



European Roma and Travellers Forum  
c/o Council of Europe  
F - 67 075 Strasbourg  
Tel.: + 33 3 90 21 43 31  
Fax: + 33 3 90 21 44 34  
e-mail: [ertf@ertf.org](mailto:ertf@ertf.org)  
[www.ertf.org](http://www.ertf.org)

# ERTF Update

03/2007

27.02.07

## Reports

---

### NGOs

---

#### **Illicit arms used against Roma, Amnesty International reports**

In a report issued today, Amnesty International reports about the use of electric batons by police officers against Roma in Bulgaria and Slovakia.

The full report can be downloaded here:

<http://www.amnesty-eu.org/static/documents/2007/Finaltoolsoftorturereport.pdf>

---

#### **ERRC report on exclusion of Roma from employment**

26 February 2007

The report "The Glass Box: Exclusion of Roma from Employment", published by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) presents the results of groundbreaking factual research in five countries, as well as legal and policy research from various contexts. The central finding of the research is that explicit, open and unconcealed racial discrimination against Roma is a fact in hiring procedures in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

64% of respondents believe that they have personally suffered discrimination on the labour market. Close to half of those persons reported to researchers that they had been explicitly told by prospective employers that the company at issue did not hire Roma. The research further revealed that public labour offices charged with assisting the unemployed in finding work in the main magnified discriminatory hiring policies by undertaking no actions whatsoever to challenge these.

The report can be downloaded at: <http://www.errc.org/db/02/14/m00000214.pdf>

---

## **ITUC notes widespread discrimination against Roma**

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has just issued a new report on core-labour standards in the European Union. In its conclusion the organisation notes that discrimination against Roma which was cited in 10 of the 27 member states is a "serious concern".

The report can be downloaded at:  
[http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/EU\\_TPR\\_CLS\\_Report\\_-\\_2007\\_final.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/EU_TPR_CLS_Report_-_2007_final.pdf)

## **News digest**

### **Countries**

---

#### **Czech Republic**

---

#### **Collection for evicted Czech Romany families dropped** 23 February 2007

Prague, Feb 23 (CTK) - Czech Minister without Portfolio Dzamila Stehlikova (Greens) has dropped the idea of a collection for the Romany families evicted by the town hall in Vsetin, North Moravia, from their ramshackle houses to other regions in Moravia last year, the Government Press Office told CTK today.

The evicted Romanies have refused the financial help. The promised money from politicians and further donors should be sent to the Olga Havlova Good Will Foundation, the Government Press Office said.

When Christian Democrat leader, senator Jiri Cunek, was the mayor of Vsetin, the town hall evicted the Romanies from a dilapidated tenant house in the town centre last October.

Most of the families were moved to "container-type" house at the town edges and the rest went to the Jesenice region where they were given some ramshackle houses. Romanies are to repay them for 20 years.

Stehlikova originally wanted to gain a 1.5-million subsidy for repair works for the Romanies.

However, state money cannot be used for private property. This prompted Stehlikova to plan a collection. She sharply criticised Cunek for the eviction of the Romanies as he had pushed the solution to another town hall.

Cunek replied that she did not understand the problem.

The evicted families have appreciated Stehlikova's interest, but they have refused the offered money.

In a letter for Stehlikova, they said that they were trying to repair their homes, that their children attend the school and one of the men has found a job despite the high unemployment rate in the area.

Stehlikova said that the facts had shown that the evicted Romany families were not unadaptable.

This should prompt politicians to solve the problems in the place in question and not to "multiply them by their export to other localities," she added.

Source: ČTK Czech News Agency/The Prague Daily Monitor  
[http://launch.praguemonitor.com/en/31/czech\\_national\\_news/1935/](http://launch.praguemonitor.com/en/31/czech_national_news/1935/)

---

## Hungary

---

### Apartheid Made in Hungary

21. Februar 2007

#### *Europaabgeordnete über Diskriminierung von Romakindern*

In Hunderten von ungarischen Grundschulen werden Romakinder bewusst diskriminiert: Entweder kommen sie in eigene Klassenzüge mit niedrigerem Niveau, oder sie werden als geistig zurückgeblieben abgestempelt, wodurch sie auf noch schlechterer Ebene unterrichtet werden. Das Ergebnis ist die vermehrte Reproduktion einer immer größeren Gesellschaftsschicht, die unfähig ist, einer Erwerbstätigkeit nachzugehen.

