

To the Bulgarian authorities:

*The General Prosecutor of the Republic of Bulgaria,
The Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria
The Ministry of Interiors of the Republic of Bulgaria
The Permanent Representation of the Republic of Bulgaria to the Council of Europe*

To the attention of the international institutions:

*UN Human Rights Committee
UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
Secretary General of the Council of Europe
European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights
Council of Europe Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues
Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee on Equality and Non-discrimination
OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities*

LETTER OF PROTEST

Few days ago, Mitko, a 17 years old Roma boy from the Bulgarian village Ovchepolci, near Pazardjik, was violently aggressed, humiliated because he told he was equal to a non-Roma, who was threatening him, calling him, “gypsy”, “we cannot be equal, as I am not a gypsy”, ordering him to kneel, lay, sit, stand up, punched him several times and used denigrating words to Mitko.¹

We consider that this case is a racially motivated one. The perpetrator publicly admitted that he is a [nationalist](#) and that Roma cannot be equal to Bulgarians. In this respect, we urge the Bulgarian state to take a lead in strengthening the role and position of Roma in the Bulgarian society through the promotion of equality, tolerance and human rights.

This case is a particular one because it is based on ethnic hatred and therefore needs to be investigated accordingly. In the light of this incident, we would like to recall the European Court of Human Rights reasoning in previous cases of racially motivated attacks against Roma, such as **ŠEČIĆ v. CROATIA, NACHOVA v BULGARIA**, where the Court says that States “*have the additional duty to take all reasonable steps to unmask any racial motive and to establish whether or not ethnic hatred and prejudice may have played a role in the events*” and this is “...equally applicable to attacks perpetrated by private individuals.” The Court noted that “*treating racially induced violence and brutality on an equal footing with cases that have no racist overtones would be turning a blind eye to the specific nature of acts that are particularly destructive of fundamental rights.*”

¹ (Please see the video of the incident here)

https://www.dropbox.com/s/1usdkdte1qmp8q3/Roma%20incident_Bulgaria%202016_ENG%20subs%20updated.mp4?dl=0

As a group of young Roma activists and Roma youth organizations from all around Europe, we condemn any form of violence towards Roma and we stand against racism and discrimination against Roma.

This case reinforces the deeply rooted hatred against Roma in the European societies and also how much are the Roma disrespected. At the same time, we are witnessing an increase of the nationalistic and extremist discourse towards Roma in Europe.

In this respect, we:

- Call for an immediate and effective investigation of the case and punishment of the perpetrator;
- Call the Bulgarian authorities to investigate the case in the light of a racially motivated attack;
- Call the Bulgarian authorities to stand against any form of discrimination and racism against Roma;
- Call the Bulgarian authorities to publish the Court decision of the case;
- Urge the Bulgarian authorities to condemn publicly the racially motivated attacks on Roma.
- Invite the international organizations to closely follow the case and bring it to the international attention, in order to prevent future incidents of this type in other European countries.

If this kind of behaviour is not strictly punished, it will send a message to the public that the use of force against Roma and the humiliation against them is acceptable and permissible.

It is the duty of the authorities to criminalize the case adequately in the light of a racially motivated attack and behaviour and discourage future incidents of this kind.

We, as young Roma from Europe, patiently follow the development of the case and wish to express our concern regarding the prosecutors' decision to not invoke article 162 as a ground for the arrest and thus ignore the racial motivation behind the act.

Signatories (Roma activists and organizations)

1. Cristina Marian – Moldova
2. Elvis Shakjiri - Macedonia
3. Albert Memeti - Macedonia
4. Simona Torotcoi - Romania
5. Atanas Stoyanov - Bulgaria
6. Ramon Flores - Spain
7. Laszlo Jakab - Hungary
8. Marianna Jonas - Hungary
9. Ciprian Nodis - Romania
10. Csaba Olah - Hungary
11. Erjon Qirollari - Albania
12. Nadire Redzepi - Macedonia
13. Simona Gamonte - Romania
14. Ramona Cara - Romania
15. Fatma Azemi – Albania

