

Attacks against Roma communities in Italy

“All Roma camps will have to be dismantled right way and inhabitants will be either expelled or incarcerated” said Minister of Interior Roberto Maroni, according to the Italian newspaper La Repubblica on 11 May 2008. On the same day and on 13 May, several arson attacks took place on Roma settlements in different suburbs in Italy.

The incidents of violence against Romani communities in Italy occurred in recent days in the context of an increased anti-Roma and anti-immigrant rhetoric coming from Italian authorities. This rhetoric may have caused a climate in which verbal and physical abuse against Roma has been legitimised.

Several Italian politicians have made stigmatising statements about Roma, and the deputy mayor of Milan, Riccardo De Corato, has suggested that there should be limitations to the number of Roma who can live in Milan and that thousands of Roma need to be expelled.

On 11 May 2008, Molotov cocktails were thrown into a Roma settlement in Novara, near Milan by non-state actors. Even though the bombs exploded, they allegedly did not set fire to the as the attack happened just after a rain storm.

On 13 May 2008, after the arrest of a teenage Romani girl caught inside an apartment allegedly trying to kidnap a six month old baby, a crowd of angry people in the suburbs of Ponticelli in Naples took the streets chasing Roma out of three settlements. Molotov cocktails were thrown into the settlements which were largely destroyed by fire and more than 500 Roma, half of whom were children, had to flee the settlements.

Italy has received widespread criticism for its recent actions against Romani people. The head of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Christian Strohal, has stated that ‘the current stigmatisation of Roma groups in Italy is dangerous as it contributes to fuelling tensions and increases the potential for violence’. The European Union (EU) Commission and the EU Parliament have also criticised the situation of Roma in Italy.

In light of these events, Amnesty International calls on the Italian authorities to refrain from engaging in stigmatising speeches against Roma persons, and to take all the necessary measures to provide protection to the Roma community and pursue their active inclusion in society.

Act now

Call on the Italian authorities to:

Stop using anti-Roma rhetoric in media and in political speeches.

Ensure that thorough independent and impartial investigations are conducted into each attack on Romani persons and property carried out by non-state actors and state actors. Those affected by the attacks should be given adequate access to reparations.

Write to:

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