

WINTER 2019

ROMA RIGHTS REVIEW



EYES WIDE SHUT:
COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT
OF ROMA IN 21ST
CENTURY EUROPE

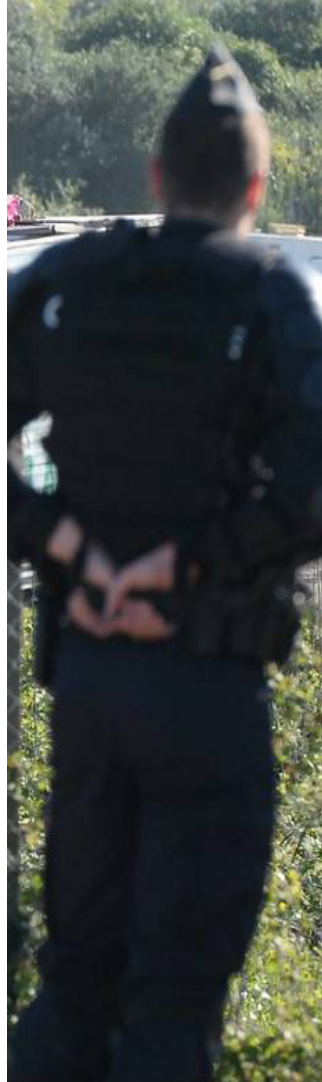


A European collective racist consciousness?

Margareta Matache

On October 24th 2019, around noon, 24-year-old Anzhelika Belova, a Ukrainian Romani activist and director of the Roma Center “Lacho Drom,” was returning home from shopping.

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The French recipe

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FOREWORD

JONATHAN LEE

One of society's most dangerous stereotypes about Roma is also one of its most subtle. It is as simple and insidious a stereotype as you can imagine and it infects our public institutions, our state policies, our electoral politics - even our very conception of Roma as a people.

It is the idea of "the Roma" as a collective noun. I don't mean in the linguistic sense, I mean when "the Roma community" become a single entity in the minds of gadjé society and are dealt with on that basis.

Collective punishment lies at the heart of antigypsyism. The systems of discrimination which persecute Roma in our society do so by collectivising them into a homogenous group. This imagined group is called *the Gypsies*, and they pay for this stereotype in a thousand different ways as a result of collective punishment by those with power. Whether it is punitive forced evictions of entire Romani neighbourhoods, violent and indiscriminate police raids, deadly pogroms by murderous race mobs, or segregated education of Romani children; the persecution of *the Gypsies* has always been carried out through collective punishment for the crimes, imagined or real, of the few.

Our human rights are inalienable and individual. Actions by public authorities which deny us our individuality and abuse our rights as a collective are illegal. You don't have to be a lawyer to know this; it is arguably racism in its most basic and purest form. But you also don't have to be a lawyer to recognise it and to call it out. Roma are frequently

banished to slums on the margins of cities, away from public services, jobs, and transportation because of centuries of compounded racism. These segregated shanty-towns, unfit for human habitation, are treated with suspicion and disdain by a society which sanctions collective evictions against them for the crime of being poor-while-Roma. The same society which remains repugnantly silent at the waves of anti-Roma hate mobs rioting outside Romani homes. The silent majority remain mute at the ever growing number of ethnic murders of Romani women, men, and children; **fifteen** last year.

Any society which allows public authorities to punish an ethnic group collectively, which allows stereotypes to become established truth, and has seemingly no problem with Romani people living shorter, more miserable lives because of a misguided notion of "Roma culture" is not a functioning society at all. These things would be unacceptable for anyone else, and it is unacceptable that they should happen to Roma.

Some brave individuals are fighting back against collective punishment. Through the courts, the media, the arts, and education - Roma are standing up to be counted, as individuals, and demanding respect for their rights. This edition of the *Roma Rights Review* looks at the scourge of collective punishment of Roma in Europe, its many shades and practices, and the different ways Romani individuals are challenging society's stereotypes and prejudices.

A EUROPEAN COLLECTIVE RACIST CONSCIOUSNESS?

MARGARETA MATACHE

On October 24th 2019, around noon, 24-year-old Anzhelika Belova, a Ukrainian Romani activist and director of the Roma Center “Lacho Drom,” was returning home from shopping. A far-right extremist followed her until she reached her apartment building where he attacked and stabbed her several times. Badly wounded, Anzhelika was hospitalized.¹ The mainstream media ignored this racially motivated attack, except for three short online news pieces in English. This lackluster response is symptomatic of a wider culture at work. By and large, Europeans’ longstanding rejection and racism towards Romani people, including children and youth, has remained morally unquestioned and barely addressed in the public sphere.

The attack against Anzhelika was not unique. In 2018, extremists in Ukraine killed the 23-year-old Romani man David Popp. Human rights organizations had reported to the Ministry of Interior that hate crimes were increasing in Ukraine, including the crimes committed by Ukrainian extremists who murdered several Romani individuals.² After they attacked a Roma camp, filming and posting the attack online, a Ukraine-based fascist group said they had “safely burned” the camp of makeshift tents, successfully “cleaning” Kiev.³

Italy also has also witnessed a rise in racially motivated attacks; they tripled from 2017 to 2018.⁴ And Ukraine and Italy are hardly exceptions in Europe. But we see few, if any, reactions from Europeans. Do we see hashtags? Do we hear of protest, outrage? No. Mostly silence. I am hurt and astonished, every time a European ignores, downplays, or justifies an anti-Roma attack.

It takes a great deal to confront structural racism: genuine commitment, anti-racist education, truth-telling, redress, and radical changes in policy, law, and society. We need all of that, as structural racism is embedded in our institutions, laws, policies, cultures, societies, scholarship, and media. And it reproduces itself, often invisibly.

But racially motivated killings, a manifestation of racism, are overt and plainly inhuman. When they happen so often, they clearly contradict the values that Europeans, whether Christians or progressives, pretend to stand up for. So, what is it that allows Europeans to remain oblivious as they witness the murders of Romani children and youth? How do modern Europeans morally justify their indifference and inaction regarding anti-Roma racism? Where is the “*Je suis Rom*” hashtag?

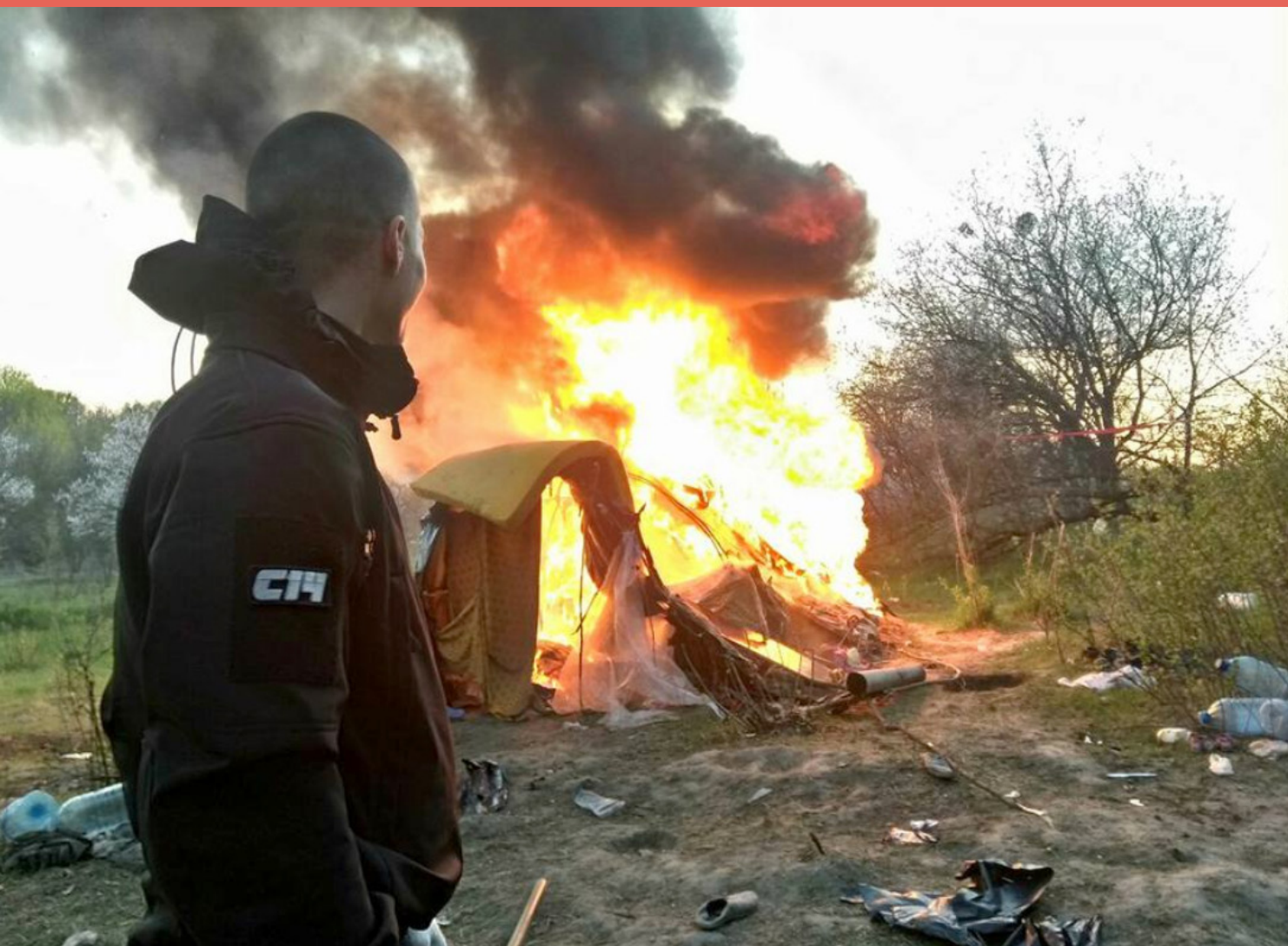
Today, far-right extremists—and they are not alone—exploit the deep-rooted racist belief in Romani criminality both online and offline to justify anti-Romani violence.⁵ But the anti-Roma racist ideology was born long before the age of social media, as a means to justify and preserve Roma oppression. For centuries, the deployment and dispersion of racist ideas have served governments as well as the hearts and minds of Europeans to legally justify, and “morally” validate and accept anti-Roma laws, policies, measures, actions, attitudes, and behaviors.

The enslavement of Romani people in Romania - including my own great-great-grandparents - was one of the very first instances in which an official establishment justified the economic, social, and cultural exploitation of Roma through crafting so-called Roma “behaviors.” In general, around the world, enslavement has served as a means of exploitation, and the Roma enslavement was no different. In early medieval Europe, those enslaved were largely prisoners of war and victims of pirates, but the 500 years of Romanian enslavement, in the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, exploited and targeted the entire local Romani population, purely on account of their ethnicity.⁶

Building on the Christian church’s tradition of slave ownership, the Orthodox church had a crucial role in the “birth of the institution of slavery in the medieval Romanian states.”⁷ Having accepted donations of enormous estates, it faced considerable economic and financial



- 1 Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-roma-activist-emergency-care-stabbing-in-zaporizhzhya/30234903.html>.
- 2 Chris Scott, “Roma’s Murder by Far Right Reveals Deep Wounds in Ukraine,” *Al Jazeera*, accessed August 2, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/attack-roma-killed-laid-rest-180629175419541.html>.
- 3 Iulia Mendel, “Attacks on Roma Force Ukraine to Confront an Old Ethnic Enmity,” *The New York Times*, July 23, 2018, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/21/world/europe/ukraine-roma-attacks.html>.
- 4 The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/28/italys-intelligence-agency-warns-of-rise-in-racist-attacks>.
- 5 See: <https://fpif.org/romani-resistance-day-is-about-more-than-memory/>.
- 6 See: <http://cncr.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Romii.-Sclavie-si-libertate.pdf>.
- 7 See: <http://cncr.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Romii.-Sclavie-si-libertate.pdf> . P.36.



needs; to address them, it took advantage of the Roma's status as a people who were highly skilled but were non-natives and non-Christians. This is when Romanians began to misrepresent the Roma as criminals within these territories. Romani slaves who were running away from abusive owners were seen as *fugitives*, *deceitful*, and *bad*. In the 1600s, a Wallachian village was named *Țigănească* because the peasants "behaved" like Romani slaves—they were *deceitful* because they ran away (from administrative abuse).⁸ Thus, running away, a form of the resistance to slavery and abuse, was framed as Romani *deceit*. And so, the *racecraft*⁹ of criminality has been used as a false moral justification and reinforcement for the exploitation, rejection, violence against, and oppression of Roma. It was not that the belief in the Roma being *deceitful* led to anti-Roma racism, but rather that the Roma exploitation needed "moral" justifications.

