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Sweden: Skåne police database violates human rights of Romanis

Amnesty International expresses deep concern at the revelation published on 23 September in the Swedish daily, *Dagens Nyheter* (DN), that Swedish police in the Skåne police department have maintained an illegal database of about 4,000 Romani people, for no apparent reason other than their ethnicity.

The database created and held by the Skåne police department, under the name Kringresande (Travellers or Nomads) reportedly registered the names of over 4000 Romani individuals as old as one born in the late 1800s and now deceased, and children born as recently as 2011. The majority of people included on the searchable database had no recorded criminal convictions; details of children as young as two months old were reportedly registered. Amnesty International is particularly concerned by the allegation that the details of Romani individuals were held on a database to assist in criminal investigations, particularly when the majority of those on the database had no known criminal convictions.

The Skåne county police chief, the National Police Commissioner, the Minister of Justice and Minister of Integration have all now expressed regret for the database and apologized publicly. The matter is currently under investigation by Sweden's Commission on Security and Integrity Protection (Säkerhets- och integritetsskyddsnämnden) and the National Police-related crimes unit (Riksenheten för polismål) as well as internally by the National Police Board (Rikspolisstyrelsen).

Further news reports on 24 September suggested that the Skåne police held a further database on Romanis, although it remained unclear whether the individuals on this database were distinct from those on the database revealed the day before.

Amnesty International considers the collection of such private information about individuals solely on the basis of their ethnicity to be discriminatory, unnecessary and unjustified; it is clearly in violation of international and regional human rights standards, including Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), regarding the right to respect for private life, and Article 14 regarding the right to freedom from discrimination.

Targeting an ethnic minority in this way – and creating the perception in doing so that ethnicity can be linked to criminality – is directly and unambiguously discriminatory.

Amnesty calls on the relevant Swedish authorities to ensure that all those individuals identified on the database are contacted, informed of the appropriate complaint procedure, and provided with access to remedy. Amnesty International also calls for a prompt, independent, impartial inquiry into the matter to identify and apportion responsibility, and set out lessons to be learned by all law-enforcement authorities in Sweden; such an inquiry would necessarily have to begin from a root and branch search of all other police departments' databases, to ensure that no other such registers exist.