



HUMAN RIGHTS

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ROMA RIGHTS

NOW

Roma across Europe – 6 million of them living in the European Union – are the largest and most disadvantaged minority in the region.

Thousands of Roma are forced to live in informal settlements. Tens of thousands are forcibly evicted from their homes every year, and – if not left homeless – are resettled to inadequate conditions on the outskirts of cities.

Every year, thousands of Romani children are segregated in schools offering inferior education. Many are denied access to jobs and quality health care.

Roma are victims of racially motivated violence. They are often left unprotected by the police and without access to justice.

This is not a coincidence. It is the result of the widespread discrimination and racism that Roma face across Europe.

The EU prides itself on being a Union founded on the principles of democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. This rings hollow as long as millions of Roma – millions of EU citizens – are denied their basic human rights as a result of discrimination.

These photographs do not just show individuals. They represent the stories of thousands of Roma across Europe, facing discrimination and fighting for equality.



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Romani woman, preparing dinner in Valeni II, Romania, October 2012.

With around 500 other Roma, she was forcibly evicted from her home in the centre of Piatra Neamț, Romania, and relocated to the outskirts of the city, in inadequate housing. In Romania, thousands of Roma live in informal settlements as government policies deny them other housing options. They are often targeted by local authorities with forced evictions and are relocated to areas where their health is at risk. Forcibly evicted Roma communities do not just lose their homes; they lose also their possessions, their social networks and their access to work, schools and other essential services.

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“I was the last one they bulldozed, because I didn’t want to leave... More than 1,500 of my books [stock for his stall] were left there.”

Bela Novak at his bookstall in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, October 2012.

Bela Novak was forcibly evicted from his home in Coastei Street in the centre of Cluj-Napoca, on 17 December 2010.

He was among around 350 people, the majority Roma, who were relocated 9km out of the city, next to the city’s rubbish tip. Living outside the city, with limited access to public transport, Bela struggles to continue selling his books.

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A Romani girl watches as the local authorities build a 2m-high wall to separate her community from the non-Roma neighbourhood in Horea Street, Baia Mare, Romania, July 2011.

The equality body in Romania stated that the building of the wall to separate Roma and non-Roma communities in Baia Mare amounted to discrimination, and recommended that it was demolished and housing conditions were improved. The wall is still there.



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A boy watches homes being destroyed during the Casilino 900 forced eviction, Italy, 2009.

The Casilino 900 camp in Rome, Italy, was one of the largest in Europe for Roma and had existed for 40 years until it closed in February 2010. Its closure signalled the beginning of the implementation of Rome's "Nomad Plan".

Those evicted were then moved on to other, overcrowded camps where living conditions are still very poor. They have yet to be offered adequate housing.

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A police officer removes a family's belongings from their home in the Tor de'Cenci camp, Rome, Italy, during their eviction on 28 September 2012.

About 250 Romani people, mostly Bosnians, were forcibly evicted from the camp that day. The camp had been opened by municipal authorities in 1995, and many children grew up there and attended local schools.

Against their will, Tor de'Cenci residents were resettled in two purpose-built camps in segregated areas, La Barbuta and Castel Romano. Although many would have preferred relocation in social housing, this option was never considered by local authorities.

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Romanians of Roma origin waiting for a bus in Villejuif, Paris, France, 29 September, 2010.

Thousands of Roma have been forcibly evicted in France. The French authorities offer money to Roma to return to their countries of origin.



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“Every day we have to go to fetch water ... from the cemetery or from the water spring which is 3.5km away.”

A Romani man collects water from the cemetery, Ribnica, Slovenia, July 2012.

In Slovenia, local authorities supply safe drinking water only to people who can provide specific documents, including building permits, for their homes. Roma, often living in informal settlements without documents, have no access to this service. Almost 100% of the Slovene population have access to water, but 20-30% of Roma settlements in the country's south-east do not.

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Roma-only school in Ostrava, Czech Republic, June 2012.

Tens of thousands of Romani pupils in Europe attend segregated Roma-only schools or classes and schools or classes for pupils with "mild mental disabilities", where they are taught a reduced curriculum. In the Czech Republic, 35% of the pupils placed in "practical" schools and classes for people with mild mental disabilities are Romani.

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“We are not the primary school children, we are practical school kids.”

Romi D. prepares his homework, Ostrava, Czech Republic June 2012.

Romi goes to a school with approximately 90% Roma intake and where most classes teach a “practical” curriculum focusing on the development of practical skills. He has not started to learn a foreign language, as he would have done if he was in a mainstream school.

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“We want to be with the white kids... We asked [the school] if we can take books and notebooks at home, but they don’t give us any.”

Margita and Adela attend a segregated special class at the elementary school in Krivany, in eastern Slovakia, April 2010.

Almost all the Romani children at the Krivany elementary school in Slovakia attended special classes for pupils with “mild mental disabilities”.

In Slovakia 65% of special schools contain only Romani pupils, and 90% of special classes in mainstream schools are attended by Romani pupils.

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The house in Tatárszentgyörgy, Hungary, February 2010 where Róbert Csorba and his five-year-old son were killed as they fled from the house following an arson attack on 23 February 2009.

Racial hatred and violence against Roma are pervasive in Europe.

In Hungary, according to the European Roma Rights Centre, between January 2008 and September 2012 there were over 60 attacks on Roma in various parts of the country, and nine Roma – including Róbert and his son – were killed.

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Isabela Mihalache, a Roma human rights activist from Romania, addresses the crowd during a demonstration in Budapest, Hungary, April 2011, calling for a better EU Roma Strategy.

On 7 April 2011, the European Commission adopted an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. It attempts to set out a long-term strategy to promote Roma integration, but fails to specify actions that EU member states should take to combat discrimination and racism against Roma or to ensure Roma participation. It does not establish strong indicators, or a thorough monitoring mechanism to assess member states' policies.

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Children playing in a container settlement, near Rakovica on the outskirts of Belgrade, Serbia, March 2012.

Roma face similar human rights violations outside EU borders. In countries that aspire to become members of the EU, governments are required in the accession process to guarantee the rights of Roma.

Yet, in Serbia, for example, there are concerns that EU funds might be used to increase segregation. Funds earmarked to provide alternative housing for forcibly evicted Roma who are living in container settlements could be used by the Belgrade city authorities to build racially segregated housing for Roma.