16. Marija Sulejmanova – Macedonia
17. Eshref Rustem-Şerifoğlu - Bulgaria
18. Silhan Saitov - Macedonia
19. Lyusi Georgieva - Bulgaria
20. Julian Kondur - Ukraine
21. Simona Lazar – Romania
22. Manuela Demir - Macedonia
23. Anna Conkova - Slovakia
24. Hadis Redzepe - Macedonia
25. Marina Vasic – Serbia
26. Suad Skenderi - Macedonia
27. Deniz Selmani – Macedonia
28. Ismael Cortes-Spain
29. Natalia Duminica-Moldova
30. Andriano Marian- Moldova
31. Radu Marian- Moldova
32. Tatiana Caldarari- Moldova
33. Aurica Carai- Moldova
34. Leahu Diana- Moldova
35. Nicoleta Calin-Romania
36. Rade Besic- Serbia
37. Liviu Dinu- Romania
38. Romina Kajtazova-Macedonia
39. Aida Farkas- Hungary/Romania
40. Elena Sirbu- Moldova
41. Sebijan Fejzula- Macedonia
42. Carmen Tanasie- Romania
43. Elvis Bajram- Macedonia
44. Senada Sali- Macedonia
45. Ionut Sarbu- Romania
46. Sara Sejfula- Macedonia
47. Jengis Huseini- Macedonia
48. Muamed Aloski- Macedonia
49. Dzenifer Dzeladin- Macedonia
50. Ramona Cara- Romania
51. Selma Idrizi- Macedonia
52. Ildikó Csanya- Hungary
53. Dehran Bislim- Hungary
54. Brisilda Taco- Albania
55. Ramiza Sakip- Macedonia
56. Robert Demiri- Macedonia
57. Idriz Durmis- Macedonia
58. Eleonora Demirovska- Macedonia
59. Elvis Memeti-Macedonia
60. Arif Ademi- Macedonia
61. Esmeralda Aliu- Albania
62. Maryana Borisova- Bulgaria
63. Sonia Styrkacz- Poland

64. Marija Mitrovic- Serbia
65. Edin Durmisov- Germany
66. Maryana Borisova- Bulgaria
67. Kiril Kirilov- Bulgaria
68. Anelia Atanasova-Bulgaria
69. Vera Angelova-Bulgaria
70. Arif Pini – Macedonia
71. Ilhan Kurtis – Macedonia
72. Sejhan Jasarov Macedonia
73. Selma Sulimanova – Macedonia
74. Anifa Redzeqi- Macedonia
75. Fata Osmanovska Kundovska – Macedonia
76. Sabina Salimovska – Macedonia
77. Pakize Kazim – Macedonia
78. Emir Abdurimanov – Macedonia
79. Ajsel Memet – Macedonia
80. Emina Destanova – Macedonia
81. Suzan Amet- Macedonia
82. Erol Ademov- Macedonia
83. Merita Mustafi- Macedonia
84. Shejla Fidani- Macedonia
85. Andrzej Mirga- Poland
86. Kansuela Maciuleviciute- Lithuania

Organizations

87. Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP) - European Roma Youth Network,
20 member Roma youth organizations and 60 individual members
88. Institute for Research and Policy Analyses – Romalítico
89. Association of Roma Lawyers from Macedonia
90. ROMAJUST- Association of Roma Lawyers from Romania
91. Informal Network of Roma Lawyers- Bulgaria
92. Roma Education Fund
93. European Roma Rights Centre
94. Agora Roma- Spain
95. Roma National Center-Moldova
96. SIMURGH - European Roma Network, 17 member Roma organizations
97. Romanitin Roma Youth and Students Association- Romania
98. European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network- ERGO
99. ternYpe- International Roma Youth Network
100. Association for Democratic Development of Roma - Sonce
101. Association for Roma Community Development SUMNAL

102. NGO Roma Youth Centre –Macedonia
103. Initiative for Social Change – InSoC
104. ROMAVERSITAS Macedonia
105. Roma Community Empowerment and Organizing Association- Romano Avazi
Macedonia
106. Association MIR
107. Association 24vakti
108. Unga Romer Macedonia
109. National Roma Centrum Macedonia
110. Association Mesecina Gostivar
111. NGO Kham Delcevo
112. Association Terno Vas – Macedonia
113. CRZ Drom Kumanovo
114. Rromanipen
115. Association of Multi-ethnic Society for Human Rights
116. Youth Network for Development Association-Bulgaria
117. Phiren Amenca International Network