

ERPC PRESS STATEMENT

Time for France to stop forced evictions and expulsions of Roma

Brussels, 31 August 2012 – The European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) is deeply concerned with France’s latest evictions and expulsions of Roma. Despite recent measures taken by the French government, French police continue to dismantle Roma settlements across the country. Roma are also still being sent back to Romania and Bulgaria under the scheme of so-called voluntary returns. These actions go against President François Hollande’s promise to end the controversial policies of his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy, who also expelled Roma to Romania and Bulgaria in 2010.

“These actions are in clear breach of international human rights standards and of the European fundamental rights to equal treatment and free movement. It is unacceptable that Roma people’s rights as EU citizens are completely ignored”, said Ivan Ivanov, ERPC Chair.

The ERPC welcomes the French decision to ease limitations on employment for citizens of Bulgaria and Romania. But more has to be done. It is time for France to make Roma integration a priority and stop discrimination against this group. France submitted its National Roma Integration Strategy to the European Commission earlier this year. The Commission’s own feedback said there was “no real national strategy concerning migrant Roma”. Evictions should not take place without sufficient notice and without provisions for long-term quality alternative housing.

We urge the European Commission to closely monitor the situation and to take strong action under EU anti-discrimination legislation. The Commission should publicly condemn such discriminatory acts and follow up on the EC Communication from May 2012 with France to develop and implement a set of measures concerning migrant Roma enabling them to enjoy their fundamental rights and their integration in society.

For interviews or further comment, please contact:

Marta Pinto, Policy Officer, European Roma Information Office
Tel: +32 (0)2 733 34 62 - E-mail: marta.pinto@erionet.eu

The ERPC is an informal gathering of non-governmental organisations operating at EU level on issues of human rights, anti-discrimination, anti-racism, social inclusion, and Roma and Travellers’ rights. Its members are Amnesty International, the European Roma Rights Centre, the European Roma Information Office, the Open Society Institute, European Network Against Racism, Minority Rights Group International, the European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network, Policy Center for Roma and Minorities, the Roma Education Fund, and Fundación Secretariado Gitano.

*From June until November 2012, the rotating chairmanship of the ERPC is held by the European Roma Information Office, in close cooperation with ENAR and ERRC.
Contact: coordinator@romapolicy.eu*

**Winner of Campaign of the Year: ERPC Campaign for an EU Roma Strategy,
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