And so, constantly reassured through various "trustworthy" parties—churches, academics, politicians, textbooks, the media¹⁰—that Roma are *deceitful*, Europeans see no need to question their own values or the humanity of those

around them when Romani children are slaughtered. In Italy in 2017, a man used a Molotov cocktail to burn alive the Halilovic sisters, Francesca, Angelica, and Elisabeth, ages 4, 8, and 20. In Greece in 2018, a 34-year-old man shot dead Yannoula, a 13-year-old Romani girl.¹¹ In Bulgaria in 2018, a 38-year-old man shot and killed Goszko, a 17-year-old adolescent.¹² Some leaders, including the Pope, and some human rights activists and organizations, such as Amnesty International, did react to some of these violent killings. But to many Europeans, the Romani parents must have done something wrong for their children to deserve such treatment: *they chose to live in a camp; they begged; they left their children unattended; they did not send their children to school; they must have stolen something. It was THEIR fault. THEY.*

And if Europeans did not feel outraged at the fact of child murders, or merely remained bystanders, many still regard other discriminatory practices as *ordinary* or even *necessary*; practices both old and new which are rooted in the racist ideology of white superiority. For instance, from 1926 to 1973, the Swiss government and the Pro

8 See: <http://cncr.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Romii.-Sclavie-si-libertate.pdf> , p. 25.

9 Term borrowed from Karen Fields and Barbara Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*, Verso, 2012.

10 Margareta Matache and Jacqueline Bhabha, "The Roma Case for Reparations," in Jacqueline Bhabha, Margareta Matache, Caroline Elkins, Walter Johnson, eds, *Time for reparation? Addressing state responsibility for collective injustice*, University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming 2020.

11 See: <https://www.keptalkinggreece.com/2018/06/06/roma-girl-amfissa-perpetrator/>.

12 See: <http://www.errc.org/news/romani-child-shot-dead-in-bulgaria>.



Juventute Foundation transferred hundreds of Yenisch children from their parents and placing them in foster care adoption with Swiss families.¹³ Recently, the Swiss government paid compensations to 2000 victims of this practice¹⁴ and commissioned a poorly-funded study,¹⁵ but it has yet to recognize this practice as genocide as defined under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide which includes acts of “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”¹⁶ And the Pro Juventute organization, which implemented the genocide, continues to exist and to conduct projects to “benefit” children¹⁷—a practice that Europeans would roundly reject in other situations.

Similarly, the discriminatory actions of teachers and psychologists who have misdiagnosed and segregated Romani children in special schools remain largely unsanctioned, underreported, and socially acceptable in many European countries.

Examples of non-Roma teachers refusing to enroll Romani children in schools have existed since the beginning of public education, but the racecraft of a “Roma culture that does not value education” conveniently keeps blaming Romani parents and their culture.¹⁸ Moreover,

the scientific community solidified racism in the educational system when they justified the false and racialized diagnosis, and the overtly racist segregation, of Romani children in special schools through scientific racism. The former Czechoslovakia started the creation of special schools for Romani children in 1927. School segregation has continued ever since, across Europe. Today, in the EU countries involved in a FRA study, “one out of 10 Roma children were reported to have attended a special school or class that was mainly for Roma, even if only for a short period.”¹⁹ In the minds and hearts of many Europeans, once again *this must have been the fault of all these Romani parents*. But this time around, the blame was for a different reason: the Romani parents dared to send their children to the same schools as the mainstream European children.

While we need groundbreaking reform to break through all the dimensions and manifestations of racism, we are getting just the opposite. In many communities and neighbourhoods, non-Roma teachers, psychologists, and parents play a critical role in stealing Romani children’s right to dignity, education, and childhood. For instance, just this year, in Iasi, Romania, because non-Roma parents protested, the Romani children have to take their breaks at different times

13 See: <https://mondediplo.com/1999/10/11gypsy>.

14 See: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/475682cd0.pdf>.

15 See: <https://biblio.parlament.ch/e-docs/293533.pdf>.

16 Genocide, as defined by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, also means acts of “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”(art II, e) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crimeofgenocide.aspx>.

17 See: <https://www.projuventute.ch/>.

18 Margareta Matache, Tanja Jovanovic, Simona Barbu, and Jacqueline Bhabha, “Roma in Higher Education: Access Denied,” in Jacqueline Bhabha, Wenona Giles and Faraaz Mahomed, eds, *A Better Future: The Role of Higher Education for Displaced and Marginalized People*, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2020.

19 Europäische Union, ed., *Education: The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States*, Roma Survey - Data in Focus (Luxembourg: Publ. Off. of the Europ. Union, 2014).



than non-Roma so that the other children don't have to interact with them.²⁰ Similarly, in Croatia in 2010, non-Roma parents protested at having their children placed in the same classrooms with Romani children; they claimed that Romani "children do not speak Croatian, they are more aggressive and do not have hygienic habits like we do. Our children, therefore, cannot make any progress with them in the same class."²¹ In other countries, including the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, certified specialists have intentionally misdiagnosed Romani children on racial grounds, which led to their placement in special needs schools.

Clearly we need mandatory anti-racism education and training, but we also need sanctions for the actual perpetrators. And all that is still missing. Meanwhile racist educators, informed by racist ideology, have robbed the dreams, aspirations, and lives of hundreds of thousands of Romani children. How should we ensure redress and repair for them? States and the EU must guarantee compensations, offender accountability, apology, healing, and recognition

of the harm done, and then broader processes to promote reparations. But to create real social change we need to create spaces for truth-telling and conversations between victims, offenders, and bystanders, addressing the question of who to hold accountable for racism against Romani children and youth.



20 See: https://adevarul.ro/educatie/scoala/print-cersetor-scoala-romaneasca-segregati-copiii-romi-iasi-1_5dc1ae125163ec4271b8549b/index.html?fbclid=IwAR2tDVLGQJyXE58xHIYKtQ6GkBN-PEf-f976qaFas25GzuJJcCgYiYNz-A.

21 See: <https://humanrightshouse.org/articles/discrimination-and-segregation-of-roma-pupils-in-croatian-schools/>.



THE FRENCH RECIPE: EVICT, DEMOLISH AND “DELIVER THEM BACK TO THE BORDERS”

BERNARD RORKE

France’s long cherished self-image as the source of enlightenment, and the republic as embodying “the moral ideal of the world” (Michelet), has taken something of a battering since 2010, not least due to its scandalous treatment of Roma. A state policy of collective punishment effectively kicked off with President Sarkozy’s declared intent in 2010 to raze Roma camps to the ground and deport Roma en masse back to Romania and Bulgaria.

The inflammatory rhetoric was followed by punitive policy measures and the deliberate infliction of hardship upon Roma through forced evictions and deportations. The extraordinary kerfuffle created by the authorities about Roma was by any standards extraordinary when one considers that in a country of 66.3 million inhabitants, the ‘migrant’ Roma never amounted to more than 20,000 people. Rather than invest in strategic Roma inclusion policies, France chose the repressive option, one which duly proved to be both futile and toxic.¹

BEFORE SARKOZY

However, maltreatment of Roma and Travellers in France long predates the Sarkozy excesses. More recently, back in 2005, the ERRC warned of a crisis facing Travellers and

Romani migrants in France, where they were driven from municipality to municipality, subject to police harassment, brutality and mass expulsion by a combination of laws, policies and practices. The ERRC 2005 report, *Always Somewhere Else: Anti-Gypsyism in France*, found that:

“While the indivisible Republic proclaims equality before the law for all citizens without distinction, Roma and Travellers experience a reality driven by racism that has resulted in them being treated as sub-citizens, subject to racial discrimination, rejection, repression and assimilation.”²

On the issue of hate speech, the report cited the contribution of Senator Dominique Leclerc, who was widely applauded in a 2002 Senate debate when he described Travellers “as the plague of tomorrow”, bearing “extraordinary pathologies” and stated “*They are anti-social people who have no respect for private property, no references, and for whom the words we use have no meaning.*”

Travellers reported that police officers often taunted them during violent raids by saying, “It is too bad Hitler did not finish his work.” Mr M.C. described one such raid to the ERRC:

“They took out their guns and threatened us with tear-gas. They saw my five-month-old son sleeping in the crib. One

1 Bernard Rorke, The French Roma file 1997-2005: The shame of the Republic (part 1). ERRC News: 28 April 2015: <http://www.errc.org/news/the-french-roma-file-1997-2005-the-shame-of-the-republic-part-1>.

2 ERRC, *Always Somewhere Else: Anti-Gypsyism In France*, 28 November 2005. Available at: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2421>.

of the police officers asked his female colleague to come and said 'It is at that age that you have to put a bullet through them' and laughed ... the police escorted us until we were outside of the municipality. They followed us to be sure that we left."

A municipal councillor from the Department of Seine-et-Marne told the ERRC how Travellers were scapegoated, and cited one mayor who boasted that he systematically refused to enrol Traveller children in the town schools, and that he rented fallow land to private individuals so that any Travellers who halted there could more easily be expelled from the municipality. He described how officials covertly created local citizens' associations to wage protests against the creation of halting areas and the presence of Travellers in their town.

Most of the repressive measures targeted French nationals, and policymakers were particularly creative in finding ways to single out Travellers and Roma for negative treatment without being explicitly racist. Laws and policies did not explicitly target an ethnic or cultural group, but rather a "way of life."

The French authorities, refuted ECRI and ERRC allegations of human rights abuses in the 21st Century, cited Article 1 of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, and without the slightest hint of irony declared that:

"The French Republican structure is founded on a social pact which transcends all differences and to which every individual can willingly adhere, whatever his or her

biological characteristics or personal convictions. It follows that the legal concept of "minority" does not exist in French law ... any approach that attempts to introduce quotas or recognize communities within society in defiance of the principle that all persons are equal before the law is unambiguously rejected."

So, long before the 'Sarkozy surge' in 2010, Travellers and Roma faced institutional discrimination, direct racism, police harassment and collective punishment. In the European Union, the plight of French Travellers and Roma in France had for far too long been a case of eyes wide shut. Sarkozy's opportunistic scapegoating of Roma ramped up the persecution; but it also had the unintended consequence of exposing the unsavoury side of France to the glare of global media. Roma suddenly found themselves the targets of the most punitive action by any French government since World War II.

THE NEW WAVE OF ROMA REPRESSION: COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT, MASS EVICTIONS AND 'VOLUNTARY' DEPORTATIONS

Struggling in the opinion polls, and with his government and ruling party dogged by financial scandal, Sarkozy took this opportunity to divert attention from his own failings by turning on a vulnerable and visible minority. While round-ups and deportations were already underway, the President's rhetoric in singling out one ethnic group for blame and punishment, marked what an opposition MP called "the death of the Republic".



16 July 2010: Riots in the village of Saint-Aignan by *Gens du Voyage* after a 22-year-old French Traveller was shot and killed by police during a car chase, provided French President Nicolas Sarkozy with a pretext to launch a series of measures directly targeting Bulgarian and Romanian Roma. He also stepped up harassment of *Gens du Voyage*. In addition to expulsions and the destruction of camps, a squad of tax inspectors was set up to target the owners of “caravans pulled by certain powerful cars”.

