-Roma MP Filip Turek Accused Of ‘Adoring’ the Nazis by Czech President. 15 January 2026. Available [here](#).

9 May 2025

Romani Family with Infant targeted by mob in arson attack in Serbia

In the Serbian village of Tavnik on 3rd May 2025, a violent mob of around twenty individuals surrounded and brutally attacked a Romani family in their home (described above). [Romski glas za pravdu \(Romani Voice for Justice\)](#), reported that the infant was physically attacked, as well other family members; and that the mob shouted ethnic slurs, cursed their “Gypsy mothers” and told them to “go back to Turkey”. When they were filing a report at the police station, the officer on duty made a racist remark that “Roma need to learn how to socialise.” Additionally, the man who led the attackers was already known in the locality for instigating previous racist incidents without consequence. Despite the clear danger and the family’s fears of reprisals, the police merely told them to return home.



Photograph: Romski glas za pravdu

The Romski glas za pravdu network and the ERRC demanded a full criminal investigation and prosecution, considering hate crimes with aggravating circumstances; and protection and support for the Gaši family.⁵¹

20 January 2025

Czech Vice-Mayor Forced to Resign over Racist Remarks

Controversy erupted in the Czech Republic, after Romea.cz reported racist remarks made in a press interview by vice-mayor Alena Pataky, which prompted her subsequent resignation. Pataky, vice-mayor of the Municipal Department of Moravská Ostrava and Přívoz, member of the ANO party, and a ‘social educator’ said:

“The mentality of the Roma has not changed since the 13th century because of their absolutely different equipment, genetically speaking. Education is not their life’s aim. They have absolutely different aims. The itinerancy that was seeded into them somewhere in India still persists in a certain way.”

Commenting on the affair, following Pataky’s resignation, Jan Húsak wrote that “Her resignation would be an example of taking political responsibility if we lived in an ideal world. However, in reality it is more an exceptional episode in Czech politics, where such deeds and words frequently have no such repercussions.”⁵²

51. ERRC News, Romani Family with infant targeted by mob in arson attack in Serbia. 9 May 2025. Available [here](#).
52. ERRC News, Czech Vice-Mayor Forced to Resign Over Racist Remarks. 20 January 2025. Available [here](#).

HOW STATES FAIL ROMANI WOMEN & CHILDREN



One year after Ramajana Asan, a 36-year-old Romani woman, was murdered by her partner in her own home in front of her five-year-old daughter in North Macedonia, the national equality body rejected a complaint brought by the ERRC, which asserted that police inaction constituted intersectional discrimination.

Despite multiple reports of domestic violence made by Ramajana—including in the presence of her father and other witnesses—authorities failed to file a formal criminal complaint or implement protective measures. Police officers allegedly dismissed her complaints, reassuring her that she would ‘reconcile’ with her abuser, rather than conducting risk assessments or pursuing legal action.

The ERRC filed the complaint against the Interior Ministry on the grounds that police inaction constituted intersectional discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, sex, and marginalisation. The Commission concluded that the legal threshold for discrimination was not met and that intersectional discrimination was not established in the actions of the Ministry of Interior. In a powerful article, ERRC’s Judit Ignac wrote:

“This was not an unforeseen failure of justice. A man had already killed a Romani woman after institutions failed to protect her. For many Romani women, seeking protection from violence means navigating institutions that often minimise their experiences, ignore warning signs, or treat their intersecting vulnerabilities as invisible. It is another painful example of how domestic violence can escalate fatally when institutions’ responses are biased, delayed, or insufficient.”⁵³

According to testimonies from local Romani women’s organisations and advocacy groups, Ramajana Asan sought help from the police more than once before her murder. Even though authorities are obliged in domestic violence cases to assess risk, document indicators of abuse, and act where there is reasonable suspicion of any harm, many of Ramajana’s statements were not fully recorded and no formal criminal complaint or protective measures followed.

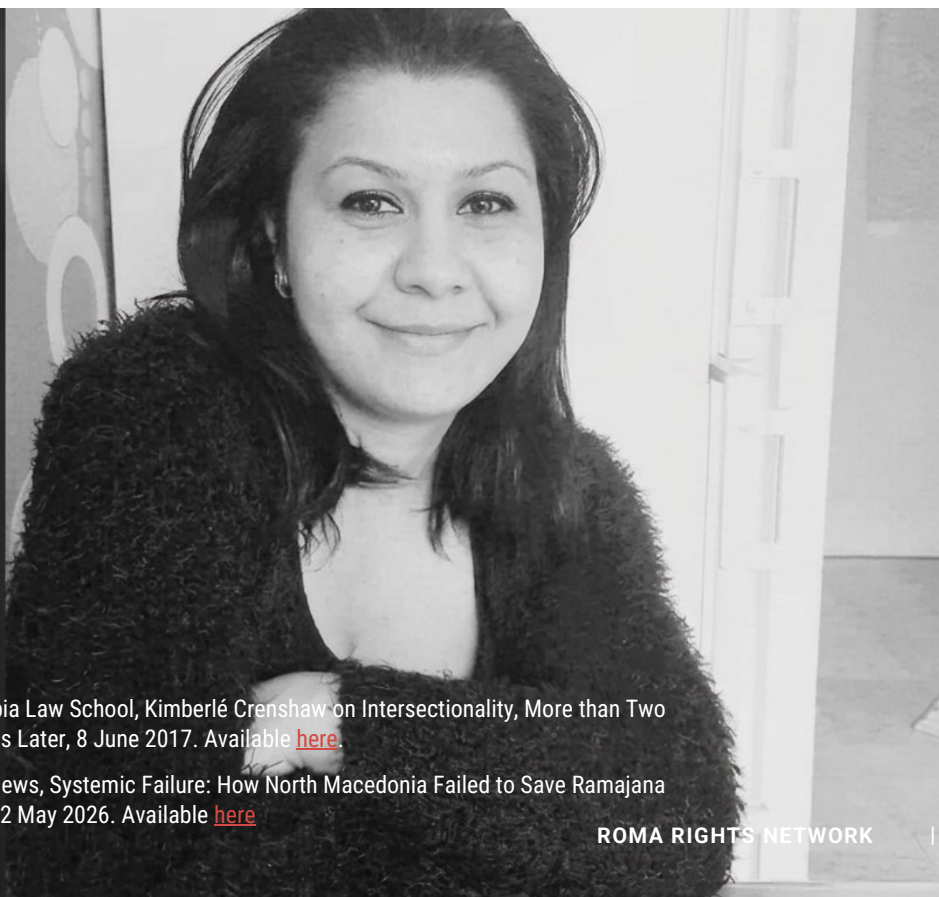
53. ERRC News, Systemic Failure: How North Macedonia Failed to Save Ramajana Asan, 22 May 2026. Available [here](#).

The Roma Rights Network promotes an intersectional approach to defending Roma rights. Following Kimberlé Crenshaw, we understand intersectionality as

“a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.” ⁵⁴

This is not ‘too complicated’ to get to grips with. In very practical terms, when it comes to violence against Romani and other ethnic minority women, policy and justice approaches to combat such violence need a complete overhaul. Discriminatory practices do not always appear as explicit refusal or overt, direct hostility. Research by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and the Association Initiative for Women’s Rights from Shuto Orizari documents systemic barriers Romani women face when seeking protection from domestic violence in North Macedonia, such as recurring patterns in which police discourage formal complaints or encourage reconciliation. Repeated incidents are treated as isolated rather than cumulative, risk assessments are inconsistent, documentation and intervention are optional or delayed. Routinely warnings replace investigations, danger is systematically minimised and institutional follow-up is limited or absent.

