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Czech Republic: Obligation to protect the Romani community in Nový Bydžov

Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre have urged the Czech authorities to ensure protection of Roma in Nový Bydžov during a demonstration by the Workers' Social Justice Party planned on 12 March.

The Worker's Party, the predecessor to the Workers' Social Justice Party, was dissolved by the Supreme Administrative Court in February 2010. The Court held that its programme led to incitement to national, racial, ethnic intolerance and amounted to an attempt to infringe the basic rights and freedoms of certain groups, in particular the minorities. In November 2008, the then-Workers Party organized a rally in the Janov neighbourhood of the town Litvínov. After the rally, the demonstrators reportedly tried to reach the mainly Roma neighbourhood of the town armed with stones, firecrackers and petrol bombs with the apparent intention of attacking the Roma community. About 500 demonstrators clashed with police who prevented the attacks against the Roma community. The Workers' Social Justice Party has the same chairman, the same leadership and the same platform.

Far right groups are using the internet to make links between the planned demonstration in Nový Bydžov and the Janov rally of 2008. One of the far-right groups that announced its support for the demonstration in Nový Bydžov is the Autonomous Nationalists. The group reportedly issued a call in which it reminded the "pro-national forces" of the Janov events and declared that it was now again "time to show the power". The organizers of the demonstration reportedly plan to march through the town on a route which passes by a house inhabited by Romani families.

Nový Bydžov became a focus of attention for the media and local as well as national politicians in the aftermath of a rape of a 21-year-old woman in November 2010. The suspected perpetrator of the attack was allegedly a Roma. In response to the attack, the Mayor of Nový Bydžov stated that the rape called forth the "last drop of hatred of citizens towards Gypsies". Following the Mayor's statement, the Workers' Social Justice Party welcomed "open and truthful naming of the problem" and announced its readiness to help, including by providing monitoring patrols to the municipality.

Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre remind the Czech authorities of their obligation under international human rights law and standards to ensure the security and the physical integrity of Roma, without any discrimination, and to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, punish and provide redress for racially motivated attacks by non-state actors. The organizations will monitor the situation during the demonstration in Nový Bydžov.

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