

Submission to the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism

Addressing the Glorification of Nazism and Neo-Nazism: The Roma Perspective

The Roma community has historically faced severe discrimination based on work and descent¹, and persecution, including during the Holocaust, where an estimated 500,000 to 1.5 million Roma were killed. The Roma were targeted by Nazi policies, leading to significant loss of life and cultural heritage. The glorification of Nazism perpetuates a narrative that dehumanizes and marginalizes Roma, contributing to ongoing discrimination. Neo-Nazi groups often target Roma communities, promoting hate speech and violence. This glorification emboldens perpetrators and normalizes anti-Roma sentiment, exacerbating social exclusion and marginalization. Despite historical injustices, many Roma communities still lack adequate recognition and reparation. The glorification of Nazism hinders efforts to acknowledge and address past atrocities, further entrenching systemic racism. Today, Roma continue to face racism and xenophobia, often fueled by the glorification of Nazism and neo-Nazism. This submission highlights the need to address these issues specifically from a Roma perspective.

The Roma community in Europe continues to face severe forms of racism, xenophobia, and related intolerance. The Roma continue to experience persistent and systemic discrimination, and we believe that the current trends in hate speech, extremist movements, and xenophobic violence disproportionately affect them. Roma communities across Europe are increasingly targeted by extremist groups, including neo-Nazi and skinhead movements. These groups, often emboldened by political rhetoric, continue to propagate harmful stereotypes and racialized narratives about Roma people. This environment has led to a rise in violent incidents, including physical assaults, targeted harassment, and the desecration of Roma cultural sites

In recent years, there has been a notable rise in neo-Nazi groups in countries like Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Czechia, Romania and others, where Roma communities have been particularly targeted. Roma individuals and families have been victims of violent attacks, some of which were explicitly linked to the glorification of Nazi-era figures or neo-Nazi movements. For example:

- **Romania (2020):** There were **increased threats and harassment** against Roma communities following the rise of far-right parties like the AUR, whose rhetoric often included references to Nazi symbols and figures such as Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, head of an extremist nationalist group. These have created a hostile environment for Roma people, leading to intimidation and violence against them.
- **Italy (2021):** Neo-Nazi graffiti was sprayed on Roma homes, depicting swastikas and anti-Roma slogans. This act of hate was part of a broader climate of increasing extremism and discrimination in Italy, where Roma communities already face significant marginalization.

¹ Discrimination based on work and descent - Sub-Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2004/17: [e-cn_4-sub_2-res-2004-17.doc](#)

- In **2019**, Roma were among the targets of neo-Nazi groups during a series of protests in **Germany** where far-right groups glorified Nazi-era figures and spread racist rhetoric against Roma and other minority communities. Roma communities reported **increased violence and hate speech** following these events, making it difficult for them to live peacefully in these areas.
- **The Czech Republic (2018)**: Roma women and children were targeted during protests by neo-Nazi groups that aimed to "eradicate" Romani culture. These groups claimed that Roma were a threat to the "purity" of the Czech nation, using Nazi symbolism and rhetoric. This led to widespread intimidation, harassment, and physical violence against Roma children and women.
- **Italy (2019)**: During a neo-Nazi rally in Milan, Roma children were attacked with racial slurs, and some were physically assaulted. These attacks were supported by right-wing extremists who glorified the violent actions of Nazi sympathizers in the past.
- **Serbia (2020)**: Roma families were evicted from their homes in the midst of the pandemic, with some facing violent assaults from local far-right groups who blamed them for the spread of the virus. The rise in neo-Nazi groups during this period contributed to a climate of increased discrimination and violence against Roma communities.
- **Germany (2023)**: Attacks on Sinti and Roma nearly doubled, with over 1,200 incidents reported. These included violent attacks, threats, and property damage, often linked to neo-Nazi motivations.²
- **Hungary (2023)**: Dozens of violent attacks against Roma occurred, including six murders. The Hungarian government faced criticism for not addressing these attacks as ethnically motivated.³
- **Romania (2025)**: The resurgence of far-right ideologies has led to increased intimidation and threats against Roma communities. Following the rise of figures like Călin Georgescu, who has been associated with fascist symbols and rhetoric, Roma rights groups have reported receiving death threats, photos of guns and Nazi symbols.⁴ These threats, which include messages advocating for the elimination of Jews and Roma, have been linked to the emboldened extreme-right movements in the country.