“ROMANI WOMEN HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF BEING TREATED AS LESS CREDIBLE, LESS URGENT, AND LESS DESERVING OF INSTITUTIONAL CARE. LONGSTANDING STEREOTYPES AGAINST THEM, SUCH AS ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT UNRELIABILITY, CONFLICTS, OR THE ‘NORMALISATION’ OF VIOLENCE WITHIN ROMANI COMMUNITIES, INFLUENCE HOW RISK IS ASSESSED AND HOW URGENTLY CASES ARE HANDLED.” ⁵⁵



54. Columbia Law School, Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later, 8 June 2017. Available [here](#).

55. ERRC News, Systemic Failure: How North Macedonia Failed to Save Ramajana Asan, 22 May 2026. Available [here](#)

What is missing is a full reckoning by authorities of how the trauma of violence is further aggravated by other forms of discrimination. As regards domestic violence, incidents such as the murder of a young Romani mother in front of her child in North Macedonia are all too frequent right across Europe. Failure to get to grips with an intersectional approach to counter such violence has very real, life-threatening – and in the case of Ramajana Asan – fatal consequences.

One of the most shocking consequences of antigypsyism in Europe this century has been the murder and maiming of Romani children by neo-Nazis in gun and bomb attacks on family homes and settlements. Beyond these atrocities, hundreds of thousands of Romani children continue to live in squalid conditions in segregated camps and emergency shelters, in slum neighbourhoods and irregular settlements, under constant fear of eviction, harried and harassed, without any security of tenure and no prospect whatsoever of social integration. These conditions take a terrible toll on family life and cause untold trauma to Romani children.

The grim reality is that hundreds of thousands of Romani children bear the consequences of the institutional violence that comprises ‘everyday racism’, and continue to bear the brunt of social exclusion, educational segregation, and myriad forms of discrimination that blight their life opportunities and damage their wellbeing. That Romani children’s fundamental rights are so routinely and egregiously abused is an affront that should inspire outrage and indignation among all right-minded citizens. But somehow it doesn’t.

A chilling aspect of anti-Roma racism is the extent to which ordinary, everyday people simply acquiesce and remain indifferent to the suffering of the youngest and most vulnerable of Europe’s citizens. Especially worrying are the indications that despite all the policy frameworks for inclusion, things are actually worsening for many Romani children inside and beyond the European Union.

The following review of violence against Romani women and children in 2025-26 reveals a litany of cruelty, accounts of struggles against injustice by the Roma Rights Network and others, and institutional failures to deliver justice and protection for the most vulnerable.

NO SAFE PLACE

Hungary's Child Care Abuse Scandal & the Betrayal of Romani Children



By Judit Ignácz

**“THEY MADE US STRIP DOWN TO OUR UNDERWEAR AND BEAT US.
HE YELLS, USES BAD WORDS, AND THREATENS TO BEAT US.
I WAS GOING TO MY ROOM, HE HUGGED ME, AND HE GROPED MY BREAST.”**

These are not words we should hear coming out of children's mouths in a children's home. They describe experiences no child should ever have, but they reflect lived realities for many. In 2025, Hungary was wracked by several scandals involving severe, systemic abuse and neglect in state-run children's homes.

Multiple investigations and reports showed a litany of physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional violence affecting many vulnerable children in care. Although there are no national disaggregated data in these cases, we know that Romani children are significantly overrepresented in Hungary's child welfare system, making them particularly exposed to these forms of violence.⁵⁶

56. ERRC News, No Safe Place: How Hungary's Child Care Abuse Scandal Betrays Romani Children. 20 January 2026. Available [here](#).

From protection to punishment: abuse inside Hungary's children's homes

In the [Hűvösvölgy Children's Home](#) of Budapest, at least four 12-13-year-old children were physically and emotionally abused by their caregivers, including being screamed at, slapped, spat on, and forced to perform degrading tasks such as picking up crumbs one by one or massaging caregivers' feet. One supervisor reportedly called a child "dog jizz," and among other verbal abuses said, "If you don't behave, I'll make sure you end up in a closed institution where you'll be fucked in the ass! You little shit!"

According to one of the care guardians whom a child turned to with his complaints, when confronting the institution's director, his response was, "if the consequence of this incident is that the child supervisor gets suspended" and they "leave the children's home because of it, everyone here will gang up" against the child, and "together they will make his life a living hell." The Pest County Office of the National Directorate General for Social Affairs and Child Protection (SZGYF) provides support to the institution, including communication and anger management training, as well as a course called Children's Rights and Children's Yoga.

In Sopron's (Cseresznyevirág) Children's Home, law enforcement opened a criminal case after a staff member [dragged kindergarten-aged children by the hair and locked them in a dark room](#) "as discipline" for misbehaviour. The worker was dismissed.

These are not the first cases in the institution. In 2024, authorities [reviewed files](#) documenting past abuses over the previous fifteen years, including children's testimonies describing cold showers, being forced to kneel on the floor, and even an incident in which a child's head was pressed against shards of glass.

In [Szolnok's reception home](#), footage and survivor testimonies [revealed](#) that a supervisor came to work drunk, beat the boys, groped the girls, and tied infants to radiators with cloths. Guardians and colleagues who reported problems faced retaliation. The abusive supervisor resigned but was later hired by another institution despite complaints.

Some of the most shocking cases came from the juvenile correctional institution located on [Szőlő Street](#) in Budapest. The Central Investigative Prosecutor's Office has prosecuted seven people. Investigations show that abuses involved extreme mistreatment, including physical violence and sexual coercion, and exploitation through child prostitution and human trafficking. On 19th January, an interior ministerial decree effectively shut down the Szőlő Street institution with immediate effect. A new decree that entered into force the day after, states it is necessary to "restructure the organizational system of reformatory institutions," and the first step in this process is "the termination of the operation of the Budapest Juvenile institution on Szőlő Street."



Political and public reaction

Tens of thousands of people [protested in Budapest](#), demanding accountability and the resignation of political leaders over inaction and cover-ups related to child abuse cases. Opposition parties and some European-level actors have called for [parliamentary investigations](#) and an EU-level inspection of Hungary's child protection system. Courts ordered the Interior Ministry to [release inspection reports on children's homes](#), including data on abuse incidents, which officials must now provide to journalists and the public.

In several recent cases, authorities launched investigations into endangering minors. So far, in 2023, [one priest has been sentenced to 28 years in prison](#) for raping, physically and

sexually abusing, molesting and endangering the physical safety of multiple children between 2007 and 2017, while working at the Szent László Child Protection Centre in Tusnádfürdő and the Szent Katalin Home in Kászonimpér.

In September 2019, János Vársárhelyi, former director of the Kossuth Zsuzsa Children's Home in Bicske, was convicted of sexually abusing at least ten minors and sentenced to eight years in prison. His deputy, Endre Kónya, was convicted in 2021 of coercion for covering up the abuse, pressuring victims to withdraw their testimony, and was sentenced to over three years. However, in 2023, former Hungarian President Katalin Novák [pardoned him](#). She later resigned in February 2024, along with the former minister of justice.

When the state enables abuse

These incidents of 2025 are not isolated but part of a broader pattern of historical, structural failures and dysfunction to protect children in children's care institutions run by the state, the church, or charitable private organisations. Children in these institutions were supposed to be protected from abusive, unsafe family environments or given support for rebuilding their future, but instead, they have been subjected to abuse, sexual harassment, fear, violence, neglect, and left with the burden of severe trauma that accompanies them for the rest of their lives.

Over the past decade, many scandals have come to light across Hungary, including in Bicske, Kalocsa, and Göd. The Hungarian Helsinki Committee [reviewed](#) Hungary's Commissioner for Fundamental Rights (Ombudsperson) investigations in closed institutions, including children's homes, juvenile institutions, and disability care institutions. The focus of these investigations was the detection and prevention of torture, inhuman, and degrading treatment, as well as assessing how the state responds to such abuses. Based on these reports, approximately 40% of children in certain specialised children's homes have been involved in prostitution in some way, while institutional workers mainly failed to fulfil their mandatory reporting obligations in these cases.



Racialised child removal is racist violence

Social welfare and child protection are often missing from national integration strategies and EU Roma strategic frameworks as well, which narrows their focus on the situation of Romani children in education, skipping important issues such as violence and abuse in the children's welfare system and state care.