Diese deprimierende Analyse stammt von einer recht gut informierten Expertin: Viktória Mohácsi ist Jahrgang 1971 und eine der wenigen ungarischen Intellektuellen mit Roma-Abstammung. Sie arbeitete einst als Ministerialbeauftragte für Romafragen und ist seit 2004 liberale Europaabgeordnete. Die Politikerin hält mit ihrer Kritik über die unhaltbaren Zustände auch im eigenen politischen Lager nicht hinter den Berg. Als sie 2002 von der linksliberalen Regierung beauftragt worden war, die Bildungspolitik bezüglich der größten ethnischen Minderheit des Landes zu gestalten, war sie hinsichtlich ihres Erfolgs sehr zuversichtlich - um dann feststellen zu müssen, dass all die Versprechen nicht verwirklicht wurden und sich die Lage mit der Zeit nur immer weiter verschlechterte.

#### *Teufelskreis*

Die Abgeordnete erinnert daran, dass die von allen EU-Neulingen akzeptierten EU-Direktiven eine Diskriminierung der Kinder im Unterricht eindeutig untersagten. Trotzdem sei genau dies allgemeine Praxis in einem Drittel der Schulen. Die Segregation beginne bereits im Kindergarten. Sobald der Anteil der Romakinder in den Grundschulen (für Kinder von 6 bis 14 Jahren) 20 Prozent erreicht, werden für diese gewöhnlich eigene Klassenzüge eingerichtet. Dort erhalten sie Unterricht auf einem niedrigeren Niveau, was u.a. bedeutet, dass nur ein kleiner Teil von ihnen in die Mittelschule wechselt. Während 70 Prozent der „weißen“ Kinder die mittlere Reife erreichten, sei der Anteil bei den Roma nur 10 Prozent.

Als doppelte Diskriminierung bezeichnete Mohácsi die Einstufung vieler Roma als „geistig unterentwickelt“. Die so Gebrandmarkten kommen in Sonderschulen, aus denen erst recht kein Weg heraus führt, um als arbeitender Mensch in die Gesellschaft integriert zu werden.

#### *Lage trotz Gerichtsurteil unverändert*

Vertreter der Minderheit wollen auch auf dem Rechtsweg diese Lage verändern. Ihr erster Musterprozess gegen die Selbstverwaltung von Miskolc, einer großen Industriestadt mit besonders hohem Roma-Anteil an der Bevölkerung, wurde auch in zweiter Instanz gewonnen: Das Gericht stellte die rechtswidrige Diskriminierung der Romaschüler fest. Doch änderte dieser Spruch in der Praxis gar nichts. Nun will man mit weiteren Prozessen eine Änderung erreichen. Das umso mehr, als die finanziellen Quellen dazu eigentlich sprudeln: Es gibt eine besondere

Ausbildung für Pädagogen, die sich mit Romakindern befassen, und Gelder, um den Unterricht auf ansprechendem Niveau zu gestalten.

### *Hoffnungsvolle Ansätze*

Während sich der Großteil der Selbstverwaltungen trotzdem passiv in der Frage verhält, gibt es auch positive Beispiele, die hoffen lassen: In der südungarischen Stadt Orosháza, aber auch in Hódmezővásárhely, die unter Führung des Fidesz steht, haben die Bürgermeister eine Aufhebung der rechtswidrigen Trennung der Kinder angeordnet. Diese Beispiel könnte problemlos Schule machen, haben doch Untersuchungen bewiesen, dass hinsichtlich der Fähigkeiten der Kinder keinerlei Unterschiede festzustellen sind. Alles hänge von der Atmosphäre und vom Niveau der Schule ab. Besonders wichtig ist, dass Kinder aus armen Familien - zu denen nicht nur die Roma gehören - besondere Hilfe und Aufmerksamkeit erhalten.

