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NGOs deeply concerned over discriminatory remarks by Romanian representatives during UN Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee review process

On 20 – 21 November 2014, almost 20 years since its last review, Romania again appeared in front of the [UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (CESCR). NGOs present during the review sessions are deeply concerned over discriminatory statements by the Romanian representatives and the government's failure to engage in a constructive dialogue with the UN Committee as to the extent of which civil society organizations consider that Romania has failed to meet its international obligations prescribed by the Covenant.

During the review the Romanian Ambassador to the UN, Maria Ciobanu, responding to a question on Roma inclusion policies referred to Roma in Romania as being “nomadic by nature” and implied that this nomadism makes ensuring successful Roma inclusion particularly difficult. However, the great majority of Roma in Romania live a sedentary lifestyle and have done so for generations. The representative then commented that women in Romania, despite being highly educated, did not have “the skills to take part in the tough political life”. Both of these statements are rooted in prejudice, and they are discriminatory and unacceptable. Furthermore, they are indicative of Romania's contemptuous attitude towards the CESCR and the review process in particular.

Since 1994, Romania has repeatedly failed to submit reports for review by the Committee, which states parties to the ICESCR are required to submit every five years. No relevant Ministry representative joined the review sessions in Geneva to represent Romania before the Committee, and furthermore, the Romanian delegation failed to provide answers to several of the questions presented by the members of the CESC.

The overall participation of the delegation in the review process appears as an attempt to cover-up and prevent the members of the UN Committee from being presented with the reality of the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights in Romania. We consider it a contempt of the UN Committee and its mandate and it sends a worrying signal that Romania does not in fact take seriously its duty to protect and ensure the rights enshrined in the ICESCR.

Background

The CESC assesses states' compliance with their obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which Romania has ratified.

National and international NGOs participated in the review process – [Amnesty International](#), the [European Roma Rights Centre](#), [Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives](#), [Global Justice Institute](#), [Romani CRISS](#) and [Society for Contraception and Sexual Education](#) – and were accompanied by a Roma community activist, who herself was affected by human rights violations relevant to the review, when her community were [forcibly evicted](#) from the centre of the north-western Romanian city of Cluj-Napoca and resettled to the outskirts adjacent to a waste dump in December 2010.

The NGOs met with several of the members of the CESC in a pre-session meeting, and participated as observers in the public dialogue between the CESC and the Romanian delegation.

The concluding observations of the CESC will be issued on Friday 28 November 2014.

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