30 July 2010: Sarkozy made a speech in Grenoble condemning anti-police demonstrations and vowed to “put an end to the wild squatting and camping of the Roma”. As president, he could not accept the fact that there were 539 Romani camps in his country, and he promised that half of them would be gone within three months.

As *Spiegel Online* reported, Sarkozy was merely ratcheting up already-existing policies. Almost 10,000 Roma were expelled in 2009, and 8,500 in the year before that. Between the beginning of 2010 and Sarkozy’s July speech, 24 charter flights loaded with Roma had already been flown to Romania and Bulgaria. According to the official account, the Roma were leaving the country voluntarily, because they had been pressured into signing a piece of paper and had been given €300 (\$389) in compensation. However, the Grenoble speech “revealed a dramatic sharpening of the rhetoric.”³

7 August 2010: The first camp clearance took place in Saint-Etienne, when French police sealed off the area around the camp, preventing journalists and rights groups from seeing the evictions, which began before dawn and continued for several hours. Afterwards, police said 44 of the camp’s residents were ordered to leave France, with 10 adults and eight minors voluntarily agreeing to leave. The Loire regional prefect told journalists: “It is clear what I did this morning was in line with presidential instructions. There have been recent instructions to ask Roma to return home. There is no future here for Roma whose papers are not in order.”

19 August 2010: *Der Spiegel* reported that a charter flight carrying 93 recently evicted Roma took off for Bucharest. Interior Minister Brice Hortefeux, trumpeted: “We have closed down 40 illegal camps in the last two weeks.” He said that 700 evictees would be sent back to their “countries of origin” within weeks. By 22 August, the government reported it had eliminated 88 Roma camps. As Ullrich Fichtner wrote:

“Now the government has taken to releasing counts representing the corresponding numbers of foreigners in those camps, a practice that hasn’t been used in France since the 1940s, resulting in official statements to the effect that 700 Romanians were “evacuated” from one location, 160 Bulgarians from another and 130 Roma from yet another camp.”⁴

Critics from within Sarkozy’s own party described the policy as ‘shocking’. Jean-Pierre Grand even said the arrests recall the mass incarcerations of French Roma during the

Nazi occupation, who were kept in internment camps for two years after the liberation, and was upset “that families have been split up by security personnel -- on one side the men, on the other the women, and they are threatened with being split up from their children.”

9 September 2010: The European Parliament passed a resolution calling for an immediate suspension of all expulsions of Roma, and “rejected any statements which link minorities and immigration with criminality and create discriminatory stereotypes as well as the inflammatory and openly discriminatory rhetoric lending credibility to racist statements and the actions of extreme right-wing groups”.

14 September 2010: EU Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding provoked outrage from the French government when she branded the expulsions “a disgrace”, accused French ministers of duplicity, and described the situation as one she thought that “Europe would not have to witness again after the Second World War”.

Reding’s suggestion that the Commission might take legal action was prompted a leaked memo from the interior ministry, which showed that the French authorities had been instructed to specifically target Roma camps, contrary to assurances given by French ministers to the European Commission that there was no racial targeting.

The leaked file dated 5 August, sent from the Interior Ministry to regional police chiefs, included the instruction: “Three hundred camps or illegal settlements must be cleared within three months, Roma camps are a priority”. Reding, furious at have been lied to, stated: “This is not a minor offence in a situation of this importance. After 11 years of experience in the Commission, I even go further: this is a disgrace.”

16 September 2010: For the first time in recent memory, the issue of Roma exclusion had become one of bitter contention between EU Member States. Sarkozy’s spite and racism had the unintended consequence of forcing Europe’s most powerful leaders to recognise and face the reality of anti-Roma racism like never before.

The 2010 EU Summit was overshadowed by the unprecedented dispute between the French government and the EU Commission.⁵ Nicolas Sarkozy slammed Reding, saying “The disgusting and shameful words that were used - World War II, the evocation of the Jews - was something that shocked us deeply”. Sarkozy told Luxembourg to take in France’s unwanted Roma, and affirmed that his government would continue with its policy. Luxembourg’s Foreign Minister described Sarkozy’s suggestion that Viviane Reding’s country of origin, Luxembourg, could accommodate the expelled Roma as “malevolent”.

European Commission head, Barroso distanced himself from Reding’s comments, but affirmed that “The prohibition of discrimination based on racial and ethnic origin is one of the EU’s fundamental principles.” Finland’s Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb warned that the EU risked looking hypocritical: “When we promote free trade, climate

3 Ullrich Fichtner, Driving out the Unwanted: Sarkozy’s War Against the Roma, *Spiegel Online*, 15 September 2010. Available at: <https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/driving-out-the-unwanted-sarkozy-s-war-against-the-roma-a-717324.html>.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Haroon Siddiqui, Roma expulsions by France overshadow EU summit opening, *The Guardian*, 16 September 2010. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/16/france-roma-expulsions-eu-summit>.

change and human rights around the world we need to have our own backyard in order.”

19 October 2010: The Commission expressed its satisfaction that France had responded “positively” to the Commission’s official request, and had decided not to pursue an infringement procedure against France for alleged discrimination, instead demanding more proof to support France’s claim that it was not deliberately targeting Roma.

AFTER SARKOZY: PLUS ÇA CHANGE, PLUS C’EST LA MÊME CHOSE

Any grounds for optimism that a Socialist government might herald a more humane approach were soon dashed. Françoise Hollande’s denunciation of Sarkozy’s policy as creating a situation of “intolerable” precariousness for Roma communities came with a pre-election call to abolish “discriminatory measures against Roma populations.”

However, the new Interior Minister, Manuel Valls proved to be even more enthusiastic about mass evictions than Sarkozy, and claimed to be acting “not just as interior minister, but as a citizen, as a militant member of the left.”

Famously in 2013 he declared «The majority [of Roma] should be delivered back to the borders. We are not here to welcome these people”; that Roma lifestyles were «clearly in confrontation» with French ways of life – they could never be integrated; and that “the majority should be delivered back to the borders. We are not here to welcome these people.”

This approach became the ‘new normal’, and with it, racist prejudice became the new mainstream. Two indelible images from 2014 spelt out the consequences of this new and very toxic ‘normal’.

The first was the atrocious photograph of the young 16-year-old Roma victim of a lynching, beaten to a pulp and dumped for dead in a supermarket trolley by a motorway in the Seine-Saint-Denis area near Paris. The second image was that of the injuries sustained by 89-year-old French Traveller, holocaust survivor and resistance fighter, Raymond Gûreme, after a 40-strong police raid in November. The police beat him with batons and used tear gas when they stormed his caravan without a warrant.

Mass evictions continued unabated. The *Ligue des droits de l’Homme* and the ERRC reported that more than 11,000 Roma people were forcibly evicted by the authorities in France in 2015 alone. ERRC monitor, Radost Zahareiva

reported that in February 2016, 300 Roma were evicted from their informal settlement in the 18th district of Paris. While some were offered emergency shelter, most were left on the street. It quickly emerged that this eviction was illegal carried out in defiance authorising the families to stay on the site until June.

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland, condemned this illegal act and warned the French authorities that “forced evictions can prove counter-productive as they often disrupt the schooling of Roma children and hamper the efforts of those who provide basic healthcare to Roma communities, for example through vaccination campaigns.” **Jagland called on the French authorities** “to provide all those who have been forced to leave the ‘Petite ceinture’ camp – including children and elderly people – with adequate, alternative accommodation, particularly as they have decided to take this action during winter.”⁶

Evictions just carried on. On the morning of 13 April 2016, the Mayor of Cogolin filmed an eviction of Roma and in his Facebook posting described their personal possessions as “stolen goods”, and added, “Fortunately for those watching (the video), you cannot smell the bad odour ... which at 8:30 in the morning is quite something ...”



The summer months of 2016 witnessed a spike in racist violence against Roma that went largely unreported. The ERRC covered a series of attacks against Roma that included three grievous assaults within a few weeks, where Roma were firebombed, threatened and beaten at knifepoint in Marseille and Paris.⁷

French Traveller Angelo Garand was shot dead by police on 30 March 2016. The police raided the Traveller’s family home after Garand had failed to return from temporary release from prison in Vivonne where he was serving a two-year sentence for burglary. The state prosecutor asserted that the GIGN (*Groupe d’intervention de la Gendarmerie nationale*) lethal response was justified, because Garand posed a danger to the police and resisted arrest. Garand’s sisters repudiated this assertion and stated “*Angelo would never have thrown himself on three members of the GIGN. He may not have been an angel, but he was not suicidal.*”⁸

For the country whose revolution is seen as the founding moment for modern politics, proclaimed ad nauseam as the country of *Droits de l’Homme* in the abstract, France has found it increasingly difficult to respect the rights of actual Romani women, men and children in the 21st Century. For significant elements of both left and right, enthusiastic in their vilification of the Roma, it seems that prejudice against visible minorities, though not a founding principle, certainly became a guiding principle of the Republic.

6 Radost Zahareiva, Forced Evictions in France: Inhuman and Illegal, ERRC News, 4 March 2016. Available at: <http://www.errc.org/news/forced-evictions-in-france-inhuman-and-illegal>.

7 See: <http://www.errc.org/news/anti-gypsyism-in-france-the-shame-of-the-republic>.

8 See: <http://www.errc.org/news/french-traveller-shot-and-killed-by-police-can-macron-turn-the-page-on-frances-shame>.

POLICING TRAVELLERS: IRELAND'S DEEPLY INGRAINED RACIAL DIVIDE

DR SINDY JOYCE

Irish Travellers are Ireland's indigenous ethnic group. We are distinct from the rest of Ireland's population with our own language, traditions, culture and customs, and have been part of Irish society and culture for centuries. We have been documented as far back as the 5th century when we were called 'Whitesmiths' because of our connection to tinsmithing which has now been inscribed in the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage which requires signatory states to "recognise, protect and promote the living cultural heritage of their countries" (UN 2019). In the Irish language, we are called 'An Lucht Siúil', meaning the 'Walking People' because of our history of nomadism. Mincéirí or Pavee is what we call ourselves in our own language.

According to the Irish Central Statistics Office (2016) there are over 40,000 Travellers living in Ireland, accounting for just 0.7 per cent of the general population. We are a young population with 73% being under the age of 35. We experience extreme disadvantage in terms of education, employment, accommodation, and health, as well as facing virulent racism and discrimination. Irish Traveller life expectancy remains similar to the life expectancy of the general population in 1945 and the suicide rate is nearly 7 times higher than the general population, with 11% of Travellers dying from suicide alone. Like many other countries across Europe, the Irish state has a history of persecuting Travellers, for example, in 1963, the Report of the Commission on Itineracy was published by the government where it stated "there could be no 'Final Solution' until itinerant families were absorbed into the general community" (Government of Ireland 1963). This was the first systematic attempt by the Irish government to settle Travellers and it began with "the ultimate goal of settlement and spatial fixity which has remained the cornerstone of government policy towards Travellers ever

since" (Crowley 1999). In 2002, the Housing (miscellaneous provisions) Act 2002 was passed that gave local authorities and police more powers to move Travellers off public and private land. Under this law "encampment has been criminalised" and "Travellers can be moved with less than twenty-four hours' notice; if they do not move they can be arrested without a warrant. Fines of €3000 can be issued to Travellers or they can be faced with a prison sentence" (Drummond 2007).

We are up to 22 times more likely to experience discrimination in housing which results in overcrowded accommodation, homelessness and unauthorised encampments. Despite local authorities being obligated under the *Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998* to provide culturally appropriate accommodation, and receiving specific annual funding to achieve this, Travellers still live in dire conditions with some halting sites having no access to services and resources. This year the Council of Europe expressed its "shock" at the conditions in Ireland's halting sites, and in 2016 the Council of Europe's Committee of Social Rights found forced evictions of Travellers to be violations of Human Rights. Ireland has ignored this and today continues to violate Traveller Human Rights. This year, out of 26 local authorities in Ireland, only four spent all of their Traveller accommodation budget, with just €4m out of €13m spent.