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)'s research has long shown that Romani children are disproportionately overrepresented in Hungary's state care system. This makes them multiply vulnerable to the very abuses documented above.

Additionally, Romani children are removed from their families, often without sufficient legal or social justification, usually for cited reasons of inadequate housing, non-attendance at school, or poverty (illegally). A new Hungarian law allows the guardianship authority to decide to remove a child before they are born.

Instead of supporting families to access the full range of services they need, and the realisation and protection of their rights, the Hungarian state places children into seriously underfunded, rotten institutional care, combined in many cases with racist and often unqualified staff who continue to expose Romani children to severe risk of abuse, violence, exclusion, trafficking, and discrimination.



LOOK BACK IN ANGER

Gendered Harm and Child Abuse of Roma 2025—2026

17 June 2026

North Macedonia: Equality Body Confirms Segregation of Romani Children in Kičevo Primary School

North Macedonia's Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination (KSZD), which has confirmed that Romani children have been subjected to ethnic segregation at OOU "Sande Shterjoški" primary school in Kičevo, North Macedonia. The Commission confirmed that segregation on grounds of ethnicity exists at OOU "Sande Shterjoški" primary school in Kičevo and the practice constitutes discrimination under national anti-discrimination legislation. The complaint to the Commission was brought by the ERRC with support from Roma Rights Network member, Ednakva Pravda. The decision reinforces the standards established by the European Court of Human Rights in the landmark case of *Elmazova and Others v. North Macedonia* (2022), in which it has been stated that segregation does not need to be intentional to be unlawful.⁵⁷

22 May 2026

Systemic Failure: How North Macedonia Failed to Save Ramajana Asan

In North Macedonia, following the murder of Ramajana Asan by her partner (see introduction) the national equality body rejected a complaint brought by the ERRC, which maintained that police inaction constituted intersectional discrimination. A key part of the Equality Body's reasoning focused on a documented incident from March 2020, in which Ramajana asked the police to only issue a warning her partner and did not pursue formal prosecution. This became central to the conclusion that institutional responsibility had not been engaged in a discriminatory way.

According to ERRC's Judit Ignac, "*the continued reliance on victim-initiated protection is deeply troubling. This reasoning wrongly interprets hesitation as the absence of harm, withdrawal as resolution, and silence as safety. It shifts responsibility for protection onto the person at highest risk and assumes that the absence of a formal complaint means there is no danger.*"

57. ERRC Press Release: North Macedonia: Equality Body Confirms Segregation of Romani Children in Kičevo Primary School. 17 June 2026. Available [here](#).

24 January 2026

Kiosk owner who dragged a 13-year-old Romani boy into a bush and beat him faces legal action.

Romani parents took legal action after a kiosk-owner dragged their 13-year-old son out of a shopping mall and beat him in a bush while allegedly insulting him based on his ethnicity in Kragujevac, Serbia. The boy suffered multiple physical injuries, a hematoma on the lip, and injuries to his neck and jaw, which were confirmed by medical examinations, and the family submitted documentation and photos to the authorities. Due to experiencing psychological trauma, the boy was also taken to a psychiatrist.

"The authorities must ensure that both the child's age and his ethnic background are central to the investigation and prosecution of this case, as the law requires. This incident must be examined not merely as an act of assault, but also as a potential hate crime. Any response that falls short of this standard would represent a failure to protect a child from violence and to effectively address racially motivated crime." - said Andrea Colak, the ERRC's Legal Consultant in Serbia.⁵⁸

24 November 2025

North Macedonia: Terrifying knifepoint ordeal for eight-year-old Romani victim of hate crime

The ERRC filed a complaint with the Ombudsman on 17 October following a shocking incident, where a traumatised and weeping eight-year-old boy was threatened, degraded, and forced at knifepoint by two adult perpetrators to kneel and kiss their shoes. This atrocious incident, which took place in early November in the city of Strumica, was recorded by the attackers, and disseminated on Facebook. Subsequently, the authorities reportedly identified both men and placed them under house arrest. The ERRC complaint asserted that this incident was one of hate-motivated violence grounded in race, ethnic origin, membership of a marginalised group, and age. The complaint emphasised the organised nature of the abuse, the deliberate filming, and public posting on social media, which caused secondary victimisation through public exposure, comments, and sharing. The ERRC argued that these factors *"elevate the case beyond an 'ordinary' crime into the sphere of hate crimes and discrimination against Romani children."*⁵⁹

5 November 2025

ERRC Pushes to end school segregation in Albania and North Macedonia

The ERRC, working together with national equality bodies, took the decisive step to ensure that legal protections are enforced into real change by filing two Rule 9 submissions to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The submissions concern two cases of school segregation; [X and Others v. Albania](#) and [Elmazova and Others v. North Macedonia](#), and urge the governments in North Macedonia and Albania to dismantle segregated schools and deliver meaningful remedies for affected communities.⁶⁰

9 September 2025

ERRC calls for investigation into alleged medical neglect of Romani mother resulting in stillbirth

The ERRC called for an urgent inquiry into allegations of criminal neglect by hospital staff, of Bojana Marković, following the tragic loss of her baby in the maternity ward of the Leskovac General Hospital on the evening of the 31 August 2025. Despite the 24-year-old's repeated complaints of intense pain she was not taken to the delivery room. When she first experienced labour pains, she reportedly received an injection to induce dilation. A CTG (foetal heart monitoring) scan taken at 17:30 showed the baby was still alive. Despite being in active labour and in extreme agony, her complaints of severe pain were reportedly ignored, and following a second CTG scan taken approximately two hours later, staff informed Bojana's father and her husband that the baby had died.⁶¹

58. ERRC News, Serbia: Kiosk owner who dragged a 13-year-old Romani boy into a bush and beat him faces legal action. 24 January 2026. Available [here](#).

59. ERRC News, North Macedonia: Terrifying knifepoint ordeal for eight-year-old Romani victim of hate crime. 24 November 2025. Available [here](#).

60. ERRC News, Breaking the Cycle of School Segregation: ERRC Pushes for Romani Children's Rights in Albania and North Macedonia. 5 November 2025. Available [here](#).

61. ERRC News, ERRC calls for investigation into alleged medical neglect of Romani mother resulting in stillbirth. 9 September 2025. Available [here](#).

8 September 2025

'Family-friendly' Hungary: Horrific reports of child abuse and neglect in state care facility

Shocking images of abuse and neglect from a children's home – including one of an eighteen-month-old boy tied to a radiator with a scarf – were broadcast in a report by [RTL's Házon kívül](#) on 17 August. The report, which revealed accounts of sexual and violent abuse of young residents by some staff, included images of teenagers sleeping on filthy mattresses, a five-year-old with a cut wrist, and smashed glass doors.

One young victim, who waived anonymity, [spoke publicly](#) of how when she arrived at the home, she was shouted at and forcefully grabbed by one of the childminders, who was drunk, and according to the report, routinely beat the boys and molested the girls. When she went to the management with the accusations, she wasn't believed. Even when one of the adult colleagues reported the abuser's actions to the police, no action was taken. Eventually the abuser voluntarily resigned, *"but was then hired by another church-run child protection institution because he passed the impeccable conduct test."*⁶²

18 July 2025

'Family-Friendly' Hungary Allows for Removals to be Decided Before a Child is Born

Less than a month after the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled against Hungary for wrongfully removing a new-born from its Romani mother, the Orbán regime doubled down and introduced a new amendment to the child protection law, enabling the authorities to decide on removal even before a child is born. According to the amendment passed on 1 July 2025, the guardianship authority may decide to remove a child before she is born, if child welfare risk factors are discovered during pregnancy, that endanger the child's *"physical, intellectual, emotional or moral development"*, and have not been eliminated by the 31st week of the mother's pregnancy.⁶³

6 March 2025

Coercive sterilisation: Prague court victory for victims of coercive sterilization

In a landmark court victory, the Prague Municipal Court ruled that compensation for forced sterilisation can be awarded on the basis of a family member's testimony. The court overturned the rejection of a compensation claim by the Czech Health Ministry of a Romani woman, who was sterilised without informed consent back in 1981. As recounted by [Romea.cz](#), the plaintiff described how in 1981, pregnant with her sixth child, her doctor pressured and eventually persuaded her to terminate the pregnancy. Immediately prior to the procedure, physicians suggested she also undergo sterilisation. According to her testimony, *"They just told me it was birth control,"* nobody explained to her what sterilisation actually meant, and nobody warned her that it was irreversible.⁶⁴

4 March 2025

31 Romani children found in 'house of horrors', police officer among eight arrested for trafficking

Shock waves swept across Bosnia following the revelation that eight people, including a police officer, were arrested on charges including human trafficking, after 31 Romani children under the age of 12 were found in a house. The 'house of horrors' story only came to light on the evening of 25 February 2025, after a 'disoriented' 12-year-old girl with two young children, approached a passer-by in the street for help, explaining that they did not want to go back to the house.