² [Germany: Attacks on Sinti and Roma double – DW – 06/17/2024](#)

³ [International Roma Day Bracketed by Rising Extremism and Violence - CSCE](#)

⁴ [In Romania, the far right has unleashed a tide of hate and resurrected our fascist ghosts | Andrei Popoviciu | The Guardian](#)

Legal Action Against Hate Speech and Neo-Nazi Rhetoric in Bulgaria

In July 2023, Bulgaria's Commission for Protection against Discrimination fined the VMRO-BND party for promoting derogatory statements about the Roma community.⁵ In this case, the VMRO-BND party, an extremist political group, posted online content that perpetuated harmful stereotypes and discriminatory views about the Roma people. These statements, made on social media platforms, echoed far-right rhetoric and contributed to an environment of hostility and incitement of hatred toward Roma communities.⁶ The Bulgarian authorities' response, which led to the party being fined for promoting hate speech under Bulgarian law, signals an important step toward accountability for online hate speech and neo-Nazi glorification.

Combatting Impunity and Online Hate Speech: The Czech Republic's Legal Response to Antigypsyism

These attacks often go unpunished, further entrenching the sense of impunity among perpetrators and increasing the vulnerability of Roma individuals and families.

On 22 August 2023, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and Forum for Human Rights (FORUM), in collaboration with young Romani volunteers at Romea.cz, filed five criminal complaints in the Czech Republic against individuals who posted racist statements online inciting violence against Roma.⁷ The complaints, filed between 13 July and 9 August 2023, are linked to the parole of two neo-Nazis responsible for a 2009 firebomb attack on a Romani family in Vítkov, which severely burned a 2-year-old girl.

The complaints were based on violations of Sections 355 (defamation of an ethnic group), 356 (incitement of hatred), and 364 (inciting a criminal act) of the Czech Criminal Code. The offensive posts included genocidal calls against Roma, promotion of race wars, celebration of the Lety u Písek concentration camp murders, and praise for the neo-Nazis involved in the Vítkov attack.

The ERRC and FORUM emphasize the need for a coordinated approach to combating online hate speech, as it often leads to real-world violence. They continue to gather evidence through their project, *Challenging Digital Antigypsyism*, which involves volunteer-led actions to counter digital antigypsyism and bring legal challenges against hate speech.

This follows previous criminal complaints filed in 2022 and 2023, which led to two individuals being punished. The organizations are closely monitoring the progress of these new complaints.

The case is also connected to the release of two neo-Nazi attackers on parole, which shocked the Czech public, including the victim's family. The Vítkov attack was part of a

⁵ [Bulgaria: Extremist VMRO-BND party fined for 'Gypsy issue' online hate - European Roma Rights Centre](#)

⁶ [Bulgaria: Roma inclusion and the far-right threat in the EU's own Absurdistan - European Roma Rights Centre](#)

⁷ [Czech Romani Activists Take Legal Action Against Online Hate Following Release of Neo-Nazis from Prison - European Roma Rights Centre](#)

broader wave of anti-Roma violence in Central Europe between 2008 and 2010, which saw numerous attacks in Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. The ERRC criticized the Czech response to these attacks, noting that the judgment in the Vítkov case was substandard.

The Czech legal action highlights the danger of impunity⁸, where perpetrators of harmful and offensive hate speech are often shielded from the consequences of their actions, despite clear violations of the law. Such impunity not only perpetuates harm against marginalized communities but also emboldens far-right groups to continue promoting their hateful ideologies.