### *Kein Erbe des Kommunismus*

Eine Antwort auf die Frage, wie die Pädagogen unter den heutzutage in ungarischen Grundschulen gebotenen Möglichkeiten diese äußerst schwierigen Aufgaben lösen sollten, blieb Frau Mohácsi schuldig. Immerhin wies sie auf die ähnliche Lage in Westeuropa hin. So kommen etwa in Deutschland 80 Prozent der Romakinder in besondere Klassen für Schüler mit Lernschwierigkeiten. Man kann also die Lage in Osteuropa kaum als ein Erbe des Kommunismus bezeichnen - im Gegenteil, war doch die Lage der Roma vor der Wende besser: Viele fanden Arbeit in der Schwerindustrie und der Landwirtschaft und das Schulsystem erfasste ihre Kinder effektiver.

Die Umgestaltung drängte viele Roma aus den Städten heraus in entferne kleine Dörfer - oder in die Slums der Städte. Die Abgeordnete schätzt deren Zahl auf 600.000 bis 800.000, also auf sechs bis acht Prozent der Bevölkerung, wobei dieser Anteil aufgrund des Kinderreichtums bei Romafamilien rasch anwächst.

Rumänien, die Slowakei und Bulgarien haben einen noch größeren Anteil an Roma. Diese Tatsache stellt eine gewaltige Herausforderung dar, der sich auch die EU nach den Erfahrungen von Viktória Mohácsi noch nicht entsprechend gestellt hat.

Source: Pester Lloyd  
[http://www.pestertloyd.net/Archiv/2007\\_09/0709roma/0709roma.html](http://www.pestertloyd.net/Archiv/2007_09/0709roma/0709roma.html)

---

### **Italy/Romania**

---

#### **Hundreds of Gypsies Left Romania for Turin, Italy** 26 February 2007

About 350 people from the village of Rau de Mori, in Romania, Hunedoara County, live now in make-shift shelters and mobile homes on the outskirts of Turin, Italy, some 800 meters from the city's Orbassano district.

Seven years ago they were about ten people in the colony of Gypsies; last year some 100 people had left their village in Romania, and the rest joined the group after the country's accession to the European Union on January 1st.

In the Rau de Mori village live now only six families, the elderly, and those undocumented.

The Gypsies in the colony in Turin said they tried to find work, but could not, so they had to beg in order to support themselves.

Horia Munteanu came to Turin a few days after celebrating the 2007 New Year back home, in Romania.

"I took my family and came here, where we had relatives already located. We live here together, as we did back home, only better. Even if we are far away from home we do not miss our dear ones, because we are all in one place. I wanted to come earlier, but I had no passport. So, it made a difference that after January 1st we could come to Italy using only our Romanian IDs. We are in all 350 people here, all from Rau de Mori," said Munteanu.

Patru Gaman explained that "People back home lived on social security. But how could one live on 80 lei some 23 euros a month!? We make a living here begging at street corners and earn up to 60 euros per day."

The average earning from begging goes to some 30 euros daily, which led the Gypsies conclude that the Italians are more generous than the Romanians.

"We came here believing there will be work for us, but nobody looked at us, so then we went to beg at street corners. Italians are good people; they give us money, not like the people back home. Here even the police the carabinieri are all right. They come from time to time to check if we keep stolen goods here, but otherwise they leave us alone," explained Ion Lega.

In the Gypsy settlement close to Turin there are people who made it better than others. Some live in mobile homes they bought for 300 euros, others preferred to save their money for make-shift shelters at half the price. The energy supply was solved with feeding their electrical appliances from the street lighting system. As for the water, they carry it in cans, from the city's district. They are happy they do not have to work and earn more money from begging than that they would have made in Romania.

Gabriela Mladin

Source: Jurnalul National

[http://www.jurnalul.ro/articol\\_73175/hundreds\\_of\\_gypsies\\_left\\_romania\\_for\\_turin\\_\\_italy.html](http://www.jurnalul.ro/articol_73175/hundreds_of_gypsies_left_romania_for_turin__italy.html)

---

Romania

---

### **Les Roumains désormais plus tolérants envers les Roms?**

22 février 2007

*D'après une étude de la Fondation Soros rendue publique lundi, les Roumains acceptent davantage leurs voisins roms. Mais selon ces derniers, ils seraient toujours sujets à de fortes discriminations, notamment de la part des autorités*

En 1993, 72% des Roumains préféraient ne pas avoir de voisins roms. En 2006, selon l'étude de la Fondation Soros, ils ne seraient plus que 37%. D'après le sociologue Mircea Kivu, "le discours de l'opinion publique a changé et l'idée de tolérance est plus répandue. Mais cela ne veut pas dire qu'il y a eu un véritable changement de mentalité et de comportement envers les Roms". Une opinion partagée par Marian Mandache, l'un des responsables de l'association rom Romani Criss : "Je ne suis pas certain que les Roumains soient devenus plus tolérants. Sur le marché de l'emploi par exemple, la discrimination envers les Roms est évidente".

