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Brussels, 8 September 2025

Subject: Demonstration in Szolnok organized jointly by the Mi Hazánk Movement, the Hungarian Self-Defense Movement, the Betyársereg, and the Crime Hunters

Dear Recipients,

The European Roma Rights Centre Foundation (hereinafter ERRC) is an international Roma human rights organization that monitors human rights violations against Roma people and provides legal assistance in cases of violations.

On 28 August 2025, the Mi Hazánk Movement announced that it intends to hold a torchlight march in the city of Szolnok under the title: *“Demonstration against Gypsy Crime with the Mi Hazánk Movement, the Hungarian Self-Defense Movement, the Betyársereg, and the Crime Hunters. We will bring law to the ghettos!”* The clear aim of the demonstration is to intimidate the city’s Roma population. The far-right Mi Hazánk Movement announced the event in response to a mass brawl at an entertainment venue in Szolnok.

The title of the event is deliberately provocative and calls for a show of force against the local Roma community. The far-right party regularly uses the term “*Gypsy crime*”, rhetoric that fits neatly into its political program, which repeatedly emphasizes so-called “Gypsy crime.” The same organization has previously organized demonstrations with the Hungarian Self-Defense Movement and the Betyársereg in Törökszentmiklós on 21 May 2019, in Budapest on 28 May 2020, and in Monor on 13 June 2021, all with the clear aim of intimidating the Roma population of those towns. The most recent such demonstration was held on 25 July 2021 in Jászapáti.

The rhetoric of the Mi Hazánk Movement, a far-right party, is suitable for inciting hatred against Roma. We express our concern that such rhetoric further fuels hate speech against Roma and deepens ethnic tensions between Roma and non-Roma.

Hungary, under EU law, is obliged to act against racism and xenophobia. It is clear that this demonstration is intended to incite hatred against Roma. Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (hereinafter ECHR) do not protect situations where freedom of speech and assembly are used to intimidate members of a minority. Instead, as the European Court of Human Rights (hereinafter ECtHR) has made clear in similar cases, the authorities are entitled to intervene.

The realization of the demonstration would constitute an unjustified interference with the right to private life of local Roma under Article 8 of the ECHR, as their personal and physical integrity would be explicitly targeted by far-right demonstrators. There is also a significant risk that other human rights of local Roma will be violated (in particular the prohibition of torture, inhuman, and degrading treatment under Article 3 of the ECHR), as such demonstrations often escalate into violence. Under the ECHR, ECtHR case law requires authorities to take positive steps to provide adequate protection against intimidation of Roma in such situations.

All of this is particularly alarming in light of the recent far-right marches — condemned by the ECtHR — and the 2008–2009 serial killings of Roma, considered one of the darkest moments in modern Hungarian history.

The Szolnok Police Headquarters did not authorize the announced route, arguing that “due to the participation of known extremist sympathizers of the organization and the stated aims of the demonstration, the event is not suitable for maintaining its peaceful character.” Instead, the police offered Szolnok’s Kossuth Lajos Square for the event in the form of a static (non-marching) demonstration.

Nevertheless, on 31 August 2025, the far-right Mi Hazánk Movement announced that despite the police ban, it would hold the Szolnok demonstration as originally planned on 13 September.

Based on Act CXII of 2011 on the Right of Informational Self-Determination and Freedom of Information, the ERRC requests further information on the following questions:

1. Does the city of Szolnok have an institution or staff member responsible for mediating between parties in the event of possible ethnic tensions?
2. What method did the local police use to assess potential risks before authorizing the static demonstration?
3. What is the local authority’s plan in case civil disobedience or radicalization occurs following the demonstration?
4. Has anyone in the local municipality made any attempt to publicly condemn the planned anti-Roma demonstration?
5. What preventive measures are the local authorities taking to ensure the safety of Roma citizens in light of the announced demonstration?

Given the history of far-right organizations in Hungary intimidating Roma — a pattern to which both the past and present activities of the Mi Hazánk Movement contribute — we expect that the Szolnok police will closely monitor the event, paying particular attention to potential hate-motivated attacks against Roma.

We look forward to your response by email at jonathan.lee@errc.org or by post to:
European Roma Rights Centre, c/o Amnesty International, Avenue de Cortenbergh 71, 4th floor,
1000 Brussels, Belgium

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dorđe Jovanović', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Đorđe Jovanović

President
ERRC

