

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

25 October 2010

AI Index: EUR 71/007/2010

Czech Republic: Four convicted of racially-motivated attacks in Vítkov

The recent trial for the arson attack against a Romani family in Vítkov, a village in Czech Republic, is an important step in realizing the right to an effective remedy for victims of hate crimes in the country.

In April 2009 Molotov cocktails were thrown into the home of a Romani family. The fire completely destroyed their house with the father and mother suffering burns over 11 and 27 per cent of their bodies respectively. Their two-year-old daughter, Natálka, suffered burns over 80 per cent of her body and was in an induced coma for three months. Five other family members also present at the time of the attack escaped unharmed.

According to the judgment as published by the media, the Regional Court in Ostrava, found the four perpetrators guilty of attempted homicide and property damage “committed with exceptional cruelty against members of an ethnic group.”

The court concluded that the crime was premeditated and with the intention deliberately targeting a house inhabited by a large Romani family. Their intention was to put the house on fire and kill its inhabitants because of their ethnicity. Three of them were sentenced to 22 years and the fourth to 20 years in prison. All of the perpetrators announced they will appeal the verdict.

Amnesty International calls on governments to protect people from discriminatory violence and to provide victims of such attacks to remedies including access to justice. In line with international obligations, authorities must take steps to unmask discriminatory motives for crimes where such a motivation is suspected to have played a role in the crime.

In the case of *Nachova and others v. Bulgaria*, the European Court of Human Rights held that “[r]acial violence is a particular affront to human dignity and in view of its perilous consequences requires from the authorities special vigilance and a vigorous reaction.”

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or email: press@amnesty.org

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK

www.amnesty.org