Commemorating Romani Victims of Neo-Nazi Terror: The Call for a Memorial Day

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and Hungarian NGOs' call for a Memorial Day for Romani Victims of Neo-Nazi Terror⁹ is an initiative aimed to commemorate the 2008 firebomb attack on a Romani family in the Hungarian town of Tiszavasvári, which resulted in the death of a young child and the severe injury of family members. This attack, carried out by a neo-Nazi group, was part of a broader series of violent assaults against Romani communities in Hungary, reflecting the dangerous rise of far-right extremism. The call for a Memorial Day seeks to honor these victims, ensuring that their stories are not forgotten and countering the glorification of the perpetrators of such acts.

Key Remaining Concerns

- While some European states have made legislative strides in combating racism and xenophobia, including measures to prevent hate crimes, these laws are frequently not implemented effectively, particularly in relation to Roma communities. In some cases, Roma individuals face institutionalized discrimination within legal and judicial systems, limiting their ability to access justice. Furthermore, the state's response to hate speech and racist violence remains inconsistent, and there is a lack of clear policies that address the intersectional nature of Roma discrimination, particularly against women and children.
- There is an urgent need for stronger legal frameworks and state intervention to address hate speech and incitement to violence against Roma people. Politicians and public figures, including media outlets, often perpetuate harmful stereotypes, which contributes to the rise of discriminatory narratives. Although some countries have established laws to counter hate speech, Roma communities continue to be exposed to racist rhetoric without sufficient protection or response from authorities.
- Positive lessons can be drawn from community-led initiatives that empower Roma individuals to advocate for their rights and protect themselves against hate crimes. Some governments have, in fact, improved efforts to commemorate Romani Holocaust losses – including Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. More of this effort needs to be brought into the classroom and, of course, reflected in the discourse of public leaders. Systemic discrimination and the normalization of Roma-bashing in

⁸ [Outrage as Czech neo-Nazis guilty of 'Natálka atrocity' get parole and walk free - European Roma Rights Centre](#)

⁹ [Hungary: NGOs call for a memorial-day for Romani victims of neo-Nazi terror - European Roma Rights Centre](#)

public discourse remain significant barriers. Efforts to combat racism have been hindered by a lack of political will to fully implement existing anti-discrimination laws, and insufficient focus on intersectionality, particularly when it comes to Roma women and children.

- Accurate and disaggregated data on hate crimes against Roma communities is sparse, which makes it difficult to understand the true scale of violence. It is essential that member states systematically collect and report data on victims and perpetrators of hate crimes, with a focus on the Roma. This data is crucial for shaping effective policies and interventions aimed at combating racial hatred and ensuring justice for Roma victims.
- States must actively promote political, social, and cultural tolerance, particularly in public discourse. Political leaders, media representatives, and educators must be held accountable for their role in perpetuating or combating hate speech. Furthermore, the state should encourage inclusive education that addresses Roma history, culture, and contributions, as well as provide resources for community-based initiatives to counter hate speech and foster mutual understanding between Roma and non-Roma communities.

Recommendations:

1. We urge the Special Rapporteur to prioritize the situation of Roma as communities discriminated on work and descent within the broader context of contemporary racism and xenophobia in Europe. Roma people must be protected from hate speech, violence, and discrimination, and effective, intersectional policies must be implemented to address the unique challenges they face. We believe that addressing the exclusion and marginalization of Roma people is essential for achieving genuine equality and inclusion across Europe.
2. In accordance with the OHCHR Sub-Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2004/17, we requested the Special Rapporteurs, for the purpose of identifying best practices, to obtain more comprehensive information on constitutional, legislative, judicial, administrative, and educational measures taken to address discrimination based on work and descent. This includes the elaboration and submission of a questionnaire to Governments, national human rights institutions, relevant organs and agencies of the United Nations system, and non-governmental organizations.