



Hungarian Helsinki Committee

## HUNGARIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE

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### *Hungarian Helsinki Committee UPR Fact sheet 6*

## SITUATION OF THE ROMA MINORITY WITH REGARD TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

**1. Lack of monitoring of hate crimes:** Several international organizations have pointed out the lack of a system to monitor incidents that may constitute racist violence. However, even after the series of fatal attacks against the Roma in Hungary, no publicly available information indicates that the authorities are planning the set up of such a system for racist crimes or hate crimes in general.

**2. Handling of violent attacks against the Roma:** In August 2009, the suspects of the series of fatal attacks against Roma people – killing 6 and injuring 5 Roma victims and threatening the lives of a high number of other people between the end of 2008 and the summer of 2009 – were arrested. At the same time severe omissions and negligence on the part of state authorities in handling the incidents have been revealed. Despite these problems, there is no information on whether the competent authorities have devised a plan to address the problem of investigating and prosecuting hate crimes in general, such as the fact that authorities seem to be reluctant to qualify potential hate crimes as such and go for the qualification that is easier to substantiate (e.g. qualifying the case as a simple "bodily harm" instead of "violence against a member of a community", the Hungarian term for hate crimes). While the National Report (§69) indicates that a protocol is in the process of being devised, NGO's active in the field have not been informed about the process in spite of their explicit request to be included in it in some form.

**3.** Since March 2011, members of the Civil Guard Association for a Better Future (Szebb Jövőért Polgárőr Egyesület), **a paramilitary radical right-wing group** closely associated with the radical right wing parliamentary party Jobbik and the dissolved Hungarian Guard (Magyar Gárda), **have been "patrolling" and marching in towns with significant ethnic tensions, claiming that they are providing citizens of Hungarian origin with protection against "Gypsy criminality"**. Unimpeded by local police, the Civil Guard members have reportedly threatened residents of Roma origin. Another paramilitary right-wing group called Véderő has been planning to set up a training camp in Gyöngyöspata, as a result of which on 22 April around 250 Roma women and children were transferred from the town by the Red Cross. Even though some of the Véderő members were taken into short-term arrest, some members reappeared in the town on 26 April, after the Roma returned and a mass fight broke out. The Police seem to be unable to handle the paramilitary groups and to find the adequate legal solutions for the problems.

**4. Police officers biased against the Roma:** According to empirical sociological research, police officers are highly biased against the Roma, which may seriously influence the way they treat victims of Roma origin and conduct in racially motivated crimes. Researches has demonstrated ethnic profiling in ID checks by the police, showing that a Roma person is three times more likely to be stopped and checked, while checks on Roma are not any more efficient and successful than checks on members of the majority population.

### **? Questions:**

- What kind of measures will be taken in order to introduce systematic and comprehensive monitoring of offences potentially motivated by hatred?
- What kind of measures will be taken in order to ensure that potential hate crimes are investigated and prosecuted appropriately?



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- What kind of measures will be taken in order to prevent paramilitary radical right-wing groups from "patrolling", marching in areas populated by Roma people and threatening citizens of Roma origin?
- What kind of measures will be taken in order to reduce racism and prejudices among police officers?

### ***! Recommendations:***

- The systematic and comprehensive monitoring of offences potentially motivated by hatred should be introduced, covering all stages of proceedings.
- Effective steps should be taken in order to ensure that potential hate crimes are investigated and prosecuted adequately.
- Effective steps should be taken in order to prevent paramilitary radical right-wing groups from threatening citizens of Roma origin.
- Effective steps should be taken in order to reduce racism and prejudices among police officers.