



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 12

Tolerance and non-discrimination II

Roma and Sinti issues, including:

Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti; Prevention and responses to hate crimes in the OSCE area; Protection against discrimination on any grounds by law; Aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism, including the Rise of political parties, movements and groups; Advocating violence and hatred on ethnic, racial and religious grounds

As prepared for delivery by U.S. Head of Delegation J. Brian Atwood
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, September 30, 2014

Moderator, my delegation shares the concerns voiced by many over the course of this year about the growing appeal of extremist, anti-immigrant, anti-Roma and anti-Semitic parties as seen in local, national and EU-wide elections or rhetoric and actions on the ground. We are equally troubled by the use of inflammatory or bigoted rhetoric about Roma to score political points in some electoral campaigns. It is not just the extreme fringe that has engaged in such ugly pandering. Some mainstream politicians, including at the highest levels of government, have stooped to it. Such language has no place in the OSCE community.

The United States welcomes the efforts of the **Czech Republic** to improve the situation of Roma. We commend the joint visits by the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, the Minister of Human Rights and Legislation, and the Minister of Interior to socially excluded communities around the country. We welcome the message that addressing and reversing the deep marginalization of Roma benefit all the people of the Czech Republic and hope this will lead to further concrete steps. We are also heartened by the success of a decade-long education inclusion program in **Macedonia**. We urge the Government of Macedonia to ensure that its achievements are sustained.

Moderator, the displacement of Roma in numerous OSCE participating States remains a serious concern. Over the past two decades, tens of thousands of Romani families have been pushed out of their homes and forced into a cycle of displacement and marginalization, moving from one community or country to another, only to be displaced again. The countries may vary, but the pattern is often the same: local authorities remove Roma from their housing for some reason, perhaps lack of identity documents or tenancy papers, or alleged building code violations or gentrification, that is inconsistent with a participating States' own laws and regulations. We are troubled, for example, by plans of the municipal government in Miskolc, **Hungary**, to remove Romani residents under the guise of urban renewal with a five-year ban on return.

Twenty years ago, a young woman addressed the OSCE in what was our first meeting focused on the human rights of Roma persons. At 19, her husband was murdered in the 1993 Hadareni pogrom, one of the most notorious of some 30 incidents of mob violence against Romani communities in **Romania** in the early 1990s. This year, on July 25, the Cluj Napoca Court of Appeal held that the Romanian government should do more to implement commitments it made before the European Court of Human Rights as part of a settlement regarding the Hadareni case. We welcome the role that Romania's courts are playing in advancing justice for Roma and urge the Government of Romania to take additional steps to help the surviving community in Hadareni.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the destruction of the "Gypsy Family Camp" at Auschwitz, when over 3,000 Romani men, women, and children were loaded onto trucks and shipped to gas chambers. I will attach Secretary of State Kerry's remarks on that unspeakable event to the written text of my statement today.

Just before the opening of the HDIM, I joined members of the U.S. delegation and a number of other OSCE Permanent Representatives in making the sobering journey to Auschwitz. Auschwitz stands as a soul-chilling reminder to us all of the horrors that can result when we fail to protect human rights and combat hatred in all of its ugly forms.

Alongside Jews and Roma, LGBT persons also were targeted for extermination by the Nazis and their sympathizers. Have the unspeakable atrocities of the Holocaust not taught us the importance of recognizing that all human beings are born equal in dignity and rights?

Today across the OSCE region, LGBT individuals are the targets of vicious assaults. We condemn the recent horrific attack against a German LGBT activist in Belgrade, widely reported to be motivated by xenophobia and homophobia. We commend **Serbian** officials' swift condemnation of the attack and apprehension of the alleged perpetrators. We also note their support of the subsequent parade protesting violence against LGBT persons. We welcome the decision of Serbian officials to support this year's Belgrade Pride parade after three years of cancellations. We call on all states to meet their responsibility to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all of their people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, including their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, even under challenging conditions.

In **Russia**, laws, actions, and official rhetoric restricting the rights of the LGBT community have coincided with a marked increase in violent attacks. In some cases, vigilante groups have used social media to bully LGBT teenagers and in some instances lure them to encounters in which the youth were subjected to torture and degrading treatment.

Attacks on LGBT persons, around the world and in the OSCE region, are unacceptable. The response to these crimes must be decisive and immediate – they should be condemned, thoroughly investigated, and prosecuted to the fullest extent possible. Participating states should make clear that they condemn violence against LGBT persons.

Every participating State has committed itself to respect what the Helsinki Final Act calls "the inherent dignity of the human person." In keeping with that commitment and in recognition of our common humanity, we call upon **the Holy See** to lift its objection to the condemning of hate crimes based upon all forms of intolerance and discrimination.

Thank you.