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EU ROMA POLICY COALITION



NGOs call on Commission to clarify position on Italian Roma policies and make response public

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(Brussels) The European Commission's position regarding the Italian government's recent policies in relation to Roma needs to be clarified, says the EU Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC).*

The Coalition is concerned by the comments of Commissioner Barrot's spokesperson – so far the only public response to the Maroni report.

The Commission appears to have taken the narrowest possible view, accepting a “softened” version of the measures initially implemented by the Italian government. These same measures had been severely criticized as discriminatory and violating human rights law by the Council of Europe, civil society and indeed the Commission itself.

The Coalition is worried that such an approach sends a dangerous signal, particularly in Italy where anti-Roma speech and action have already reached unacceptable levels such as the burning of camps by vigilante mobs. This reality appears to be absent from the Commission's current interpretation according to which, a census of Roma community is acceptable as an ultimate solution – even though a census carried out on the basis of ethnicity is necessarily a discriminatory practice.

In the name of transparency, it is in the Commission's interest to provide adequate explanations about its conclusions and to render all relevant documents public.

As the Commission prepares to host a summit designed to debate Roma exclusion in Europe, it is crucial that there are no misunderstandings of where it stands in regard to the basic rights of Roma living in Europe.

The Coalition therefore calls on the Commission to:

- Fully disclose the report and explanation on which the assessment is based;
- Clarify if the response to Maroni's report implies a “green light” to the action and measures being implemented, namely forced evictions, attacks on Roma camps and derogatory or racist declarations by officials;
- Address Roma issues based on social inclusion policies, not on security concerns.

** The EU Roma Policy Coalition (Coalition) is an informal gathering of NGOs operating at EU level in the broader areas of human rights, anti-discrimination, anti-racism, social inclusion and Roma and Travelers rights.*

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