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Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by World Roma Federation Inc., a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 May 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Call for Action Against Racism and Discrimination Against Roma

The World Roma Federation expresses gratitude for the commitment to addressing global issues related to racism, xenophobia, and discrimination. We respectfully present this statement to highlight the unique challenges encountered by the Roma community and ask for further consideration and suitable action in light of the recent UN resolution denouncing neo-Nazism, neo-Fascism, and violent nationalist ideologies.

The rise of extremist ideologies in Europe and other countries has been a significant factor in the discrimination and violence faced by the Roma community. These extremist ideologies, such as neo-Nazism, neo-Fascism, and violent nationalist ideologies, promote the idea of racial superiority and often target minority groups, including the Roma, as scapegoats. The consequences of these ideologies are severe and can lead to violent acts of aggression towards the Roma community, including harassment, verbal abuse, physical assault, and even murder. It is critical that action is taken to prevent the spread of these ideologies and ensure the protection of the Roma community's rights and dignity.

The infiltration of extremist ideology into politics is a concerning trend that threatens not only the Roma community but society as a whole. Members of these extremist groups often hold positions of power, including control of political parties and elected office. This gives them a platform to spread their hateful rhetoric and enact policies that discriminate against marginalized groups like the Roma. The consequence of these actions is a society where racism and discrimination are not only tolerated but often openly promoted.

It is not just politicians that promote extremist ideology. Those who hold positions in other areas, such as government, social services, and healthcare, can also perpetuate discrimination against the Roma community. This makes it even more challenging for the Roma to access necessary services and support. Discrimination against marginalized communities should never be tolerated, and it is time for action to be taken to put an end to these harmful practices.

We draw your attention to particular areas where Roma rights can be more effectively supported in accordance with the United Nations' comprehensive strategy:

1. **Ratifying International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination:** Despite being an essential part of numerous European cultures for centuries, the Roma community still experiences racial discrimination. We seek your support in encouraging states to ratify this convention and enforce successful anti-discrimination measures for marginalized groups, such as the Roma people.

The ratification of the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination can potentially bring significant positive changes to the Roma community. This convention recognizes and promotes the need for an equal society without any forms of racial discrimination. Ratifying this convention can lead to the enforcement of more powerful anti-discrimination measures to support marginalized groups, including the Roma people. Such measures can provide the necessary framework for promoting equal opportunity and social inclusion among the Roma community.

2. **Addressing Neo-Nazi Glorification and WWII Commemorations:** The growth of extremist ideologies leads to increased hate crimes against minorities like the Roma community. The recent glorification of Nazi regime elements has severe repercussions for all minority communities affected during WWII, including annihilation and forced labor camps where hundreds of thousands of Roma were victimized. We call on all UN member states to forbid these commemorative activities and to take a strong stance against all forms of neo-Nazism, neo-Fascism, and violent nationalist ideologies. It is crucial that we work together to ensure that the memory of those who lost their lives in these atrocities is preserved while also actively fighting against the rise of extremist hate and spreading awareness of the dangers these ideologies pose to our global community. In light of the recent UN resolution, we urge all member states to prioritize actions to combat these dangerous and divisive forces.

3. **Accurate Historical Education:** It is vital that children worldwide learn about historical injustices faced by different communities throughout history to prevent future occurrences. We request that education policies include accurate information about WWII and its impact

on marginalized groups such as the Roma people with a focus on cultivating empathy, understanding, and tolerance.

When it comes to Holocaust history and education, it is critical that the story of Roma genocide is told. The Roma people were systematically targeted by the Nazi regime during World War II, resulting in an estimated 500,000 individuals being killed. Despite this, the Roma genocide is often overlooked in mainstream education and media, perpetuating a lack of understanding and recognition of this significant historical event. It is essential that we work towards raising awareness of the Roma genocide and ensuring that it is properly incorporated into education curriculums to honor the memories of those who were lost and fought for their freedom.

4. Countering Hate Speech and Promoting Tolerance: The internet has enabled the rapid spread of racist ideologies targeting vulnerable communities, including the Roma people. Denouncing hate speech by political leaders and advocating for legislative measures to prevent incitement to violence are crucial in fostering a respectful and inclusive society. We also encourage the UN to support diversity training in law enforcement agencies to properly address racially motivated incidents and effectively respond to extremism.

Hate speech against Roma by politicians in Europe has been on the rise and increasing in recent times. This kind of speech is not only offensive, but it also perpetuates harmful stereotypes and reinforces discrimination against the Roma community. It is crucial that political leaders take a strong stance against hate speech and work to promote greater understanding and acceptance of diverse cultures and backgrounds. By doing so, we can create a more inclusive society where all individuals feel valued and respected.

5. Protection of Vulnerable Groups: As a historically disenfranchised group, the Roma people need additional measures to ensure their rights without discrimination. We ask the United Nations to work towards policies that explicitly address aspects such as access to education, housing, healthcare, and employment opportunities for marginalized communities, including the Roma.

Systemic racism against the Roma community has resulted in significant barriers to accessing essential services such as healthcare and education. Discriminatory practices and stereotypes perpetuated by those in power have prevented the Roma from obtaining the help they need, leaving them vulnerable and marginalized. Additionally, many community members are often unaware of their rights, making them easy targets for exploitation. It is essential that we work towards creating policies and programs that address these issues and provide equal opportunities and protections for all members of society.

6. Exclusion from public services, political participation, and employment: Due to nationalist ideologies, the Roma community is excluded from many public services, including healthcare and education. Additionally, they face significant barriers to political participation and employment opportunities, limiting their ability to improve their circumstances and contribute to society. This exclusion perpetuates systemic discrimination and reinforces harmful stereotypes, further marginalizing the Roma people. It is essential that we work towards dismantling these barriers and ensuring equal access to public services, political participation, and employment opportunities for all members of society.

The United Nations can play an important role in promoting and protecting the rights of the Roma people around the world. Some of the key things that the UN can do include:

1. Recognizing the World Roma Federation as the Roma people's voice within the UN. Through its special consultative status with a special competency.
2. Monitoring: The UN can monitor the situation of the Roma people in different countries, including through the WRF and its own human rights mechanisms, and report on any violations of their rights.
3. Technical assistance: The UN can provide technical assistance to governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to help them develop policies and programs aimed at promoting the rights of the Roma people.

4. Capacity building: The UN can support capacity building efforts aimed at strengthening the ability of Roma communities to advocate for their own rights and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

5. Partnership building: The UN can work with a range of stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, and international organizations, to build partnerships aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of the Roma people.

The World Roma Federation is an international organization that promotes and protects the rights of Roma people and serves as their voice on the world stage as an advocate for their rights and well being. It is an umbrella organization that brings together national Roma organizations from around the world. It is time there is an international organization for Roma who can serve as observers within the UN and report on the situation of the Roma as needed.

In conclusion, we ask you to consider these recommendations for protecting the rights of Roma people worldwide. The World Roma Federation remains committed to building a better future for all by fighting racism, hate speech, and promoting mutual respect across diverse communities around the world.
