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EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST RACISM
OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE
SPOLU INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION
MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP INTERNATIONAL
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EU ROMA POLICY COALITION



Wrong message: Roma coalition deplors Commission findings on France

(Brussels, 19 October 2010) Following today's announcement by the European Commission on the situation of Roma in France, the EU Roma Policy Coalition has expressed its dismay at the Commission's silence over France's discriminatory treatment of Roma people over the summer. "The Commission accepted France's assurances that it would properly transpose EU law in future. This focus on the future fails to provide justice to those who have already suffered discrimination and lost their homes in recent weeks," said the Coalition's spokesperson.

Internal French Government documents have clearly shown that France explicitly targeted Roma people when authorities dismantled unauthorised camps. "Such ethnic targeting goes against all European guarantees on non-discrimination and equal treatment" said the spokesperson. "Addressing France's future behaviour is important. Yet we cannot remain silent about what has already happened. The Commission's failure today to criticise a member state which has so blatantly disregarded the rights of the most vulnerable people is a tremendous setback for European human rights. "

Members of the Coalition have provided the Commission with on-the-ground-evidence demonstrating that discrimination has indeed taken place. "How the Commission has reached its findings is far from transparent," said the spokesperson. "Our legal assessments, which we have shared with the Commission, clearly show that people have suffered blatant violations of their rights. Those expelled from France have had no access to justice. The Commission has failed them."

The Coalition spokesperson commented on what it sees as the growing stigmatisation of Roma across Europe. "This should have made the Commission realise it has greater responsibility than merely deciding whether an infringement procedure should be launched. If it wants to uphold the fundamental values of European cooperation, it must take a clear and principled stand and protect people whose fundamental rights are violated. This includes not being afraid of calling discrimination by its true name." The Coalition has expressed its deep concern at the discriminatory measures deployed against Roma people by several EU countries and has called for effective measures by the EU and member states to combat discrimination and tackle the socio-economic exclusion of Roma across Europe. The most recent high-profile cases have occurred in Italy and France, where the French Government has evicted Roma people and Travellers from unauthorised settlements and repatriated a number of them.

Note to editors:

The European Roma Policy Coalition is an informal gathering of non-governmental organisations operating at EU level on issues of human rights, anti-discrimination, anti-racism, social inclusion, and Roma and Travellers' rights. Its members are Amnesty International, the European Roma Rights Centre, the European Roma Information Office, the Open Society Institute, European Network Against Racism, Spolu International Foundation, Minority Rights Group International, the European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network,

Policy Center for Roma and Minorities, the Roma Education Fund, and Fondaciòn Secretariado Gitano.

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