For generations, the main dispute between Travellers and the state has been one relating to spatial allocation. The state's failure to provide Travellers with the space for functionally operating transient sites, and the introduction of anti-nomadic legalisation, has created a pattern of evictions across the country where Travellers cannot practice their cultural and political rights in relation to movement.





the popular belief over the superior value of sedentarism (as opposed to nomadism) and the desirability of "... promoting their absorption into the settled community" (Government of Ireland 1963). After such a long history of oppression and acculturation by the State, it is of no surprise that Travellers' relationship with *An Garda Síochána*, the state police body, is troublesome.

Travellers in Ireland live their daily lives experiencing racism. The racial divide is deeply ingrained into Irish society where hostility and violence towards my people is seen to be justified because of our 'difference' to the mainstream settled population. Anti-nomadism and anti-Traveller racism have long shaped the reality of Travellers' lives. The history of Travellers in Ireland is characterised by policies oriented to fixing us, informed by racialising constructions of nomadic identity as a threat to society. At the same time spaces traditionally associated with, and key to, the maintenance of our culture have been placed out of bounds, appropriated for the exclusive service of sedentary values. Travellers have been subjected to gradual forced settlement where 'closure and control' act as an instrumental tool of sedentary power. The State's spatial management and control of Travellers is intended to preserve the existing settled social and spatial order and has the effect, whether by design or otherwise, of *sedentaryising* and assimilating us. Planning in Ireland has a long history of spatial differentiation, including the production of distinct areas containing small groupings of Travellers. Indeed the *Report of the Commission on Itineracy* (1963) made it possible and justifiable to contain and isolate my people into particular areas, simultaneously depriving us of a quality of services, resources, and interactions that are generally enjoyed by the majority settled population. This normalisation of institutional and everyday racism allows for the majority population, including the police force, to view and treat us as 'failed settled people', leading many people to believe that our experiences are not racism but our own fault based solely on our ethnicity and culture.

Among the general Traveller population there is a widespread feeling of police persecution, which is amplified by their role in enforcing evictions. The common use of deploying armed response units with an army of police officers at evictions creates trauma and conflict, where the police are not the protectors of the community but rather the enforcers. For example, in October of this year, a young Traveller family with five children were evicted from a site in Limerick where at least 70 armed police officers were present. Complying with national anti-nomadic legalisation and practice, the increased forced evictions have a disproportionate effect on the everyday lives of Travellers. Once a family has been evicted from an area, it starts the sequence of being moved on by law enforcement numerous times from different spaces until the family move out, or are pushed into, sedentary housing.

Travellers are significantly over-represented in the Irish prison system. Traveller men are between five and eleven times more likely to be imprisoned than the general population, and Traveller women are between eighteen and twenty-two times more likely. According to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, this high number shows that the law enforcement sector is "clearly racial profiling" Travellers in Ireland. The common stereotypical image of Travellers as 'socially deviant' informs policing policies. Simultaneously, the frequent racist descriptions and distortions of Traveller society legitimises the institutional and disciplinary control over us. This is to further a narrative of



A IS FOR ANTIGYPSYISM

B IS FOR BRUTALITY

C IS FOR COLLECTIVE
PUNISHMENT

TEACHING JUDGES THEIR ABCS

ADAM WEISS

A IS FOR ANTIGYPSYISM

“As a result of their turbulent history and constant uprooting, the Roma have become a specific type of disadvantaged and vulnerable minority”.

-The European Court of Human Rights (a bunch of times)

What a godawful sentence. Imagine tracing your family’s history through genocide, abuse, and alternating waves of forced integration and forced exclusion. “Our turbulent history?” Like the weather hit you or something. Except, actually, it was Nazis (original and neo-), police, ministers, mayors, journalists, and the everyday people who don’t want to know you exist, unless it’s so they can beat you down. “Our constant uprooting?” Who does all that uprooting?

And what’s with the “the” in “the Roma”? It is fine just to say “Roma”. **Putting a “the” there is all about othering. It’s what Donald Trump does to minorities in the USA.**

Yet this is the go-to phrase of the European Court of Human Rights to describe the situation of Romani people. They don’t seem to want to use the term, widely accepted by other European institutions, to describe what is going on: **antigypsyism**. (When we asked them to, in a **case** decided last year, they said “They [the ERRC] referred to so-called antigypsyism”. The “so-called” is like that baggie you put in your hand to pick up your dog’s poo from the street, wrapping it safely and tossing it.)

Words matter. “Turbulent history” and “constant uprooting” make it sound like it’s nobody’s fault – just Roma and the weather, or something. “Antigypsyism” puts the problem where it is: non-Roma, many of whom harbour (and even more of whom benefit from) an ideology of hatred that perpetuates exclusion.

Antigypsyism forces non-Roma to define themselves, distance themselves, and show they aren’t contaminated by it. Right now **politicians in the UK** are squirming because they can’t escape the taint of antisemitism or Islamophobia. Politicians all over Europe should be squirming to escape the taint of antigypsyism.

B IS FOR (POLICE) BRUTALITY

Americans came up with the term “**police brutality**” in the late nineteenth century to describe what police officers do when they abuse their authority to beat up people (very, very often people of colour). It’s also a term we want and need to get judges using, for obvious reasons. But let’s move on. Because the letter of the day, today, is C.

C IS FOR COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT

Lawyers and judges, if they read this, will sigh and give up around now.

“Collective punishment” (“collective penalties” to be precise) is a legal concept enshrined in the Geneva Conventions



C IS ALSO FOR COMPLAIN

Roma were collectively punished in wartime, of course – in World War II and again in the 1990s in disintegrating Yugoslavia. On 16 May Roma celebrate **Romani Resistance Day** – a violent fight back against the Nazis' genocide.

What does fighting back look like now?

At the ERRC, we think it means turning the force of collective punishment back on the racists. That means turning collective punishment into mass complaints. If the police beat up 100 people to arrest one, then 100 people have a complaint to the police oversight body. When 200 people

are chased out of their homes by a racist mob, 200 people have a discrimination claim for losing their homes and possessions.

This takes guts. The perpetrators of collective punishment are powerful people. But they are also cowards. Right now, they are taking advantage of the silence they impose on their victims – meaning almost no cases of collective punishment reaching the courts. And they are taking advantage of the fact that their intimidation tactics mean only a few Romani people can step up.

Romani resistance means a critical mass of these complaints. So many that they force the people receiving the complaints – civil courts, police oversight bodies, equality bodies (sometimes called commissioners for protection against discrimination), data protection authorities, prosecutors – to stop and say “What the f*** is going on?”

Let's not kid ourselves. The people who make decisions in these bodies swim in the same contaminated lake of antigypsyism as the mayors and cops and ministers who perpetrate collective punishment. What will shock the judge or the prosecutor or the equality commissioner is not that this is happening, but that they have to deal with it, and call on someone to answer for it. They are counting on victims' silence like everyone else. It makes their lives easy.

The ERRC's challenge in 2020 is how to break the silence that comforts racists after they collectively punish Romani people. We don't have easy answers. We need to talk to people about what will make it possible for 50 or 500 people to stand up and complain. It won't always be possible. But sometimes it will.

It will blow the minds of the assholes who mastermind violent police raids, pogroms, and evictions. And let's hope it will get some of them fired.

Because that's the only way you can teach some people.

about the laws of war. And the vast majority of Roma are not living through a war right now. So, they'll say, it doesn't apply. Stick to “discrimination”.

But we are insisting on using it. I'm supposed to support my colleagues by telling them what the law says. So shouldn't I tell them not to say “collective punishment”?

No. Because my colleagues are on to something. Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention says this: “*No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed*”. Legally, this is about civilians in wartime. But what would you call it when:

- someone in your racially segregated Romani neighbourhood is accused of dealing drugs and the local council votes to expel all Roma from the village? (Ukraine)
- the police are trying to arrest someone who was on weekend release from prison and didn't come back, so they send in dozens of heavily armed officers who start beating up everyone in sight? (North Macedonia)
- the cops use a special “action code” for violent raids that somehow always seem to hit Romani neighbourhoods? (Slovakia)
- an off-duty cop takes his police-issued gun, goes to a Romani neighbourhood, and shoots at a Romani family in their front garden, because he needed to “do something”? (Slovakia)
- tens of thousands of Roma are evicted from their homes each year, while ministers tell the public that Roma should be “delivered back to the borders” (France)

Collective punishment – the racist impulse to inflict suffering on large numbers of Roma for alleged (often invented or exaggerated) offences by one or a few Romani people – is a classic, enduring feature of antigypsyism.

We need to start calling these things what they are. It isn't “turbulent”. It isn't even “history”. It's now and it dehumanises Romani people by assuming that all Roma should suffer because one or more Romani people may have done something wrong.

HUNGARY: A TIMELINE OF TERROR, KILLINGS, AND COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT

BERNARD RORKE

"My family was attacked by neo-Nazis in Tatárszentgyörgy, Hungary ten years ago. My grandson and his dad were murdered in this attack. My granddaughter who is here with me today managed to escape but with major injuries. Bianka was hit by four shotgun pellets. Thank God she survived the attack and we can be here together ... Nobody ever apologized me for what happened. None of the Hungarian prime ministers ever looked into my eyes and apologized for not being able to protect my family. We have never received any type of medical or mental help. We are haunted by what happened even until this day and we will never forget."

Ildikó Csurka, the grandmother of Robika Csorba, Roma week in the European Parliament 2019

PRELUDE TO TERROR: JOBBIK, HATE SPEECH AND 'GYPSY CRIME'

In 2006, Hungary found itself beset by an economic and political crisis and a surge in the political fortunes of the far-right Jobbik party, pushing a vehemently anti-Roma agenda, promising to end 'Gypsy crime'. Jobbik's meteoric rise during the couple of years that followed, saw them secure 14.71% of the vote and three seats in the European Parliamentary elections in 2009, and 16.67% of the popular vote in the 2010 general election a year later.

Jobbik's electoral successes owed much to its appropriation and hate-framing of the 'Roma issue'. The concerted fabrication of a moral panic around 'Gypsy crime' came complete with Jobbik conspiracy theories that Roma were the "biological foot-soldiers" of a Zionist plot to foment civil war in Hungary. This toxic onslaught of racist propaganda also coincided with the most lethal series of terror attacks against Roma communities since the Second World War.

Far-right rhetoric built on anti-Roma attitudes about 'welfare parasitism' and a related predisposition to crime. In the period between two high profile incidents – the lynching of a schoolteacher in Olaszliszka in October 2006, and the stabbing to death of Romanian handball player Marian Cozma in Veszprém in February 2009 – the expression 'Gypsy crime' became common currency, a 'standard fixture' of public discourse, and a political slogan for Jobbik. According to Political Capital, the earlier media stereotypes about Roma alluding to a lack of intelligence, sloth and petty crime, were replaced in the public mind by an aggressive murderous image of the 'Gypsy'.¹

Jobbik exploited and exacerbated public fear and ethnic tensions with its 'Gypsy crime' campaign, and in August 2007 founded the Hungarian Guard. This uniformed paramilitary group committed to 'national defence', began staging mass rallies, marches and demonstrations 'to protect the majority' and explicitly designed to intimidate Roma across Hungary.

A number of incidents attested to the rise in tensions: in November 2008, following the murder of a 14-year-old girl



in Kiskunlacháza in central Hungary, the local mayor organized a demonstration 'for life against violence' and made a speech implying that the killers were Roma. Seven months later, a non-Roma man admitted to have committed the murder. By this stage Roma were being held collectively responsible even for murders committed by non-Roma.

In January 2009, controversy followed the sacking of Miskolc police chief for his claim that Roma had committed all the recent robberies in the county. Protests and support from all political parties prompted his immediate reinstatement, and served to further mainstream the concept of 'Gypsy crime'. The following month at the memorial for Marian Cozma, there were cries of "death to Gypsies!" even before police announced that two of the suspects in the attack were Roma.