In a letter to the authorities, the ERRC welcomed the speedy arrests and the apparent urgency with which this investigation is being conducted, but expressed deep concern at reports that unknown numbers of children have 'passed through' this house over a number of years, with a report related to this case having allegedly been filed with the competent institutions back in 2018: *"The direct involvement of a local police officer, and the fact that these activities went unchecked for years, while the alleged perpetrators remained at liberty and unhindered, raises the alarming possibility of wider official collusion."*⁶⁵

62. ERRC News, Family-friendly Hungary: Horrific reports of child abuse and neglect in state care facility. 8 September 2025. Available [here](#).

63. ERRC News, 'Family-Friendly' Hungary Allows for Removals to be decided before a child is born. 18 July 2025. Available [here](#).

64. ERRC News, Coercive sterilisation: Prague court victory for victims of coercive sterilization. 6 March 2025. Available [here](#).

65. ERRC News, 31 Romani children found in 'house of horrors', police officer among eight arrested for trafficking. 4 March 2025. Available [here](#).



EUROPE'S SILENT FORCED EVICTION SCANDAL

Fighting forced evictions of Roma has long been a priority for activists in the Roma Rights Network and it remains one of the most intractable areas of our work. From Italy and France to Macedonia and Ukraine, for nearly 30 years, together with its partners, the ERRC has taken local authorities and landlords to court; campaigned alongside local rights groups to protest and prevent coercive evictions – often carried out in the depths of winter and in defiance of international law and constitutional obligations. Roma Rights activist lawyers have often sought, and many times obtained, interim measures to halt impending evictions of the very young and very old, heavily pregnant, ill and disabled persons, to prevent them ending up forced onto the streets, and callously exposed to conditions that pose grave and potentially fatal risks to their health.

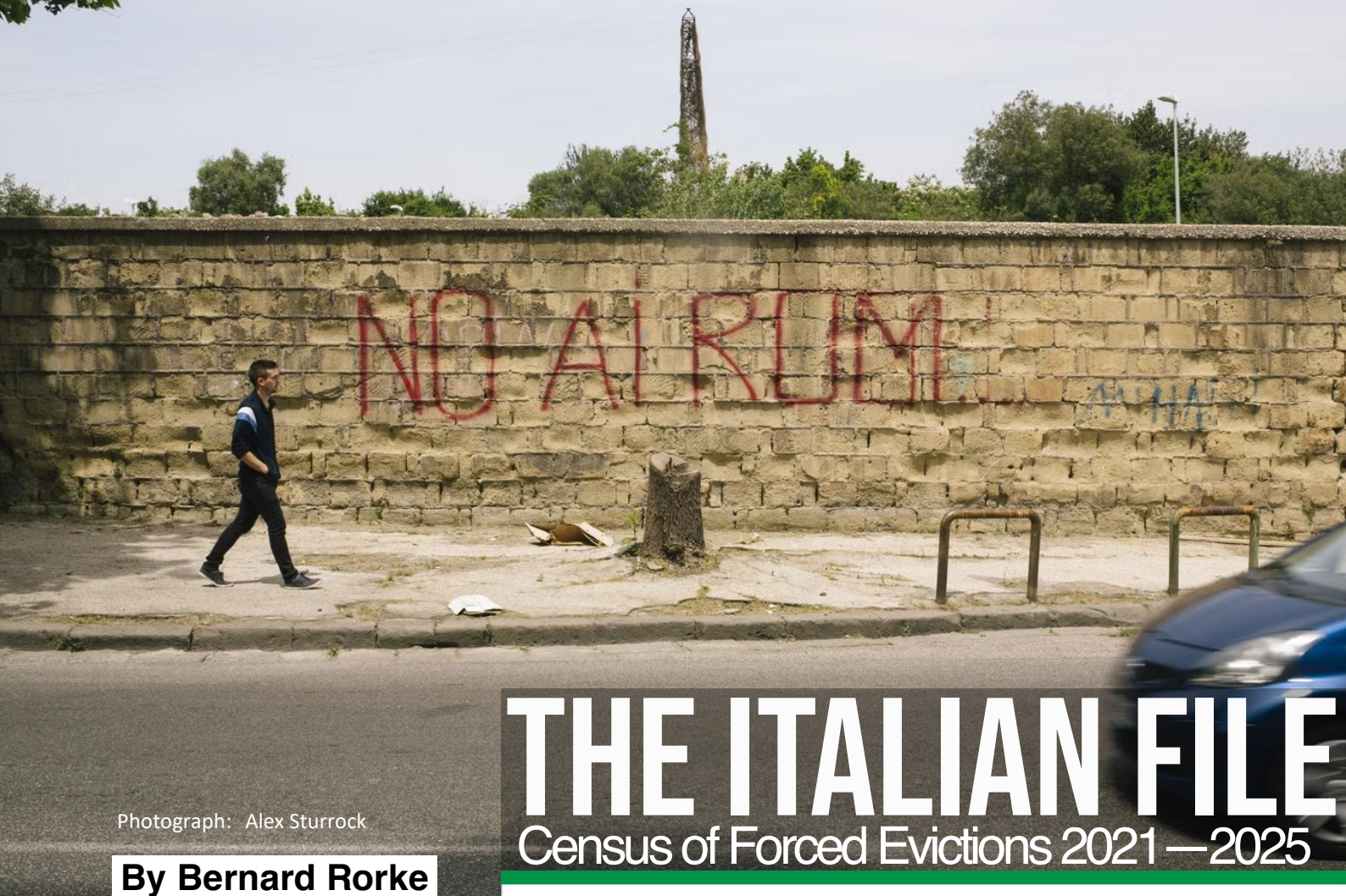
Ten years ago, in June 2016, Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, described Roma evictions as ["Europe's silent scandal."](#) He dismissed the wrong-headed notion that there is something inevitable about poverty among Roma, and described the appalling housing conditions as the most visible result of discrimination and social exclusion. His call for a moratorium on forced evictions went unheeded in the decade that followed.

Housing remains the least successful policy area in the EU frameworks for Roma inclusion, and as our review of 2025-26 reveals, forced evictions and demolitions continued apace, with many Roma relocated to remote, sometimes toxic sites, with no access to basic services. Such actions serve to banish Roma, to uproot and displace communities even further out of sight and out of mind.

The Communication from the European Commission on the Roma framework up to 2030, blandly noted that "the housing situation remains difficult," and aims to reduce the gap in housing deprivation by one third, cut overcrowding by half, and ensure that at least 95% of Roma have access to clean water – all very commendable 'quantifiable headline targets' – but the Communication made no mention of 'Europe's silent scandal' and nowhere calls on Member States to halt forced evictions of Roma. ⁶⁶

[CONTINUES ON PAGE 50]

66. European Commission, Press Release: Commission launches new 10-year plan to support Roma in the EU. 7 October 2020. Available [here](#).



