

CENTRE ON  
HOUSING RIGHTS  
AND EVICTIONS



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**Oral Statement: Switzerland Universal Periodic Review**  
**12 June 2008**

Thank you Mr. President.

We were particularly concerned at the views of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed by the Swiss government during the interactive dialogue. As reflected in the report of the Working Group, the government delegation stated that "Switzerland considered that the provisions of the Covenant served as guidelines for the State's legislation and policies. These rights are programmatic in nature and do not necessarily lead to right before the court."

This view is clearly incompatible with Switzerland's obligations under the ICESCR. COHRE notes the extensive commentary of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights establishing that ESC rights must be fully protected as human rights in domestic law, must be made subject to effective remedies and must not be downgraded to mere "policy objectives". In the view of the Committee, "Any such administrative remedies should be accessible, affordable, timely and effective." Switzerland has failed to implement effective remedies for most economic, social and cultural rights.

We welcome the fact that the Romanian government raised adequate housing issues during the interactive dialogue. In this regard, we note that no due remedy has been provided to victims of the 2007 forced eviction of persons from the Rhino collective

housing project, nor in the matter of the forced closure of the Rhino association and the arbitrary seizure of its assets.

We are further concerned at the threats levelled by the public prosecutor against persons residing at the Geneva Tulipiers residence. We urge Swiss authorities to adhere to due process requirements in that case.

Threats of forced evictions fall not only against squatters. The Geneva media will report this week on the case of 92-year-old Ms. Simone Pozzo, who is to be forcibly evicted on Monday of next week.

Finally, we have been concerned at several developments taking place since the interactive dialogue. The cover story of the May 13 issue of the Geneva daily *Le Matin* read "Police Fear an Influx of Roma", in the context of the European football championship. The page 2 headline of the same publication stated: "Roma Are Always More Violent".

Mr. President, active and gross incitement to racial hatred of this kind has no place in a democratic society. We have yet to hear high-ranking Swiss officials condemning anti-Romani racism in the media.

In addition, in light of the evident hand of the police in the information provided, there are indications that Euro 2008 is to be policed with a heavy emphasis on racial profiling. This may also be a border issue. These issues are particularly charged in light of the high-profile collective expulsion of Romanian Roma carried out by Geneva authorities in Autumn 2007, an act made possible solely because Switzerland declines to ratify Protocol 4 to the European Convention on Human Rights, which includes a ban on the collective expulsion of aliens.

Swiss authorities cannot remain passive in the face of the evident current threats of racial discrimination hanging over the EURO 2008 football events. We urge that, without delay, Swiss authorities make clear that no authorities will carry out acts of racial discrimination during the European Championship.

Thank you Mr. President.