Against this backdrop of incitement, prejudiced press reporting and far-right mobilization, with calls for crusades and final solutions to the 'Gypsy problem', six Roma were murdered and over 50 wounded in a wave of gun and fire bomb attacks on Roma settlements between 2008 and 2009.

¹ Péter Krekó, Attila Juhász, *The Hungarian Far Right: Social Demand, Political Supply and International Context*. ibidem-Verlag, Stuttgart. 2017, pp 209-210.



KILLING TIME: JULY 2008 – AUGUST 2009

Between July and September 2008 there were four fire bomb and gun attacks on Romani family houses in small villages. There were no fatalities and only one person was wounded in this first round of assaults. However, events took a deadly turn on November 3, when the family home of Tibor Nagy in the village of Nagycsécs was hit by Molotov cocktails and gunfire. Tibor was wounded, but his wife Éva and brother Jozsef were killed as they fled the burning house into a hail of gunfire. On December 15, a Romani man and his partner were shot and wounded in Alsózsolca.²

The year 2009 saw no let-up in horrifying gun and bomb attacks, including the double murder of Robert Csorba and his four-year-old son Robika. Just after midnight on 23 February 2009, in the village of Tatárszentgyörgy, attackers first threw three Molotov cocktails, setting the Csorba family home ablaze. On hearing the bangs, Róbert grabbed his two eldest children, while his partner took the youngest child Maté. As Róbert fled the burning house, holding Robika close to his chest and Bianka by his side, a waiting gunman opened fire, hitting all three. Only Bianka would survive.

2 BBC News, Two Roma die in Hungary shooting, 4 November 2008. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7708105.stm>.



The police refused to see that these atrocities and other attacks were linked and racially motivated. When they arrived at the scene of the Csorba double murder, they even denied a crime had taken place. They issued a statement later that morning saying that “the fire in Tatárszentgyörgy, in which two people had died, had been caused by a short-circuit.” The police had to be called back to the scene because the family found footprints and spent cartridges in the bloodstained snow. So careless were they, that one police officer even pissed on a footprint left by the assailants.

Only after Viktória Mohácsi, a Romani Member of the European Parliament, arrived and called in the National Investigation Bureau, was this incident registered as a double homicide. An on-site fact-finding mission by human rights organizations including the ERRC, found the conduct of the police, paramedics and firefighters to have been criminally negligent; and the rights groups demanded that the police investigate the likelihood that this double murder was a racist hate crime.

Confidence in the police force was further shaken by an article which appeared in their trade union newsletter which stated that a “*crumbling country, torn apart by Hungarian-Gypsy civil war could easily be claimed by the rich Jews [...] Given our current situation, anti-Semitism is not just our right, but is the duty of every Hungarian homeland lover, and we must prepare for armed battle against the Jews.*”³ Public concern mounted further when the union announced a formal alliance with Jobbik, with the editor of the police newsletter running as a Jobbik candidate in the European elections.

The attacks continued and the next victim was 54-year-old Jenő Kóka from Tiszalök, murdered on April 22. Jenő was shot dead with a single bullet to the heart by a waiting sniper as he set off for work from his house on Nefelejcs utca (Forget-me-not Street) at the very edge of the village.⁴ Agnes Kóka, his grief-stricken god-daughter, one of the younger generation of educated, active and civic-minded Roma, stated: “*We feel like the real targets. The death of my god-father proves that whatever we do, however we try to prove ourselves to the majority population and to our own community the only thing that matters is that we were born to be Roma.*”⁵

The far-right Magyar Garda had staged mass meetings in both Tiszalök and Tatárszentgyörgy before these fatal attacks. The speeches were full of anti-Roma racism and threats of punitive violence. The police and media had previously speculated that these attacks were carried out by loan sharks, jealous lovers, or feuding families, instead of investigating known violent far-right extremists.

Finally, after this killing, the police conceded that the atrocities were likely linked and carried out by a four-man cell with military expertise. Following the burial of Jenő Kóka, the chief of police claimed “the net is tightening around the perpetrators”, the dedicated task force had been increased to 100 officers, and that catching the killers was now “a question of prestige for our force.” But this was not enough to prevent another deadly assault in Kisléta.

The children’s grandmother said: “*I was holding Robi’s head in my lap, and he kept saying ‘le, le, le’ meaning he was shot but he couldn’t get the whole word out. My little grandson was gasping with his eyes closed. With tears rolling down his face. Putting so many shots into such a small child barely 11 kilos. May their lungs dry up.*”

3 Lahav Yehuda, “Proud Hungarians must prepare for war against the Jews”, Haaretz, 1 January 2009. Available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1089550.html>.

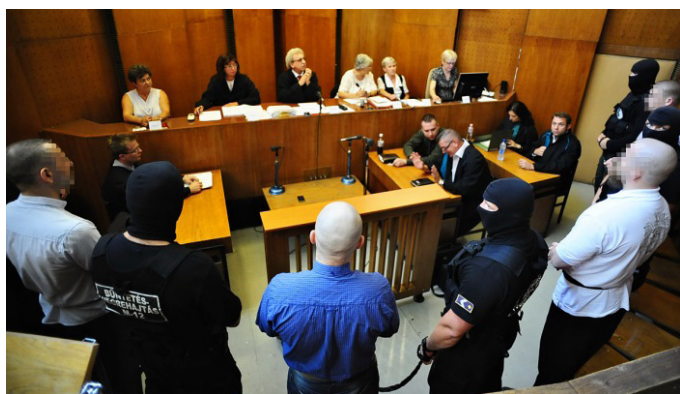
4 Nick Thorpe, ‘Murder raises ethnic tension higher’, BBC News, 30 April 2009. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8026722.stm>.

5 Bernard Rorke, ‘Nationalist Pride and Popular Prejudice’ Roma Rights Number 1, 2009. Available at: http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/04/11/m00000411.pdf.

On the night of the second of August 2009, in the ninth attack in this deadly series, Mária Balog was shot dead and her 13-year-old daughter Ketrin seriously wounded as they slept in their beds by gunmen who smashed their way into their home on Bocskai Street, the last street on the edge of the village of Kisléta.

EPILOGUE TO THE KILLINGS

Soon after the Kisléta assault, four of the killers were apprehended. In their testimony they claimed that had attended the inauguration the Hungarian Guard but had found them „ridiculous” and unfit to solve the ‘social situation’; and their indictment noted that they resolved to arm themselves to take an active role in ‘restoring order’, and selected their targets based on media reporting, “their attention drawn to wherever there was a significant Roma-Hungarian conflict.” In August 2013, three of the killers were given life sentences, and the fourth defendant got a 13-year prison sentence.



Outside the courtroom, Tibor Nagy, who was wounded in the Nagycsécs attack said *“My wish is that the perpetrators be imprisoned until the end of their days. The murderers killed my wife and brother and they destroyed my life. I won’t have much happiness in this life anymore.”* This sentiment was echoed by Eva Kóka, who lost her husband to a sniper’s bullet and travelled to Budapest to hear the verdict: *“The murderers have not just killed my husband. They’ve also destroyed me.”*

The murders stopped, but the survivors, the bereaved and the wider Roma community were left traumatized; and neither was there any let-up in hate speech, calls for collective punishment, and direct intimidation of Roma by the extreme right. Political Capital estimated in 2010, that the total number of daily media mentions of ‘Gypsy crime’ ranged between 20 and 40 in the mainstream media, with a much higher tally in the openly far-right news portals and magazines.

At a mass rally in Budapest to mark the founding of the ‘new’ Hungarian Guard, Jobbik leader Gábor Vóna declared: *“We need to roll back these hundreds of thousands of Roma outlaws. We must show zero tolerance towards Roma crime and parasitism... Any Roma who did not conform should leave the country.”* Outside the capital, collective punishment increasingly took the form of mass rallies by far-right groups descending on Roma neighbourhoods.



GYÖNGYÖSPATA AND DEVECSEER: FASCIST MILITIAS INTIMIDATE ROMA

On 1 March 2011, the militia arrived in Gyöngyöspata to fight “Gypsy crime”. Black uniformed neo-fascist paramilitaries, the so-called Civil Guard Association for a Better Future (*Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület*) marched through the village singing war songs and bellowing abuse. They were soon joined by other fascist groups, and backed up by skinhead auxiliaries with whips, axes and fighting dogs, they set up checkpoints and patrolled the Roma neighbourhood with seeming impunity, as policemen stood idly by, in a siege that lasted almost two months. As the Guardian reported, militiamen “roamed the streets day and night, singing, hammering on doors and calling the inhabitants ‘dirty fucking Gypsies’”.

When the militia announced plans to hold an Easter weekend ‘training camp’ on the hillside overlooking the Roma neighbourhood, US businessman Richard Field took action with the Hungarian Red Cross. He paid for six buses to evacuate 267 Romani women and children to spend Easter in a holiday retreat. Government spokesmen refuted suggestions that local problems were “ethnically-based”, denied that an emergency evacuation had taken place, and said “the Roma were simply taking a scheduled holiday”.⁶

Another notorious incident where Hungarian police failed to serve and protect Romani citizens from collective punishment took place in the village of Devecser on the 5 August 2012. A 100-strong neo-Nazi mob of paramilitaries linked to Jobbik descended on the village, hurling rocks and shouting “you are going to die” outside Romani homes. The speeches constituted blatant incitement to racial hatred and violence, with calls on demonstrators to fight back against “Gypsy criminality” and to “sweep out the rubbish from the country.” Zsolt Tyrityan of the Outlaw Army said *“the Gypsy is genetically-coded for criminality”*; and Attila Laszlo of the paramilitary group ‘For a Better Future’ declared that *“All the trash must be swept out of the country.”*

Five years later, the European Court of Human Rights found that the Hungarian authorities failed to protect Roma from racial abuse, and that the inaction of law enforcement *“could be perceived by the public as the State’s legitimation and/or tolerance of such behaviour”*.⁷

6 Helen Pidd, ‘Poor, abused and second-class: the Roma living in fear in Hungarian village’, The Guardian, 27 January 2012. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/27/hungary-roma-living-in-fear>.

7 Benard Rorke, Far-right violence against Roma In Hungary: Victory In Strasbourg for the Helsinki Committee, ERRC News, 20 January 2017. Available at: <http://www.errc.org/news/far-right-violence-against-roma-in-hungary-victory-in-strasbourg-for-the-helsinki-committee>.

HATE SPEECH FROM ON HIGH: “THESE ANIMALS SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO EXIST”

The state’s legitimization and tolerance of racism was made clear by official reaction to an editorial by the notorious pro-Fidesz publicist Zsolt Bayer. In January 2013, following a New Year stabbing incident, Bayer published a wild hate-filled rant in which he referred to the Roma assailants as “cowardly disgusting noxious animals”; and went on to assert that “these Gypsies’ were incapable of human communication: “Most often inarticulate sounds surge forth from their animal skulls and the only thing they understand in this miserable world is violence.” In what was to become the most notorious and oft-quoted passage, he wrote that:

“a significant part of the Gypsies is unfit for coexistence... They are not fit to live among people. These Gypsies are animals, and they behave like animals... These animals shouldn’t be allowed to exist. In no way. That needs to be solved - immediately and regardless of the method.”⁸

The government refused to condemn Bayer, who is a close confidante of Viktor Orbán and a founding member of the ruling Fidesz party. In 2016, the government went further and awarded Bayer, notorious for penning hateful anti-Roma and antisemitic op-eds, the Order of Merit, “as a recognition of his exemplary journalistic work.” This prompted dozens of notable Hungarians to return their state awards in protest at creeping fascism and this wilful provocation.⁹



EPA-EFE/OLIVIER HOSLET

8 The Orange Files, Who should not be? 9 May 2013. Available at: <https://theorangefiles.hu/2013/05/09/who-should-not-be/>.

9 Péter Szegő, Dozens of Hungarian notables returning Order of Merit, The Budapest Beacon, 23 August 2016. Available at: <https://budapest-beacon.com/scores-of-hungarian-notables-returning-order-of-merit/>.