Photograph: Alex Sturrock

By Bernard Rorke

THE ITALIAN FILE

Census of Forced Evictions 2021 — 2025

The ERRC has litigated against the Italian authorities' system of "nomad camps" and its assorted cruelties, and campaigned with its local partners to defend Roma housing rights in Italy since 1998. In addition, since 2017 the ERRC has produced two censuses on forced evictions of Roma in Italy with data compiled from media, activist, and NGO reports.

In December 2025, the ERRC published its second census of forced evictions, covering the period from April 2021 to March 2025. The data showed that Italian authorities have carried out at least 129 evictions of living spaces inhabited by Romani people, affecting approximately 696 people, comprising 67 families, who were in most cases made homeless, or otherwise put into unstable housing conditions.⁶⁷

These figures marked a decrease from the first forced eviction census, but 15 years after the Italian government promised to "overcome the

system of the camps", thousands of Roma still live in squalid conditions. In 2023, there were still at least 119 segregated camps and shelters (housing approximately 13,300 people) operated by local authorities in Italy, according to [estimates by Associazione 21 luglio](#). A further 2,500 Roma were estimated to be living in 'informal camps', many because of previous evictions of local-authority-run 'nomad camps.'

In 2024, the [Council of Europe's European Committee of Social Rights \(ECSR\)](#) found that Italy's persistent discriminatory mistreatment of Roma in its housing policies amounted to serious violations of the [European Social Charter](#). On the issue of forced evictions, the Committee found that: "*The State has failed to adopt a comprehensive and adequate legal framework allowing to ensure sufficient remedies in cases of forced evictions. Moreover, as a result of these practices, Roma and Sinti are largely stigmatised and remain marginalised, which constitutes discriminatory treatment.*"

67. European Commission, Press Release: Commission launches new 10-year plan to support Roma in the EU. 7 October 2020. Available [here](#).

Illustrative of the ongoing nature of the crisis, was the [decision in July 2025](#), by the ECSR which granted the ERRC and Associazione 21 luglio request for immediate measures over the plight of 120 Romani families in Naples. The ECSR instructed the Italian government to provide immediate safe and adequate temporary accommodation, with access to essential services such as water, sanitation, heating, waste disposal, and electricity to the families, who fled their dwellings before the eviction deadline and moved to nearby land, where conditions were even more severe, with the added hazard of asbestos contamination: “Residents, including children and adults with chronic illnesses, live in tents and shacks without access to electricity, sanitation, and safe water, and are exposed to serious health risks.” ⁶⁸

The [2025 Roma Civil Monitor](#) estimated that approximately 10,000 Roma and Sinti still live in seriously precarious housing conditions throughout the country, and continue to reside in formal and informal settlements that often lack essential services and are located in urban peripheries with limited access to public transport. Despite some good practices by a handful of municipal authorities, the report found that such actions,

“... although promising, appear insufficient to generate a significant shift away from the past ... while many administrations have yet to distance themselves from the policies and practices that gave rise to the ‘system of the camps’, and deeply-rooted antigypsyism remains a formidable obstacle to meaningful and sustainable inclusion.” ⁶⁹

More on the legacy of the Italian ‘nomad emergency’ policies [here](#).



Castel Romano “nomad camp” built in 2005 by Rome’s municipal authorities it contains mono-ethnic poor quality housing for Roma. It’s population peaked in 2017 at over 1000 people before a series of evictions relocated families to even more precarious housing situations and at risk of cyclical displacement. Since 2025, the City of Rome has begun a process of closing the camp, although long-term housing solutions for the remaining residents who were illegally placed there in the era of the ‘nomad emergency’ remain unresolved.

Photo: Google

68. ERRC Press Release, European Committee Orders Italy to take Immediate Measures to Protect Evicted Romani Families in Giugliano, Campania. 17 July 2025. Available [here](#).

69. Roma Civil Monitor, Civil Monitoring Report on the implementation of the EU Framework for Roma inclusion in Italy. Publications Office of the European Union 2025. Available [here](#).

EUROPE'S SILENT FORCED EVICTION SCANDAL

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47]

In 2023, [EU Council Conclusions](#) called on Member States to eradicate housing segregation and dedicate adequate resources to establish, maintain, improve infrastructure in terms of essential services; and to ensure that Roma can benefit from universal housing policies. The conclusions stated that the segregation of Roma communities is often exacerbated by gentrification, which pushes low-income families to leave areas where property values increase significantly. Such obstacles reinforce “the vicious circle of intergenerational poverty and violations of human rights. This limits life expectancy and impedes social cohesion.”⁷⁰

This segregation and exclusion is symptomatic of the wider issue of [environmental racism](#) across Europe’s worst-off ‘multiply-disadvantaged’ regions, where entire communities of Roma subsist in deep poverty, with many forced to live in close proximity to landfills or toxic sites in spatially segregated so-called ‘settlements’. This environmental racism is also evident in forced displacement and mass evictions to make way for gentrification, tourism or corporate development projects, in a pitiless confluence of neo-liberal avarice and racial prejudice. This is a deliberate structural form of exclusion that serves to banish Romani communities to sites beyond the pale, to desolate locations, devoid of infrastructure or public transport or services. Developments in 2025-26 revealed that those states which have been the worst offenders when it comes to segregating, evicting and displacing Roma, have paid little heed to the Council’s recommendations.⁷¹

When it comes to Roma, the human toll taken by environmental injustice on the most vulnerable is all too often ignored by mainstream society. In a recent ruling against Spain in March 2025, concerning repeated and prolonged power outages in a Madrid shanty-town, where 54% of the residents are Roma, the [European Committee of Social Rights](#) (ECSR) took stock of the human cost:

“Evidence showed severe deterioration of the health condition of the affected population since the power outages started in October 2020, due to respiratory problems aggravated by the cold and the precarious heating systems in the home; as well as burns, difficulties in carrying out treatments that require electrical connection (such as nocturnal assisted breathing); difficulties in maintaining certain medicines in optimal conditions such as insulin for diabetics; difficulties in personal hygiene, difficulties in washing clothes; and prolonged healing time for winter illnesses such as flu and colds. The reports also provided evidence of comorbidity complications from exposure to cold which have led to at least five deaths and a number of carbon monoxide poisonings requiring emergency hospital.”

The ECSR concluded that Spain breached multiple elements of the [European Social Charter](#), and asserted that where states choose to deliver energy through private companies, they cannot ‘outsource’ their human rights duties to those companies: “*Guaranteeing Charter rights remains a state responsibility.*”⁷²

So long as the greed of property developers and vulture speculators takes precedence over the fundamental human rights of women, children and men of no property, this crisis will continue, as will our resistance. Strategic litigation by Roma Rights activists is just one aspect of the fight for environmental justice for Roma and other racialized communities; a struggle comprised of coalitions of local and international Roma and pro-Roma rights defenders, anti-racist and housing activist groups, grass-roots environmentalist organisations and directly-affected communities, who have waged long-running campaigns, protests and advocacy actions against powerful vested interests, entrenched racism, and the unbridled, rapacious greed of free-market capitalism. As can be seen from the the ongoing battles exposed in this issue, the struggle continues!

70. Council of the European Union. Conclusions on measures to ensure equal access to adequate and desegregated housing for Roma. 22 September 2023. Available [here](#).
71. ERRC News, EU calls for action on housing segregation, while many Roma live from ‘expulsion to expulsion’. 18 October 2023. Available [here](#).
72. ERRC News, Power outages in Madrid shanty-town: energy poverty violates the European Social Charter. 23 March 2023. Available [here](#).

“THEY TREAT THEM LIKE SERFS”

Romani families facing eviction and exclusion in Shkodër, Albania



By Jonathan Lee

At the entrance to Shkodër, where the municipality is reshaping the riverside to present a cleaner, more touristic image of the city, dozens of Romani families now live among piles of inert waste. Their homes are patched together from tarpaulin, scrap wood, and salvaged metal. There is no running water, no electricity, and no sewage infrastructure. At night, the settlement goes dark with the only light coming from mobile phones and fires.