*Problème avec les autorités*

Les Roms se sentiraient surtout marginalisés par les autorités. "Il y a eu plus d'abus de la part

de la police en 2006 qu'en 2005", affirme Marian Mandache. D'après la Fondation Soros, 60% des Roms disent être moins bien traités que les Roumains par la police, l'administration, les hôpitaux et la justice. Et quand la mairie lance des opérations d'évacuation, "elle le fait sans ménagement et n'offre pas de logements décents en contrepartie", assure M. Mandache. De leur côté, les autorités affirment être obligées d'évacuer, notamment pour des raisons de sécurité. A Bucarest, dans le quartier de Lipscani où vivent plusieurs familles de Roms, les appartements sont dans un état d'insalubrité extrême. Sur l'ensemble du pays, toujours selon la Fondation Soros, 87% des Roms ne sont pas raccordés au gaz et 13% n'ont pas l'électricité, contre seulement 2% des Roumains.

### *L'effort de scolarisation*

Cette population rom, qui compte pour environ 9% de la population totale en Roumanie (près de 2 millions) serait par ailleurs marginalisée dès le plus jeune âge : 25% des Roms ne seraient jamais allés à l'école. Certes des programmes européens viennent désormais en aide à cette communauté. A Braila par exemple (est du pays), l'UE a dépensé plus de 500.000 euros dans la construction d'établissements scolaires pour les Roms. "C'est bien, mais il faut aussi penser à mélanger les enfants roms et les enfants roumains", estime Marian Mandache. D'autant plus que dans les campagnes, selon Mircea Kivu, "les communautés roms sont davantage mises à l'écart que dans les villes."

Source: le petit journal

<http://www.lepetitjournal.com/content/view/12044/1231/>

---

### **Roma history**

22 February 2007

The Romanian government will set up a panel to examine the slavery of Gypsies in the past, a statement said Tuesday. The panel will also make recommendations to promote Gypsy, or Roma, history and culture in schools, the government said. The decision comes as the country marks 151 years since slavery was abolished in Romania. Officially, Romania's current Roma population numbers about 500,000, but polls have put the actual figure at more than 1 million.

Source: AP/Kathimerini

[http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/news/world\\_&xml/&aspKath/world.asp?fdate=22/02/2007](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/news/world_&xml/&aspKath/world.asp?fdate=22/02/2007)

---

### ***Kosovo***

---

#### **Kosovo's Roma: Two-Faced**

26 February 2007

*In the conflict between Kosovo's Serbs and Albanians, Roma negotiate the tricky in-between.*

MITROVICA, Kosovo. Saffet Ramic has learned to travel with a screwdriver since the war.

On a dusty back street in Mitrovica, Ramic pulls his van to the side of the road. He gets out and fishes the screwdriver from his right pocket. Then he slides off the license plates with their Kosovo registration tags, throws them inside and climbs back in.

"It's so the Serbs don't kill us," he says matter-of-factly. It's permissible to drive without plates in this part of the city since Kosovo tags are not accepted here. Several blocks later as the van chugs again into ethnic Albanian territory, he reattaches the plates.

"It's so the Albanians don't kill us," Ramic, 30, chuckles, his bronze-colored skin revealing that he is neither ethnic Albanian nor Serb, but one of approximately 30,000 Roma, sometimes referred to as "Gypsies," who are part of Kosovo's population of 2 million.

In a region where ethnic tensions fester eight years after the conflict between Serbian forces and Kosovo Albanians, Ramic navigates between two clearly defined worlds, although he fits in neither. Like the license plates he slides on and off, Ramic's identity shifts with necessity and convenience.