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY ARCHIVE EDITION
OF THE ROMA RIGHTS JOURNAL

ROMA RIGHTS REVIEW

20



1997

2017



IT'S KUSHTI TO ROKKER: IT'S TIME FOR ENGLAND TO CONFRONT ITS ANTIGYPSYISM PROBLEM

IT'S KUSHTI TO ROKKER' IS ENGLISH ROMANI FOR 'IT'S GOOD TO TALK'

High levels of antigypsyism place young Romani Gypsies¹ and Travellers at a higher risk of experiencing poorer mental health, says 'It's Kushti to Rokker' project manager and founder Lisa Smith.



**IT'S KUSHTI TO
ROKKER**
BREAKING DOWN STIGMA

It's Kushti to Rokker is an education and community filmmaking project run by **Rural Media**. Young people have been working with writers and filmmakers to create a series of short films about health, wellbeing and diversity based on their real-life experiences to raise awareness about some of the challenges they experience inside and outside of school, to inspire and support other young people.

LISA SMITH

There is a silent killer on the loose in the UK. Almost no one talks about it. Striking without any repercussion, it comes in the form of chronic illnesses, preventable diseases, low quality of life, stress induced health issues, and often suicide. Its victims are 'tinkers', 'pikeys', 'knackers', and 'gyppos'. It is called antigypsyism, and its effects harm us gradually from the moment we are born; costing Gypsies, Roma and Travellers their mental wellbeing, their health and even their lives.

Racial discrimination and social exclusion are common experiences in the lives of Romani and Traveller people, and many families find themselves living on the margins of society as a result. In 2018, the **Equality and Human Rights Commission** (EHRC) carried out research on social attitudes that found that 44% of the British public openly expressed negative feelings towards Gypsies, Roma and Travellers; more than any other protected characteristic

group in society. Whilst the UK has legislation that specifically addresses discrimination, such as the **Equality Act 2010**, there remains an evident gap between what the legislation says and lived experience.

The EHRC's '**Is England Fairer**' report states that: "*Britain is fortunate to have a strong equality and human rights legal framework to protect people from discrimination and violations of their basic rights and freedoms. However, the experiences of many people across England, Scotland and Wales often do not reflect what is set out in law.*" The report revealed that the life chances of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people have declined since the Commission's last progress review in 2010, citing deprivation, social invisibility, stigma and stereotyping as contributing factors to these outcomes.

Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are frequently the subject of suspicion and disapproval. Often this is exacerbated by

¹ "Gypsy" is used as a self-identifier by Romani people in the United Kingdom. It is considered a neutral word rather than a slur, and is even used as the administrative label for Romani people from the British Isles by UK governments.



inaccurate media reporting and overtly racist statements from local and national politicians which add to the ignorance and prejudice expressed by many members of the Gorja (non-Roma) population.

A civil society monitoring **report** on Romani and Traveller integration in the United Kingdom (2018) found that: *“Whilst there has been some improvement in terms of acknowledgement by wider society that Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are amongst the most excluded and discriminated against groups in United Kingdom society today, the UK Government has taken no substantive steps to address those inequalities. Indeed, we believe that the situation has worsened across the four key policy areas (employment, housing, healthcare and education) rather than improved in recent years.”* A key factor behind the lack of social progress is the UK's Government's continued refusal to develop a National Roma Integration Strategy. At present there is no overarching national strategy to promote Roma integration in the UK – the only clear integration strategy to date has come from the Welsh Government. There has been reliance elsewhere in the UK on existing mainstream laws and policies, which have failed to adequately address the inequalities faced by Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

In fact, a **report** published in 2019 by the Parliamentary House of Commons **Women and Equalities Committee**, following an inquiry, found that Romani and Traveller communities suffered some of the worst inequalities the committee had ever seen: *“Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people have the worst outcomes of any ethnic group across a huge range of areas, including education, health, employment, criminal justice and hate crime.”*

Since the UK declined to provide a strategy for the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies in 2011, institutional racism has continued to manifest itself

through policies and practices. These have long been accepted as reasonable, but nonetheless have resulted in continued discriminatory outcomes that have actively disadvantaged and decreased the life chances of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

It's high time the UK government recognised antigypsyism as a longstanding and deeply rooted form of prejudice. Even the Equality and Human Rights Commission, have identified that existing anti-discrimination legislation has not worked in addressing discrimination towards Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, and that there is a need for antigypsyism to be addressed through a separate policy as it is *“so blatant and prevalent”*. This would be the first step to combating derogatory language used outwardly by politicians and addressing institutional practices that stifle progress and dehumanize communities.

Research shows that experience of racism and discrimination is a key contributor to ethnic inequalities in health and, given that these groups are some of the most discriminated against in British society, it should be no surprise that they also experience some of the most severe health inequalities amongst the UK population. For example, compared with the general population, Gypsies and Travellers are more likely to experience lower life expectancy, high infant mortality rates, high maternal mortality rates, low child immunisation levels, higher prevalence of anxiety and depression, chronic cough or bronchitis (even after smoking is taken into account), asthma, chest pain and diabetes, and a higher rate of suicide.

Racism is a stressor and can produce harmful physiological changes and problems for mental wellbeing, both in its more overt forms and as micro-aggressions. Even where there is no major incident, but there is an awareness of being treated and responded to in a less than fair way



on the basis of race; perhaps even being feared, avoided or especially disadvantaged. Evidence shows that these subtle influences can result in pessimism, and difficulties adjusting and recovering from trauma. There is a growing and convincing body of evidence that anxiety, depression, substance misuse and anger are much more likely to occur in those exposed to racism.

Research has also shown that the impact of discrimination is particularly damaging to young people and children, and can produce long-lasting negative health effects. However there is little recognition of, or research addressing, the impact of racial discrimination on young Gypsy, Roma and Travellers' mental health and long-term wellbeing, despite their alarmingly high levels of social and educational exclusion in England.

For example, The Race Disparity Audit showed that pupils from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities had the lowest educational attainment, had the highest "overall absence", and highest "persistent absence" rates of any ethnic group in 2016. A report from the Traveller Movement in 2016 expanded on what the Office for the Children's Commissioner had revealed in 2012 concerning educational outcomes for GRT. Romani and Traveller children were on average four times more likely to be excluded from school than the rest of the school population. This research also found that 100% of appeals against the exclusion of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils were successful, suggesting that a large number of exclusions were unfairly given. Best practice indicates that exclusion should only be used as a last resort given the vast amount of research that shows exclusion from school, either through suspension or expulsion, is correlated with psychological distress, increased risk of long-term mental health issues and entrance into the criminal justice system.

The Children's Society have also found that 63% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children have been verbally or physically bullied while in school because of their ethnicity. This, coupled with lack of positive representation of Gypsy, Roma and Travellers long-standing history, language and culture in many schools, can lead to inaccurate stereotypes being formed and many young people feeling like they have to hide their identity as something to be ashamed of.

The *It's Kushti to Rokker* project was designed to raise awareness about how high levels of social and educational exclusion impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing. After consulting with young people in 2018, the Youth Travellers' Times Advisory Group recognised that there was a clear lack of video-based informative available that accurately reflected young Gypsies and Travellers' lived experiences, from their own perspectives.

It's Kushti to Rokker set out to change this. Over the last eight months, a group of young people worked with writers and filmmakers to create a series of short films based on their real-life experiences.

The films address a wide variety of issues from the perspective of young people, including educational experiences, bereavement, coping with online hate and double layers of discrimination experienced by young LGBT+ Travellers.

An overarching theme within all the films was racial discrimination, and how this impacted on wellbeing in terms of feelings of self-perception, self-esteem and self-worth. When we launched the films we also created an information pack full of useful information and advice for young people and families to signpost them to relevant support.

It's Kushti to Rokker believes that community youth-made films are uniquely useful for combatting feelings of isolation



ness of the inequalities Romani and Traveller youth experience, as well as offer practical recommendations. The films have been designed to be used alongside a free downloadable **toolkit**, created to support formal and informal educators working with young people looking to facilitate discussions on mental health and well-being. The **toolkit** also includes information on useful educational resources and tools to promote Romani and Traveller history, language and culture in order to enhance

and supporting discussions about mental health, as they enable the viewer to see the subject through young people's eyes and offer a creative approach to addressing challenging issues. It's our hope that these films contribute to destigmatising attitudes towards young Travellers and at the same time break down stigma surrounding mental health, in order to support and inspire young people to speak out about issues impacting on their wellbeing.

In addition to five short films we also created a 10-minute documentary, aimed at policymakers, and education and health care professionals to raise aware-

service providers understanding and engagement with Romani and Traveller communities.

We want to open up vital conversations about these pressing issues and bring unheard voices to the forefront. We hope the impact of *It's Kushti to Rokker* will reach far wider than the young people involved in the project, and that their stories and voices will be used as a lasting legacy to promote inclusion and positive mental health and wellbeing.

You can find out more about the project, and view the full series of films [here](#).



▶ **HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL**

BELGIUM RETURNS TO ETHNIC PROFILING, RAIDS, AND ROUNDUPS

JONATHAN LEE

In May 2019, the Belgian police carried out the country's largest police raid in over twenty years. The raid targeted Romani communities living on permanent and halting sites all over the country. In the press, the police justified the large-scale operation (codenamed "Strike"¹) as part of an investigation into a used car scam being carried out over the internet. However, only a tiny number of those who were targeted had anything to do with the case. Many more had their homes, vehicles, possessions, and even money confiscated because of their ethnicity and their place of residence.

Early in the morning on May 7th, Romani and Traveller families throughout Belgium awoke to the sound of police officers banging fists on their trailer doors as 1,200 police officers simultaneously raided 19 sites around the country. Officers with weapons in their hands grouped together those who were not being arrested - mostly women, children, and the elderly - in the centre of the camps, where they remained until the end of the operation (in some cases 6pm). Nobody was allowed to return to the caravans, even under watch, to retrieve any of their property. No shelter, food, or water was provided to them.

Testimony from witnesses at the raids indicate that some local police officers, who knew the people personally, were

embarrassed at their role in the operation. One was quoted saying to a resident "you are paying for what others have done." Others were not so well behaved, laying down on people's beds in their caravans, and eating food they found in their cupboards. In scenes which would be not out of place in a WWII film, they marched around, rounding up Romani men and yelling at people "your caravans no longer belong to you, now they belong to the Judge...look at your loved ones, you might never see them again."

On one of the sites they cut the municipal water supply off completely, and disabled the water meter. Reports from field visits following the incident, including by a doctor, found multiple cases of post-traumatic stress tied to the police actions affecting women and children who were harassed by police officers. Two different families have said that their children did not go back to school for a week after having experienced the raid.

More than 200 people were taken into custody according to witness reports. Their belongings, and those of their friends and families, were seized including money, jewellery, cars, caravans, and other personal items. In the following days and weeks license plates for their vehicles were de-registered, bank accounts of innocent people



¹ In English, the word "strike" has multiple meanings, but in French or in Dutch it has only one, from bowling: that of knocking down all bowling pins with one ball, without leaving a single one standing.



were frozen, and the requisitioned vehicles were sold-off by the police. Further punitive actions continued for months later against other Romani people who were not even present at the original raids.