For the families living there, this is not a temporary emergency. It is the latest chapter in a cycle of eviction and exclusion that has stretched across more than fifteen years. Many of the residents first arrived in Shkodër from nearby towns such as Fushë Krujë, drawn by the possibility of survival work near the Montenegro border.

Some collected scrap metal and recyclable materials. Others survived through informal labour or begging. Over time, generations were born and raised in the city yet remained excluded from it. Without formal rental agreements or property ownership, they could not obtain residency registration. Without residency registration, they could not fully access the rights and protections afforded to recognised citizens of the municipality. The result was a community permanently suspended in legal limbo: present, visible, and often economically active, yet officially treated as though it did not belong.

The settlements themselves were always precarious. Families built impermanent shacks on privately owned industrial wasteland littered with debris and refuse. But even these fragile structures have now become difficult to hold onto. Residents have been repeatedly displaced from one informal site to another as the city expanded and redevelopment projects intensified.

In March 2025, the pressure escalated again when around 45 Roma families were evicted from another living area as part of an urban regeneration project linked to riverside improvements at the entrance to the city. Local activists say that no alternative accommodation has been offered. In meetings with local Romani activists, municipal authorities have reportedly justified their refusal to intervene by arguing that the families were not registered residents of Shkodër.

According to Manjola Veizi – a lawyer from Roma Rights Network member, Qendra Për të Drejtat e Gruas Rome (Roma Women's Rights Centre) – the exclusion that forced these people onto the city's margins and for years denied them the documentation necessary to become legal residents, is now being used to justify denying them housing assistance.

"If you go to where these people have been forced onto, you will see people living alongside piles of waste, families trying to cook without electricity or clean water, people living with the constant fear that they will be moved again at any moment. These are families who have lived in Shkodër for years, some for generations, yet they are still treated as if they do not belong anywhere."

What is happening here is wrong. It is not simply poverty; it is systematic exclusion, perpetrated by the same institutions that failed to recognise these families as citizens in the first place and are now using that exclusion as a reason to deny them their basic human dignity."

Today, approximately 200 families are believed to be living across five informal living areas in the city. Over the years, these families have been repeatedly evicted and relocated to different informal areas as a result of urban development projects. Of the 45 families evicted in March 2025, 26 were resettled in an informal living area known as "Tepe" where they currently live without access to electricity, safe water, or other essential services. The land is privately owned, adding another layer of insecurity to already desperate conditions. Despite the residents paying a small amount of rent to the landowner, they face constant uncertainty over whether they will be forced to move again. Veizi describes a relationship with landowners that resembles feudal dependency. *"They treat them like serfs on their land,"* she said.

The humanitarian conditions in the settlement remain precarious, marked by a recent disruption to electricity access. While the families had lived without electricity until August 2025, when a local business owner managed to establish a connection, this relief was short-lived. Just one month later, the electricity distribution company (OSHEE) disconnected the supply without providing a formal explanation. When the Romani families appealed to municipal officials, they were repeatedly told that their "illegal" settlement status precluded access to public services.

WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE IS WRONG. IT IS NOT SIMPLY POVERTY; IT IS SYSTEMATIC EXCLUSION, PERPETRATED BY THE SAME INSTITUTIONS THAT FAILED TO RECOGNISE THESE FAMILIES AS CITIZENS IN THE FIRST PLACE AND ARE NOW USING THAT EXCLUSION AS A REASON TO DENY THEM THEIR BASIC HUMAN DIGNITY

MANJOLA VEIZI

ROMANI HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER



Recently, an urgent appeal was sent to OSHEE by the Roma Women's Rights Centre requesting immediate reconnection, copying several state institutions to highlight the severity of the situation. Despite this, power has not yet been restored. The issue has gained traction at higher levels of government and has been raised internationally; during an OSCE meeting in May, the Roma Vice Minister agreed to personally follow up on the matter. In response to information provided by the Roma Women's Rights Centre, the Vice Minister expressed concern regarding the situation and committed to taking the matter forward with the relevant authorities to ensure appropriate follow-up and attention to the affected communities.

In the meantime, the legal battle surrounding the settlement is already underway. Albania's Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (the national equality body) issued a finding of structural discrimination in relation to the municipality's treatment of the Romani families on 7th July 2025. The Commissioner requested that the municipality take concrete measures to ensure housing for the evicted families. The municipality was asked to prepare a detailed action plan for the following six months and to submit progress reports every two months. Instead of complying with these recommendations, the municipality appealed the decision and failed to take any meaningful steps toward their implementation. The municipality's appeal is now before the Albanian Court of Appeal.



Activists from the Roma Women's Rights Centre meeting with the community in Shkodër.

Meanwhile, the Roma Women's Rights Centre and ERRC are investigating the situation and considering all legal options. Advocates argue that the case raises serious questions under the Albania's domestic and international obligations, particularly around forced evictions, discriminatory treatment, and the state's obligations toward vulnerable communities living in extreme racialized poverty.

Several local reports and videos documenting the living conditions and evictions have circulated online, including footage published by Syri TV on the eviction and the lack of electricity and drinking water, as well as by StarPlus TV at the time of the eviction in March 2025.

Beyond the legal arguments lies a more uncomfortable reality about the direction of urban development in parts of southeastern Europe. Across the region, cities eager to attract tourists and investment increasingly market riverfronts, historic centres, and public spaces as symbols of renewal. Romani neighbourhoods that are not regularised and part of the urban plan often become viewed not as communities requiring support, but as obstacles to redevelopment.

In Shkodër, the contrast is stark between one side of the city where promenades and beautification projects signal a modernising future, while on the other, Romani families who have lived in the area for over a decade live on the open ground without electricity, running water, or legal recognition itself. For now, the community still rests at the edge of the city's redevelopment zone, caught between private landowners, municipal authorities, and a legal system that is now slowly beginning to examine whether what happened there was not simply neglect, but discrimination embedded into the structure of urban policy itself.



IN PURSUIT OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

2025—2026

16 April 2026

Beyond the Deed: New Measures Proposed to end “Vicious Cycle” of Exclusion for Roma in Montenegro

In the Western Balkans, for many Roma, decades after their initial displacement by war, the lack of IDs still renders them legally invisible and unable to access housing and basic services. This was the fate of Romani families in Montenegro. The ERRC submitted a complaint in 2025 to the Ombudsman which described how the legislation creates a ‘vicious cycle’ whereby registration of residence is impossible for those living in informal settlements without legal title; those without a registered residence cannot access essential services; and the lack of parental documentation obstructs the registration of children, perpetuating statelessness across generations. Finally on 8th April 2026, after years of advocacy and in response to a [formal finding by the country's Ombudsman](#), the government announced it was finally ready to change the rules. The Ombudsman concluded that Montenegro's strict residency and birth registration requirements constituted indirect discrimination against the Roma, Ashkali, and Balkan Egyptian population. The watchdog described the situation not as a series of isolated administrative errors, but as a ‘vicious cycle’ of legal invisibility deliberately maintained by rigid bureaucratic standards.

The ERRC's Regional Human Rights Monitor, Mustafa Asanovski stated that *"The government has acknowledged the problem. They have admitted the system is broken. But admitting it and fixing it are two different things,"* adding that the focus will now shift to monitoring the progress of the Draft Law.⁷³

3 April 2026

Defeating the British law that criminalised a way of life

In March 2026, the British government tabled an amendment to repeal the [offending provisions](#) of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 ('PCSCA'), which unlawfully discriminated against Gypsies and Travellers. This came four years after a Romani Gypsy woman named Wendy Smith defeated the British government in the High Court. The judge issued a [declaration of incompatibility](#) against added enforcement powers the police neither wanted nor needed. The discriminatory provision allowed police to move Gypsies and Travellers on from a piece of land and to ban them from returning for a period of 12 months, on pain of prosecution, imprisonment, and confiscation of caravans.

73. ERRC News, Beyond the Deed: New Measures Proposed to end “Vicious Cycle” of Exclusion for Roma in Montenegro. 17 April 2026. Available [here](#).

