

Submission by Society for Threatened Peoples

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Situation of the Roma

1. There are some 250,000 to 300,000 Roma currently living in the Czech Republic.

Forced sterilisation of Roma women – Lack of compensation

2. Since the 1960s until this day an estimated one thousand Roma women have been forcibly sterilized, in order to reduce the “high and unhealthy birthrate” of Roma women. 27 cases stem from the years between 1989 and 2007. The European Court for Human Rights called on the government to adopt counter-measures. However, until this day the government has done nothing to abolish the exclusion of Roma children in the education system. The European Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg has criticized the lack of compensation. The European Court for Human Rights still has to decide on two cases with regards to forced sterilizations.

Lack of education

3. In 2007 the European Court for Human Rights ruled that the right of Roma-children for a proper education was violated by giving them only access to separate and inferior education at special schools.

4. According to an official estimation of the Czech Education Authority from March 2012, 35 per cent of the children diagnosed with a “slight mental handicap” belong to the Roma ethnic group. In some parts of the Czech Republic it was more than 50 per cent. It is the assessment method of psychologists in the centers for educational advice that excludes Roma children from regular classes, thus refusing them access to higher education.

5. In a textbook for the second grade called „Citanka“, that has been used since 2005 there is an anti-Roma text in which a mother says to her daughter that she should not talk to Roma children since they “are dirty, smell and steal”. In 2009 parents of Roma children had criticized the text for propagating prejudices and racist attitudes. The ministry for education answered the critic by stating that “the use of stereotypes helps children to overcome stereotypes.” By now the national Commissioner for Human

Rights has called for a withdrawal of the textbook. The ministry of education has announced to “check” whether the charges are true.

Assaults on and demonstrations against Roma

6. The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) documented 23 violent assaults on Roma with three deaths between October 2011 and March 2012. There have been eleven arson attacks against house in which Roma lived. Only three of the eleven cases were solved by the police. In 2011 there were at least 16 anti-Roma demonstrations in the country.

7. In October 2011 neo-nazis and members of the extreme right-wing party DSS for several weeks demonstrated in the towns of Varnsdorf, Nový Borf and Rumburk - near the border to Germany – against Roma communities. There were several violent excesses that could only be contained by a massive platoon of policemen.

8. In Varnsdorf in the North of the Czech Republic following an assault on Czech citizens by a gang of Roma there have been multiple right-wing, pogrom-like demonstrations of several thousands of people. The marches usually end with people shouting racial slurs in front of Roma houses and settlements. In recent times, many Roma had to move to the North of the country due to higher rent rates.