The next day Roma **peacefully protested** in front of the courthouse in Brussels against the actions. One protestor described the raid on his home: *“The police arrived on our site and started taking things without giving details. Vehicles, watches, jewellery, valuable objects were seized,”* he explained. *“There are children, old people, sick people. They did not ask anything, they just saw they were Travellers and took everything, without making any distinction.”*

Another Romani protestor said *“They took caravans from people who have nothing to be blamed for. We are paying for the crimes of others, it’s not fair.”*

Because of the confiscation of their cash and the freeze on their bank accounts, some children had not been fed since the night before. Despite the **press release** of the Federal Prosecutor’s Office stating that they had taken preventative measures to ensure the housing of families and minors, people affected tell a different story. According to one protestor, *“No social assistance was offered, they are completely lost here. We should not have to pay everyone’s debts because we are Travellers”.*

There are at least **30,000 Roma in Belgium**, of which around 10,000 are Belgian citizens and are described as Manouches/Sinti, Roms, or Travellers. These three distinct groups all share a nomadic culture and lifestyle. The first, the Manouches, are the Sinti of Belgium and are descendants of the first Roma to settle in the country in the 15th century. The second group, the Roms, represent the second major wave of Romani migration after the abolition of slavery in Moldavia and Wallachia in 1856. The third, the Travellers (voyageurs), are an indigenous nomadic group who are not ethnically related to the Roma but share some cultural attributes and often suffer the same prejudices, stereotypes, and rights abuses. The police raids were aimed at all of these communities who are living on permanent or temporary halting sites in Belgium.

The police actions also affected Roma, some from other countries, who live in houses and had no connection to the police raids nor indeed the criminal enterprise which the police were investigating. One Romani man living near Antwerp had nothing to do with the raids at all but his bank account was frozen for four months, meaning he was unable to run his business (as a musician) because he could not get paid. On several occasions he could not send his children to school as they had no food for them to take with them.

A non-Belgian Romani woman also had her bank account frozen for more than six months, merely because she stayed at the flat of someone who was accused of involvement in the criminal case. When her lawyer asked the prosecutor for her account be reopened, they continued to freeze it because she had moved to another country. The prosecutor argued they could not see why a woman living in another country would need a Belgian bank account. Any European Economic Area citizen can have a bank account in any European country, and might choose to do so for many legitimate reasons. It is none of the prosecutor's business whether she chooses to use one or not.

The knock on effects of these raids were severe. Not only was the property of innocent people confiscated, often this property was these peoples' homes. In one day the police made hundreds of Romani people homeless, unable to access their money, and even more vulnerable to further harassment, hatred, and prejudice. The police seized around 90 caravans and since the raids the Federal Prosecutor's Office have re-sold at least 20 of them. Under Belgian law, the police may sell any property which they seize as part of a criminal investigation if they believe it will be burdensome for them to store it, or it will depreciate in value. This is intended to offer some form of redress for the owners of property which was stolen from them. It is not intended to be used on people's homes, and it is certainly not meant to be used on people who are not guilty of a crime. In some cases, Romani families ended up trying to buy back their caravans from the people who had bought them from the authorities in order to retrieve their property.

There is also the unanswered question of how the Belgian police went about locating the names and addresses of all of these Romani people, the vast majority of which have been charged with no crime at all. Presumably the authorities have drawn up a list of people in Belgium based on their Romani ethnicity, most of whom are innocent of any crime.

Apart from the odd **exception**, most news outlets did not mention the illegal actions of the state against Romani families. Much of the press response to this raid reported that a major counter-fraud action had taken place and successfully disrupted a Traveller criminal enterprise. But this raid can hardly be considered a successful operation. So far no one has been convicted of a crime as a result of the raids. Around 65 people were charged with crimes, half of which involve Roma/Travellers, the other half were people in an official capacity who were allegedly cooperating in the criminal schemes (police officers, a notary office, someone in the agency that delivers number plates for cars). This means the police indiscriminately raided 19 sites, took more than 200 people into custody, and disrupted the lives of even more by stealing their property and freezing their finances, in order to arrest thirty-something people who they have not yet even convicted of a crime. The police and the prosecutor's office will say that every site they attended led to the collection of evidence or arrests. But we know from witnesses that at some sites there were no arrests at all, whilst caravans and vehicles were taken as "evidence" from people who have no involvement in the criminal enterprise.



This was the largest action against Romani people in Belgium since the Second World War, when police collaborators rounded up 351 Roma for deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. The methods used to target and round up Romani people on May 7th 2019 bear a disconcerting similarity to those used by those Nazi collaborators in the winter of 1943.

The ERRC have lodged a **collective complaint** with the European Committee of Social Rights relying on **evidence** gathered by Belgium's equality body which points to serious violations of fundamental rights including discrimination. The complaint is still pending.



SMELLS LIKE FASCISM: ITALY'S *EMERGENZA NOMADI*, POGROMS AND PERSECUTION

BERNARD RORKE

In 2008, the declaration of a State of Emergency to combat the so-called 'Roma menace' in Italy, prompted global media coverage, and waves of international criticism as the spectre of official collective punishment once again came to haunt Europe. Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi's '*Emergenza Nomadi*' with its demonization of Romani people, heralded a prolonged period of harassment, expulsions, mob violence and pogroms against vulnerable communities. Lasting from 2008-2011, it served only to exacerbate communal tensions, legitimize human rights abuses, and inflict irreparable damage to any prospects for social inclusion for Roma in Italy.

When the Northern League interior minister Roberto Maroni announced plans to fingerprint **Romani children** in June 2008, the move was widely condemned across the political spectrum in Italy as racist, unacceptable and discriminatory.

Recalling Italy's fascist past, and the 1938 legal census of all foreign-born Jews which prepared the ground for the racial laws, **Amos Luzzato**, a former head of the Union of Jewish Communities warned the fingerprinting measure set a dangerous precedent:

"You start like this then you move on to the exclusion from schools, separated classes and widespread discrimination," Amos Luzzato told La Repubblica. Recalling Italy's fascist past, he added: *"I remember as a child being stamped and tagged as a Jew ... Italy is a country that has lost its memory."*¹

The European Roma Rights Centre challenged the State of Emergency decree before the Italian courts, and on 4 November 2011, the Council of State ruled that the emergency decree was unfounded, unmotivated and unlaw-



- 1 Tom Kington, Unicef among critics of Italian plan to fingerprint Roma children, *The Guardian*, 27 June 2008. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jun/27/race.italy>.
- 2 ERRC, End of the Road for Italy's Illegal State of Emergency. 2 May 2013. Available at: <http://www.errc.org/press-releases/end-of-the-road-for-italys-illegal-state-of-emergency>.



ful.² But the end of the emergency and the fall of Berlusconi brought little respite for Roma. Discrimination and exclusion continued, and scapegoating was stepped up again in 2018 when Italian foreign minister Matteo Salvini spoke about carrying out “a mass cleansing street by street, piazza by piazza, neighbourhood by neighbourhood”, and conducting an ethnic Roma census. On television, Salvini declared “Irregular foreigners will be deported via agreements with other countries, but Italian Roma unfortunately, we have to keep them at home.”³

PRELUDE TO PERSECUTION

From 1997 the ERRC monitored human rights abuses against Roma in Italy, litigated, produced reports, UN submissions and sent letters of concern to the Prime Minister and Parliament. The ERRC repeatedly drew attention to the perils of deliberate exclusion, and

provided clear recommendations and very prescient warnings about what needed to be done to avert a humanitarian crisis.⁴ The elected leaders of the Second Republic chose neither to heed the warnings, nor adopt the recommendations. There was nothing inevitable about the escalation in racist oppression; but it was foreseeable and it could have been prevented.

In November 2000, ERRC launched the Country Report *Campland; Racial Segregation of Roma in Italy*. The report named Italy as the only country in Europe to boast a systematic, publicly organised and sponsored network of ghettos aimed at depriving Roma of participation or even contact with Italian life. Laws adopted in the late 1980s for the “protection of nomadic cultures” paved the way for the construction of segregated camps. Italian authorities asserted that the desires of Roma and Sinti to live in flats or houses was ‘inauthentic’ and despatched them to “camps for nomads”.⁵

3 Bernard Rorke, Smells like Fascism: Antigypsyism In Italy and the scourge that is Salvini, 22 June 2018. ERRC News, Available at: <http://www.errc.org/news/smells-like-fascism-antigypsyism-in-italy-and-the-scourge-that-is-salvini>.

4 Bernard Rorke, From the Archives: The Italian File 1997-2000, *ERRC News*, 13 October 2014. Available at: <http://www.errc.org/news/from-the-archives-the-italian-file-1997-2000>.

5 ERRC Country Report, *Campland: Racial Segregation of Roma in Italy*. November 2000. Available at: <http://www.errc.org/press-releases/campland-racial-segregation-of-roma-in-italy>.

The report highlighted racist discrimination, violence and abuse by state and non-state actors, especially law enforcement. In addition to ill-treatment upon arrest or in detention, Roma were frequently subjected to unlawful dawn raids by armed police, which included ransacking homes and the use of excessive force. The ERRC also reported that police robbery of jewellery and money from Roma, accompanied by the threat of physical violence was pervasive: “The police routinely refuse to provide written documentation of confiscated items, which are almost never returned to their owners.”

Other forms of police misconduct included strip searches of Romani women by male police officers, and arbitrary destruction of identification documents. Such abuses occurred with impunity: “Once again, ERRC knows of no case in which police officers have been disciplined or prosecuted for these offences.” This normalisation of anti-Roma racism created a permissive environment for the full-scale oppression that would follow; and was amplified by political leaders like Umberto Rossi, whose regional election campaign flyers stated, “If you don’t want Gypsies, Moroccans and delinquents in your house: be the master of your own home in a liveable city and vote Lega Nord.”

BERLUSCONI'S 'EMERGENCA NOMADI'

The brutal murder of an Italian woman in November 2007 by a Romanian citizen of Romani origin was the catalyst for a series of repressive measures that amounted to a vicious form of collective punishment: violent attacks on Roma camps, and a steep rise in antigypsyism, fomented by sensationalist press reporting and incendiary hate speech by right-wing politicians.

The declaration of a state of emergency effectively defined the presence of Roma as one of “serious social alarm” endangering public order and security. The day after the murder, the Italian Council of Ministers adopted an emergency decree for the expulsion of citizens of other European Union countries “for imperative reasons of public safety” defined as “behaviour that compromises the protection of human dignity or fundamental human rights or of public safety.”

11 May 2008: *La Repubblica* reported Minister of Interior Roberto Maroni’s public declaration that “All Romani camps will have to be dismantled right away, and the inhabitants will be either expelled or

incarcerated.” That same day, the Via Navora camp in Milan was burned to the ground with Molotov cocktails by an unknown number of assailants, forcing the Romani inhabitants to flee, their personal possessions destroyed.

13 May 2008: On May 10, hours after a 16-year-old Romani girl was charged with attempted kidnapping and unlawful intrusion into a private home, about 20 Italian residents of Ponticelli near Naples, attacked a Romanian labourer returning home from work; he was beaten and stabbed. This was followed over the next couple of days by a series of attacks on Roma camps and individuals around Ponticelli, with shacks being set on fire.

On the afternoon of 13 May, a baying mob of about 300 to 400 locals led by women, and armed with baseball bats and Molotov cocktails razed the largest Romani camp forcing Roma families to flee without their possessions through a gauntlet of violent locals. By the end of the day on the 15th, all Roma residents had been forced out of the Ponticelli camps; and images of the burning camps and frightened faces of Roma children on pickups watching their former homes in flames made the headlines on television and in newspapers.⁶

In the aftermath, Umberto Bossi stated that “People do what the state can’t manage” and Minister of Interior Roberto Maroni stated, “that is what happens when gypsies steal babies, or when Romanians commit sexual violence.” According to the results of a poll by the national Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* conducted in May 2008,



68% of Italians wanted to deal with the “Roma Gypsy problem” by expelling all of them.

6 Fundamental Rights Agency, Incident Report Violent attacks against Roma in the Ponticelli district of Naples, Italy, 2008. Available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/196-incid-report-italy-08_en.pdf.



31 May 2008: The Italian Government proclaimed a one-year state of emergency, allowing extraordinary powers to state and local officials, *de facto* going so far as to equate the presence of Roma with natural calamities, catastrophes or other events that, due to their intensity and extension, must be tackled with extraordinary means and powers, as envisaged by legislation in the field of emergency civil protection.

6 June 2008: Italian authorities stated that “Gypsies would be monitored, and a census would be carried out” and that “Gypsies would also be fingerprinted and photographed and this would allow the authorities to identify them.” On the back of round-ups and racialised hysteria, the fingerprinting of children in the absence of informed parental consent prompted widespread international condemnation, and analogies with anti-Jewish laws under Mussolini.