While this is a significant victory, the criminalisation of trespass remains. The power to seize homes on wheels remains. The two-vehicle threshold remains. The fines and the risk of imprisonment remain. As leading human rights barrister and ERRC board member, Marc Willers, who represented Ms. Smith in court stated:

"The problem is often the threat of these powers. The enforcement powers the police and local authorities have are often not used, but they're threatened. When they're threatened, Gypsies and Travellers tend to move on because they don't want their caravans – their homes – impounded. Rather than face those situations, they will move on and hope that the next local authority or the next police officer is a little more sympathetic." ⁷⁴

23 March 2026

Call for immediate repeal of discriminatory law on 'protection of local identity' in Hungary

The Hungarian Law on the Protection of Local Identity which entered into force on 1 July 2025, gave municipal authorities the right to adopt local decrees to defend their 'fundamental right to self-identity', to take action against 'undesired directions of societal development', and to determine who may move into a locality, and who may not. As the ERRC warned in an open letter to the European Union, and a complaint to the Hungarian government, this law basically provided a legal framework for racial segregation, and allowed for the drafting of municipal decrees that systematically exclude Roma from taking up residence in towns and villages across Hungary; and described the law as *"nothing less than apartheid by stealth."*

Since the adoption of the law, rights groups have monitored over 100 decrees that have been enacted by local authorities, and taken joint action, including filing complaints, and issuing legal challenges. In a joint statement, the human rights groups confirmed the discriminatory intent and impact of the 'daily proliferation of decrees' which were primarily enacted in the poorer, Roma populated regions of the country. ⁷⁵

25 February 2026

Far-right vigilantes target Hungarian Roma living in precarious housing

According to a complaint filed with Hungarian prosecutors against the vigilante Bűnvadászok (Crime Hunters), the group appears at various locations across Hungary targeting alleged unauthorised squatting of apartments or houses. They break into the affected properties, demand personal data from those present, and then order them to leave using verbal threats and physical intimidation to enforce compliance. Often, they vandalise the home by dismantling doors and windows with tools so that the place is uninhabitable.



The victims of these actions are typically Romani families living in precarious housing situations; people who are already vulnerable due to systemic discrimination in the housing market, chronic racialised poverty, and social marginalisation. The Crime Hunters exploit legal ambiguities around property disputes and housing occupancy to justify their racial intimidation under the guise of vigilante law enforcement. ⁷⁶

74. ERRC News, Nowhere to Go: British Lawyer Marc Willers on Defeating the Law That Criminalised a Way of Life. 3 April 2026. Available [here](#).

75. ERRC News, Hungarian Rights Groups call for immediate repeal of discriminatory law on 'protection of local identity'. 23 March 2026. Available [here](#).

76. ERRC News, Roma Targeted Again: Hungary's Latest Far-Right Vigilante Group Echoes Dark History. 25 February 2026. Available [here](#).

1 December 2025

Roma Rights activists call for urgent action after winter power-cuts hit Roma in Serbia

At the onset of winter, the authorities cut the power supply to the Romani community Crvena Zvezda in Niš, leaving dozens of families once again exposed to the elements in degrading and perilous living conditions. The ERRC and Roma Rights Network member, Group for Children and Youth 'Indigo', called on the mayor to immediately restore the electricity supply to the affected families to prevent further harm in winter. This sudden decision to cut the electricity has deprived these families of the means to heat their homes, prepare food, store medication, or maintain minimal hygiene.



This callous action is rendered even more reprehensible by the fact that the discriminatory nature of repeated power-cuts in Crvena Zvezda is already the subject of a pending complaint before the Serbian Constitutional Court. Going ahead with yet another power cut while the case remains under judicial scrutiny undermines the effectiveness of the ongoing legal remedy, and intensifies the harm experienced by residents. ⁷⁷

23 October 2025

Toxic Neighbours: How a Chinese Mining Giant Endangers Romani Lives in Serbia

The city of Bor is home to one of the largest reserves of copper in the world, and home to more than 300 Roma who find themselves unwillingly at the heart of a tale of corruption, unscrupulous government contracts, and environmental degradation. Because the community is not part of the urban plan, they live without street lighting; waste management and electricity supply are inadequate; and the roads remain unpaved. Living on the edge of the mine, segregated and exposed to pollution, with the very ground beneath their homes eroded by continuous explosive detonations, their story exposes the sharp edge of environmental racism in Europe. ⁷⁸

24 July 2025

French mayor and residents acquitted over illegal eviction of Roma

The mayor of Villeron and five residents who forcibly expelled Romani families from their makeshift homes were declared not guilty before the Criminal Court of Pontoise in late June. The Romani families first arrived in Villeron and began building informal homes in the wooded area by the town in September 2022. Although an expulsion procedure was already underway, the residents of Villeron decided to circumvent the civil justice system by organizing a demonstration aimed at forcibly removing the Romani families—totaling around 150 people—from their homes. On 5 February 2023, more than 200 villagers joined the violent protest. The protesters threw stones, physically intimidated the families, and shouted racist abuse, threatening to burn out the 'parasites'. ⁷⁹

24 June 2025

The Village of Roses and Beyond: The Fight Against Forced Evictions of Roma in Milan

The Villaggio delle Rose (Village of Roses), known as the Chiesa Rossa formal camp in Milan, has been home to more than 250 Italian Roma for a quarter of a century. The Municipality of Milan decided unilaterally to close the camp on the grounds of urban safety, social hardship, and environmental criticalities. Visitors to the village, including the ERRC, found clean, organised, and well-maintained legal prefabricated homes, built through the labour and investment of a self-sufficient community of Romani families.

77. ERRC News, Niš, Serbia: ERRC calls for urgent action after winter power-cut plunges Roma into the dark and cold. 1 December 2025. Available [here](#).

78. ERRC News, Toxic Neighbours: How a Chinese Mining Giant Endangers Romani Lives in Serbia. 23 October 2025. Available [here](#).

79. ERRC News: Town Mayor and Five Residents Acquitted in Trial Over Illegal Eviction of Roma in Villeron, France. 24 July 2025. Available [here](#).

Many of them are descendants of partisans and survivors of fascist deportations to concentration camps, and the village hosts Italy's first monument commemorating the Romani genocide during World War II. It is a place of remembrance that welcomes schools, associations, and institutions to pay their respects every year on Holocaust Remembrance Day. ⁸⁰

6 May 2025

Apartheid by stealth: shocking scandal of 'Gypsy free' village in Hungary revealed

A shocking film report from Szabad Europa, revealed how, for almost 20 years the village of Teresztenye, in the north-eastern part of Hungary has remained "Gypsy free", and what happened when a Romani family did move in. The local government stopped providing the children with transport to school; surveillance cameras recorded the husband László, being attacked and beaten by three men; in another incident a drunken man discharged a firearm behind the house. The family was also subjected to official and police harassment: a total of 14 official investigations, including six guardianship inspections. This has caused the family much stress and trauma, but the Sifters are not leaving, the wife Ági word: "I didn't graduate from law school so that a mayor could decide where I can live or not." ⁸¹

15 April 2025

Illegal mass demolition leaves 200 Roma homeless in 'blatant violation of basic human rights'

On 15 April, dozens of families were left homeless by the mass demolition of their homes in the *Zaharna Fabrika* district of Sofia. This action was taken by district mayor, Emil Branchevski, in collusion with the Ministry of Interior. As the bulldozers moved in, police with water cannon stood by to prevent any resistance.

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee condemned the illegal demolition that took place in Sofia leaving over 200 Romani people on the streets amidst the rubble, and called for immediate action from the authorities to avert a humanitarian crisis:

"What is shocking is not only the lack of any humanity in this deed, but also the arrogant violation of international law, the likes of which we have never witnessed before."

