

**OSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE  
WARSAW, 6 OCTOBER 2010**

**STATE RESPONSE TO ANTI-ROMANI VIOLENCE**

Dear Excellencies,

First of all, I would like to express the appreciation of the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and me personally for having an opportunity to contribute to this conference and raise an issue which urgently demands attention. I would like to draw your attention to the ongoing and weakly addressed issue of anti-Romani violence.

In significant number of countries violence against Roma remains a serious problem. Not only because it harms the Roma directly impacted by the attack, but also because, due to the lack of effective response to this situation by the state authorities, it has a serious impact on the Roma as an ethnic group.

Even though Roma are often described as a vulnerable group in governments' policies, little of this perception is visible in the practice of addressing anti-Romani violence by the police and other responsible state authorities. In the recent period the European Roma Rights Centre has monitored the state response to the violence against the most discriminated ethnic group in Europe, focusing on the cases reported in the Czech Republic (16 cases), Hungary (21 cases) and Slovakia (11 cases) since 2008.

The cases examined included shootings, killings, attempts of pogroms, firebombing and other types of brutal violence. Victims involved 5 year old boy shot to death, 2 year old girl burned on 80 percent of her body or Romani teenagers between 11 and 16 year old tortured at a police station.

To date, only a small number of incidents has been effectively investigated and only a few perpetrators ended up in prison. Many perpetrators have not been identified and of the few who were identified many were put on probation. In some cases the prosecutor classified the act as misdemeanour and forwarded it to the municipal office.

On the basis of the preliminary results of ERRC research several key deficiencies have been identified in the process of addressing anti-Romani violence on behalf of the state authorities. Police are often unable to identify the perpetrators. There is high inefficacy in proving the racial motive even in the crimes committed by neo-Nazis. Delays in investigation and prosecution are another shortfall perceived by the Romani community and advocates of their rights.

With the high occurrence of anti-Romani violence not only in the examined countries, but also in many others, Governments need to take a firm stance against such action. Governments should strengthen their efforts to address cases of hate crimes against Roma and make sure such crimes are properly investigated, the perpetrators are prosecuted and their acts are publicly denounced.

### **Recommendations**

To eliminate the deficiencies in addressing the hate crimes against Roma, Governments should take immediate action to:

- Provide clear guidance to state authorities on how to identify and address hate crimes;
- Collect anonymised statistical data on the ethnicity of hate crime victims and process the data to evaluate effectiveness of state response to these crimes;
- Monitor delays in investigative and prosecutorial processes and address them accordingly;
- Provide further training on the issue of hate crimes to involved authorities.