The Romani MEP Viktória Mohácsi, after visiting Roma camps in Rome and Naples, declared during a hearing before the Committee on Civil Liberties (LIBE) of the European Parliament that the situation of Roma in Italy was one of the worst in Europe. The MEP highlighted problems of illegality, lack of hygiene, services, or drinking

water, and lack of security in the camps where the police carry out night raids for no reason.⁷

Undaunted by all of this, Hungary’s MEP Lívia Járóka supported the clampdown and claimed that the decision to fingerprint Roma “was based on goodwill.” Cowed by Berlusconi’s threats to render their institutions unworkable, the European Commission gave state oppression of Roma the green light.

1 July 2008: Italy’s court of cassation reversed the conviction of six Northern League defendants for distributing racist propaganda calling for the expulsion of all Roma from Verona. One of the defendants, Flavio Tosi, who later became the mayor of Verona, was quoted as having said: “The Gypsies must be ordered out because, wherever they arrive, there are robberies.” The court of cassation held that his ‘deep aversion’ to Roma was not due to racial hatred but “by the fact that all the Gypsies were thieves.”

4 August 2008: The Italian government declared an emergency situation and intent to deploy 3000 soldiers on the streets of Rome, Milan, Naples, Bologna, Verona and Palermo, supposedly to combat crime. The so-called ‘Nomad

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 22.



Emergency' with its demonization of Romani people heralded a prolonged period of harassment, expulsions, mob violence and pogroms against Roma communities.

One camp dweller told ERRC staff: *"This law of Berlusconi – where will they send us to? We are living in fear. All of Italy is against us. The media has declared war on us. The whole government is fascist."*

15 December 2011: Following a false claim by a teenager that 'two gypsies had stolen her virginity', and her brother lying that he chased the assailants, Turin's daily newspaper, *la Stampa* ran the story with the headline, "Boy chases two Roma individuals after they raped his sister". The following night, local inhabitants organized a candle-lit march, and a mob armed with clubs attacked and set fire to the Roma camp, forcing the inhabitants to flee. Eyewitnesses and local media reported that a flyer was posted before the attack, calling on residents to 'clean up' the area of Roma, and confirmed that the municipal president of the fifth district was present at the demonstration that preceded the violence. Subsequently, the girl confessed that she had lied about the incident to avoid admitting she had sex with her boyfriend.⁸

END OF THE *EMERGENCA NOMADI*, BUT NO END TO SCAPEGOATING OF ROMA

The European Roma Rights Centre and its partners challenged the State of Emergency decree before the Italian courts, and on 4 November 2011 the Council of State ruled that the emergency decree was unfounded, unmotivated and unlawful. In May 2013, Italy's Cassation Court rejected the government's appeal and upheld this ruling.

The Italian National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Camminanti communities (NRIS), approved by the Italian government in February 2012, stated that it was time to overcome "emergency policies" towards Roma and clarified that most Roma in Italy are not nomads and that housing solutions such as "nomad camps" are not adequate or suitable solutions. But these shifts on the surface brought no reprieve for Roma, no liberation from the camps, and no end to the misery and fear.

ERRC's **submission** to the UN Human Rights Council in 2014, revealed the impact of EU-style collective punishment on Romani children raised in these camps, under guard or video surveillance. The children were prone to a number of severe and debilitating conditions.

They were more frequently born underweight than other children, and became ill with respiratory disease in greater numbers than their Italian peers. They suffered more often from poisoning, burns and accidents at home. There was a greater incidence of "diseases of poverty", such as tuberculosis, scabies, and lice. The children exhibited high incidences of anxiety and sleep disorders, suffer from phobias, are hyperactive and have attention deficits, and have learning difficulties - conditions which "are also predictive of more serious disorders in adolescence and adulthood."

In January 2016, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks expressed his regret at the continuation of 'past policies' associated with the Nomad emergency; his deep concern about the living conditions endured by Roma in camps; and called on the authorities to halt forced evictions, end homelessness, close Roma-only camps and segregated emergency facilities "by offering genuinely integrated ordinary housing alternatives to the families concerned."

8 USC Shoah Foundation, *The War on Roma People: The Turin Pogrom*. Available at: <https://sfi.usc.edu/education/roma-sinti/en/questioni-aperte/intercultural/la-guerra-ai-rom-conflitto-sociale/alcuni-casi-italiani.php>.

RACIST HATE-SPEECH “DIRECTLY EMANATING FROM THE AUTHORITIES”; CAMP CONDITIONS “DEPLORABLE”

In 2017, the European Committee for Social Rights repeated concerns about “the tolerance on the part of the authorities for inflammatory anti-Roma statements stimulates an attitude of impunity in which the far-right extremists feel emboldened to stage anti-Roma demonstrations and physical attacks”, and called for measures to be taken particularly with regard to racist misleading propaganda against Roma and Sinti “indirectly allowed or directly emanating from the authorities”.

As for the living conditions: “No specific legislation for the protection from discrimination of these communities has been adopted, in spite of numerous proposals being submitted in Parliament. Roma, Sinti and Caminanti remain socially and economically marginalised. Residents of segregated housing, in particular camps commonly referred to as “nomad camps”, continue to live in deplorable conditions, in spite of court rulings confirming that assigning housing in prefabricated containers surrounded by fencing constitutes discrimination”.⁹

UPPING THE ANTE: MATTEO SALVINI, CASAPOUND ITALIA AND OTHER HATE-MONGERS

“Those bastards must burn” – On Tuesday 3 April 2019, a screaming 300-strong far-right mob, set fire to dumpsters and a car service centre to prevent the placement of 70 Roma in a local reception centre in the rundown Torre Maura suburb of Rome. In the face of the violent protests,

backed by neo-fascist groups CasaPound, Forza Nuova and Frontal Action, the municipality announced that the group of Roma which, according to [la Repubblica](#) includes 33 children and 22 women, will be moved to other city facilities “within seven days”.

Forza Nuova, which declared itself “Ready to barricade against ethnic substitution”, was quick to exploit local discontent about the lack of services in this neglected district of Rome, and riot police were forced to intervene as the crowd blocked firefighters at the scene. Earlier in the afternoon the crowd seized and trampled sandwiches and snacks intended for the Roma, shouting, “They must die of hunger”.¹⁰

The new wave of anti-Roma hatred, scapegoating and collective punishment was orchestrated by Matteo Salvini in his quest to become the most powerful politician in Italy. On 26 July 2018, Italian police launched a dawn raid and mass eviction of the River Village camp outside Rome, in defiance of the European Court of Human Rights. In a gloating tweet, Salvini declared “*Legalità, ordine e rispetto prima di tutto!*” (Legality, order and respect before all). But his racist demagoguery, with his calls for an ethnic census and cleansing of Roma “piazza by piazza” has shown great hatred and little room for respect and legality.

The number of racially motivated attacks tripled between 2017 and 2018, when his far-right *Lega* became coalition partners in government. Many fear that Salvini’s abrupt fall from power in 2019 marks only a temporary lull in the public hate speech against Roma, migrants and other minorities; and few expect the current administration to make good on the 2012 integration strategy promise to “overcome the camps”.



9 European Committee of Social Rights, Follow-up to Decisions on the Merits of Collective Complaints, December 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2WhFri7>.

10 See https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/04/03/news/la_rivolta_di_torre_maura_contro_i_rom_la_procura_di_roma_indaga_per_odio_razziale-223166214/?ref=RHPPLF-BH-I0-C8-P3-S1.8-T1&refresh_ce.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Page 5:
Harvard François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights Magda Matache & Cornel West



Page 8:
Alex Sturrock
Ukrainian Roma talk to the ERRC about the far-right attacks which have terrorised their communities. Nadiya sits at home, surrounded by framed photos of her family going back generations and worries about a society which is turning against Romani people



Page 10:
ERRC
28 May 2013, before after Porte de Paris, Saint Denis. The engines started working about an hour after the police evicted the Roma



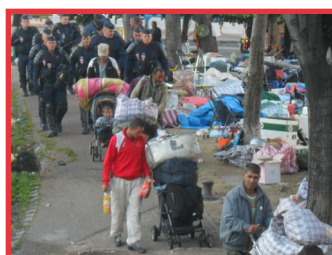
Page 14:
Sam Boal/RollingNews.ie
Children at a Travellers' rights protest outside Leinster House in October 2015



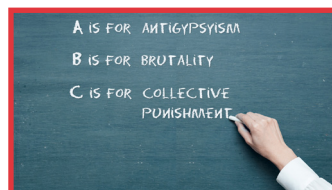
Page 6:
A member of the Ukrainian neo-Nazi group, C14, watches as the remains of a Romani dwelling burn to the ground. On 21st April, C14 drove fifteen Romani families from their makeshift homes in Lysa Hora, Kyiv. Armed with weapons they chased down fleeing parents carrying small children, threw stones at them, and then set fire to their homes. Serhiy Mazur posted this photo to Facebook boasting that they had driven the 'gypsies' from the area



Page 8:
Alex Sturrock
Andriy took in some people after they were driven from their homes in Ternopil



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ERRC
A forced eviction in Marseille



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Jonathan Lee
Teaching Judges their ABC's chalkboard graphic



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Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
Members of the far-right C14 group



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Ouest-France.fr
French Police watch Roma living in informal housing



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Pavee Point



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ERRC Hajdu D. Andras Gyöngyöspata, Hungary



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Photographs of Travellers protesting in Dublin



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ERRC-MTI
Robi Csorba's funeral



Page 20:
Budapest Beacon



Page 24:
It's Kushdi to Rokker /
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Page 29:
Le Soir
Romani families on a site in
Belgium



Page 33:
Alex Sturrock
Thirteen-year-old Alex and
his family were among
1,300 who were evicted
from the Gianturco settle-
ment in Naples, Italy



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ERRC Hajdu D. Andras
Gyöngyöspata, Hungary



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It's Kushdi to Rokker /
Lois Brooks



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Stefano Montesi
Police raid a Roma camp
in Casilino Italy in scenes
similar to the recent raids in
Belgium



Page 34:
Alex Sturrock
A fenced off, segregated
container camp at Via del
Riposo, Naples, Italy



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EPA EFE / Olivier Hoslet



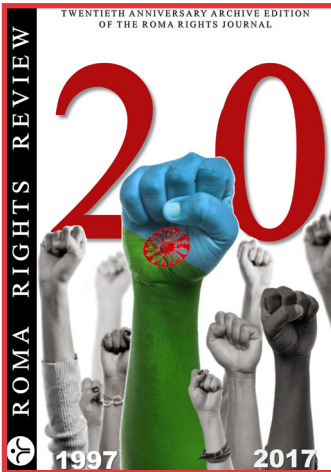
Page 26:
It's Kushdi to Rokker



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TPI
Casapound neo-Nazis
protesting outside a social
shelter housing Romani
families on the outskirts of
Rome, Italy



Page 35:
NurPhoto / SIPA USA / PA
Images
Italy's far-right League
party leader Matteo Salvini
speaks at an anti-immigra-
tion demonstration in Rome
on 10th December 2017



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ERRC Jonathan Lee
Cover of Roma Rights Re-
view 20 Year Anniversary of
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It's Kushdi to Rokker / It's a
Hard Road to Travel



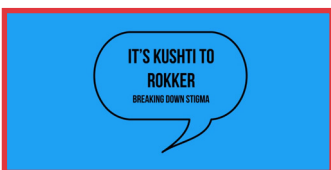
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Belga
Belgian police officer



Page 32:
Alex Sturrock "No Roma"
graffitied on the perimeter
wall of a segregated Roma
camp in Naples



Page 36:
Tiziana Fabi/AFP via Getty
Images
Leader of Italy's far-right
Lega Party, Matteo Salvini



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It's Kushdi to Rokker /
Lisa Smith



Page 28:
European Roma Grassroots
Organisation Roma protest
outside the Palais de Justice
in Brussels



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