The mass destruction of family dwellings was taken in blatant defiance of the interim measure imposed four days earlier by the European Court of Human Rights, which stipulated that no homes should be demolished until the state provided for the housing needs of those affected. ⁸²

25 March 2025

Romani families in Bosnia secure significant settlement against utility company for denial of access to water

A significant settlement was reached in a case against the Public Utility Company *Vodovod i Kanalizacija* for the denial of access to potable water and sanitation services to the Romani residents of the Banlozi camp, located near Zenica in Bosnia & Herzegovina. The public utility company must pay more than €137,000 in compensation and legal fees as a result of the settlement, which sets an important precedent for anti-discrimination efforts in BiH. The case was represented by attorneys Sanela and Almin Dautbegović on behalf of the ERRC.

The Banlozi camp was long a site of systemic neglect. In 2018, the ERRC reported severe deprivation suffered by Romani families who lived under constant threat of eviction and lack basic amenities such as clean water and proper sanitation. Their children were segregated in isolated classrooms at school, while at home they endured the presence of rats and snakes in poorly insulated barracks which exacerbates hardships in the winter months. ⁸³

80. ERRC News, The Village of Roses and Beyond: The Fight Against Forced Evictions of Romani Communities in Italy. June 2025. Available [here](#).
81. ERRC News, Apartheid by stealth: shocking scandal of 'Gypsy free' village in Hungary revealed. 6 May 2025. Available [here](#).
82. ERRC News: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee condemns illegal mass demolition of romani homes as a 'blatant violation of basic human rights'. 24 April 2025. Available [here](#).
83. ERRC Press Release, Romani Families from Banlozi Camp in Bosnia Settle Case Against Water Company for Denial of Access to Water. 25 March 2025. Available [here](#).

20 March 2025

Segregated housing plan in Calabria modified after activist intervention.

Plans to use EU funding to evict Romani residents from a segregated camp and rehouse them in new segregated social housing units have been modified after activists from the ERRC and the local Stop Ghettos Committee called on the European Commission (EC) to prevent EU funding being used to further the segregation of Roma. Following EC intervention, the Calabria Region's modified plan now provides for the relocation of families from the dilapidated Scordovillo camp into integrated social housing in Lamezia Terme, however activists warn that the plan still has significant weaknesses in implementation that must be addressed.

"Public housing must not be a vehicle for more segregation" said the ERRC's spokesperson, Jonathan Lee. "Unfortunately, Italian authorities seem to be slow learners when it comes to ethnic segregation. Despite Italy's many promises to the European Commission that the days of building discriminatory 'nomad camps' are over, here we found a plan to build a brand-new ghetto using EU funds." ⁸⁴

A coalition of activists represented by APS Lav Romanó, Un Mondo di Mondi, and the ERRC are monitoring the progress of the procurement of integrated social housing in Lamezia Terme to ensure that the authorities do not fall back on plans to build segregated housing for the Roma from Scordovillo camp.

13 March 2025

Activists File Urgent Complaint to Stop Forced Eviction of Roma from Giugliano Camp in Italy

Activists from the ERRC, with support from Associazione 21 luglio and the Comitato Campano con i Rom, filed a collective complaint

before the European Committee of Social Rights calling for the adoption of immediate measures to prevent an imminent eviction of Romani families from a camp at Via Carrafiello in Giugliano in Naples. The complaint calls for the provision of adequate alternative accommodation for the families, and for the development of long-term, integrated housing solutions.

"The families in this camp were pushed into ethnically segregated camps by the authorities and left to rot there, with little to no provision for basic infrastructure and safe living conditions. They have been repeatedly evicted; shunted from one camp to another for more than 20 years, and now, the municipality has decided to wash its hands of them completely with no offer of alternative accommodation for all the inhabitants. This is not 'overcoming the camps' this is Italy's perennial failure to offer anything but a vicious cycle of exclusion, homelessness, and systemic discrimination to its most vulnerable families" said the ERRC's spokesperson Jonathan Lee. ⁸⁵

6 March 2025

Court rules power outages in Madrid shanty-town violate European Social Charter

In a ground-breaking decision, the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) concluded that Spain breached multiple elements of the European Social Charter. The Committee upheld a complaint lodged by NGOs that frequent power outages over a prolonged period rendered persons energy poor, thereby violating the Charter. The Committee ruled that access to energy is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of fundamental rights, and stressed that Spain and other states cannot outsource their human rights duties to private utility companies. FEANTSA (the European network challenging homelessness) called for immediate restoration of electricity for the rights-deprived and energy-poor residents of Cañada Real Galiana shantytown in Madrid, 54% of whom are Roma. ⁸⁶

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84. ERRC Press Release: Italy: Region of Calabria Modifies Plans to Build Segregated Housing in Scordovillo After Intervention from Roma Rights Activists. 20 March 2025. Available [here](#).
85. ERRC Press Release, Activists File Urgent Complaint to Stop Forced Eviction of Roma from Giugliano Camp in Italy. 13 March 2025. Available [here](#).
86. ERRC News, Court rules power outages in Madrid shanty-town violate European Social Charter. 6 March 2025. Available [here](#).

13 February 2025

90-year-old couple homeless in Milan after caravan bulldozed

In what MilanoToday described as “a grotesque mix of bureaucracy, political propaganda and bad management”, bulldozers demolished a caravan belonging to an elderly couple, Bajro and Haijria. While a local councillor posted a gloating video celebrating the demolition, the 90-year-olds, who originally fled the war in Bosnia back in the 1990s, spent the night on the streets after their eviction, activated to make way for a dog-park. ⁸⁸

In their testimony, the applicants said they had not been aware of the demolition plans and were away from the site when the demolition took place. The camp was torn down after they left their homes in the morning of 22 July 2015. Their belongings which included household appliances, electricity generators, heaters, furniture, bicycles, clothes and children's toys, as well as documents, medicines and personal items, had been either destroyed or dumped. ⁸⁹

13 February 2025

European Court victory for Roma evicted from Wrocław camp in 2015

Almost a decade after the Roma camp in the Polish city of Wrocław was cleared of its inhabitants and demolished, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled in favour of the evicted families. In the case of *Caldarar & Others v. Poland*, where the ERRC intervened as a third party, the court found there was a violation of Article 8 and awarded each of the five applicant households €5000.



88. ERRC News, Milan: Ninety-year-old Romani couple evicted and left on the streets after bulldozers destroy their caravan. 13 February 2025. Available [here](#).

89. ERRC News, European Court victory for Roma evicted from Wrocław camp in 2015. 10 February 2025. Available [here](#).

A CALL FOR UNIVERSAL RESISTANCE

The evidence compiled in this Roma Rights Review leaves no room for ambiguity: the rights of Romani people across Europe are not merely under threat; they are being systematically dismantled.

From the militarised dawn raids in Greece to the "Gypsy-free" villages in Hungary, from the defunding of civil society to anti-Roma legislation, we are witnessing a coordinated erosion of the rule of law and human dignity.

The Roma Rights Network notes that this cannot be seen as a series of isolated policy failures, but rather a deliberate political project driven by the normalisation of far-right extremism and the accommodation of hate by mainstream institutions. The convergence of securitization, budgetary hollowing-out, and legislative regression has created a situation where anti-Roma sentiment is increasingly translated directly into state violence and social exclusion.

The Roma Rights Network stands united in the conviction that the attack on Roma rights, alongside other racialised minorities, and the demonisation of people with migration backgrounds, is a precursor to the erosion of rights for all. The narrative that Roma must "earn their rights" through integration is a false premise used to justify exclusion. Human rights are universal, inalienable, and indivisible. They cannot be conditional on ethnicity, gender, or economic utility.

As we face these dark times, the only viable response is active resistance. We call upon EU institutions, principled politicians in Member States, and the international donors to move beyond rhetoric and take immediate, concrete action: to work to repeal laws that criminalise Romani communities, to enforce accountability for state-sponsored violence, to make a stand to protect fundamental rights (no matter how unpopular) and to protect the operational space of human rights defenders before it is too late. The fight we face is for the universality of human rights, and we will continue to hold governments to account, regardless the cost.



ROMA RIGHTS REVIEW: SUMMER 2026



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