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Italy: Provide redress to Romani victims of racist violence

Amnesty international condemns the fire set in an unauthorized Romani settlement on 10 December in Turin and urges the Italian authorities to ensure that the victims of this racist attack obtain redress. The authorities should be diligent in ensuring that those responsible for this episode of discriminatory violence are prosecuted.

On 10 December a protest organized by some inhabitants of the Vallette suburb in Turin degenerated when some of them decided to set on fire several caravans and shacks in an unauthorized settlement where Roma from Romania were living. The protest was organized to allegedly demonstrate solidarity with a 16-year-old girl who had reported to the police on 8 December that she had been raped by two foreign Roma. The girl stated later to the police that her accusations were false and publicly apologized. The day before the protest, leaflets inciting the inhabitants of the suburb to “clean up” the area where the settlement was located, were circulating in the neighbourhood. The media reported that around 500 people took part in the march: of those; around 30 were said to have been involved in the raid against the settlement. Nobody was injured in the event since the police had evacuated the area before the protest began.

This episode of discriminatory violence took place in a context where for several years some representatives of the authorities had been helping to foster a climate of intolerance towards Romani people by making unsubstantiated statements linking these communities to raising crime and insecurity. In the name of security over the past years, Italian authorities have implemented measures that have aggravated discrimination against Roma, such as those provided under a state of emergency declared in 2008 (the so-called “Nomad Emergency”) and ruled unlawful in November 2011.

Amnesty International welcomes the statements of condemnation by national and local authorities but emphasises that words should be followed by deeds. The authorities must take active steps to address all forms of discrimination, including discriminatory violence on grounds of race and ethnicity in line with its international human rights obligations. They should ensure that any racist motive be unmasked and that those responsible for racially motivated violence be subject to criminal prosecution and receive sanctions which reflect the gravity of the human rights abuse.

See also: *Italy: ‘Zero tolerance for Roma’: Forced evictions and discrimination against Roma in Milan* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR30/020/2011/en>)