

Alona Kazanska,
roma youth activist
of the Amnesty International Ukraine

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Statement on Roma and Sinti Working session 16

My name is Alona Kazanska, I'm roma youth activist. I would like to ask you to pay attention to the status of romani girls and women within the action framework of the Istanbul Convention (the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence) and OSCE Action plan on gender equality.

I appeal to the Ukrainian government about:

1. To ensure that Roma inclusion policy will include gender sensitive criteria within the social status of romani girl and woman in the roma community and main society;
2. To address intersectional discrimination and rising violence risk in compliance with multiple identity (gender, religion, ethnicity grounds);
3. To ensure the ratification process of the Istanbul Convention.

I speak here and now as a young roma activist. What does it mean to be an activist and romani women? It is a balance between a few identities: as romani girl/woman within the roma patriarchal family model, and as equal member of civil society, and as a human rights activist.

Romani girl or woman stands against intersectional discrimination and different forms of hatred. I want you to imagine yourself as an island near or between different mainlands. Being roma youth activist to a girl/woman means to be an 'island' when you cannot be sure about your inclusion in the human rights movement, civil rights movement (for example, feminist's movement) and roma (patriarchal) rights movement at the same time.

It is also important to pay attention to academical research on this topic, on the status of romani women in different forms of social life. One of the few examples would be academical research in Gender and Society "The romani women's movement struggles and debates in Central and Eastern Europe".

In conclusion, many OSCE participating states have gender equality and roma inclusion policies. One of the sensitive parts of these frameworks are empowering girls and women from unrepresented groups for participation in public life and playing an equal role in decision making process within the main society and roma communities. The policy developing process should be based on research.