More than 150,000 Roma were caught in the 1998-1999 war, when many were targeted by ethnic Albanian forces who considered them Serb collaborators, while the Serbian army routed Roma from Kosovo Albanian villages. Thousands moved to temporary camps and still live there. More than 120,000 fled the country before eventual NATO intervention, Serbian defeat, and the establishment of a UN protectorate in Kosovo.

Partly as a result of the conflict, many Roma - a term that can also encompass the Albanian-speaking Ashkali and those claiming Egyptian heritage - have adapted their identity to survive. Although Ramic considers himself Roma, in some cases it's safer for him to say he's Ashkali.

It remains unclear whether the country will regain enough stability to ensure Ramic a definitive identity or other Roma a safe return to their homes.

Pending the conclusion of a final agreement this year, Kosovo is poised to become an independent state, a triumph for Albanians but a devastating loss to Serbs. In a land where others hold fast to their identities, the Roma - without country and cohesiveness - live between the cracks. Many just want to go home.

### *History relived*

With independence and more violence a possibility, the Roma are scared, disillusioned, and tired of being in the middle of someone else's war. To this minority, Kosovo's status is just another opportunity for trampled rights, empty promises, and more displacement.

Ramic winces as a man in a blue police uniform motions him to pull over. He slows down the van and prepares to speak Albanian. If the cop is Albanian, he will be Ashkali today. The police officer glances at his papers and, recognizing Ramic's Serbian-speaking home village, addresses him in Serbian. The Romani man breathes a sigh of relief.

Several kilometers later, the van stops in front of the bridge that connects northern Mitrovica to its Kosovo Albanian counterpart in the south. "I don't want to drive there," Ramic says, looking out at the symbolic divide of the Ibar river. He parks the van several meters from the bridge and waits.

Located in Kosovo's northernmost region, the Mitrovica region borders Serbia and is considered one of the areas most prone to violence. In a city where a tangible divide separates one ethnicity from the other, both the Serbs in northern Mitrovica and the ethnic Albanians in the south are particularly jittery about the consequences of Kosovo's possible independence.

### *Fitting in*

"We are the bridge and everyone drives over us," says another Roma, Dzafer Micini, 38, sitting on the floor of his three-room house in Kosovo Polje. He remembers the smoking remains of his neighbors' homes, memories relived five years later when Albanians attacked the town again.

The village is a target because it stands on the site of the great medieval battle where an Ottoman army defeated the Serbs, an event that still generates Serbian nationalist passion. Muslim Albanians are seen as descendants of the Turkish oppressors. The Serb enclave has about 15 Serb families and five Romani houses. Micini worries that ethnic Albanians will burn the predominantly Serb village, and he is desperately trying to sell his house. Like many Roma, however, he doesn't have the proper documents to do so.

"We can't be a lamb among wolves," he says, glancing at his youngest son playing with flimsy holiday decorations in the corner. The black woodstove warms the sparse room, darkened by the daily electrical outage. He says he even worries about sending his children to the market. "Albanians and Serbs are fickle. When they need us to fight they say we are brothers. Otherwise, they say, 'Gypsies, go away.'"

Micini is lucky. He escaped to Serbia during the war and his house was one of the few in the village still standing when he returned a year later.

When riots broke out in March 2004, Micini was not at home. He was in Pristina with several other male relatives. He could not return to his wife and children in Kosovo Polje 12 kilometers away and doesn't want to relive that feeling of helplessness a third time. If the Serbs who populate the village are forced out, he says, the Roma will have no choice but to leave, too.

Most Roma now live in Serb enclaves, small villages scattered throughout Kosovo where Cyrillic lettering replaces the Latin alphabet Albanians use. During Slobodan Milosevic's brutal decade-long regime that restricted Kosovo Albanian freedoms, even the Roma received some rights not afforded to ethnic Albanians, who make up about 90 percent of the population.

When the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) took control of the province and established a provisional government led by Kosovo Albanians after the war, Roma found themselves displaced and despised, unable to slide into either ethnic group who claim ownership of the land. It became only marginally safer to identify oneself as an Albanian-speaking Ashkali.

In a place more populated by self-described Roma than Ashkali, the war and continuing violence has created a shift in self-definition. Yet neither Roma nor Ashkali are really sure labels matter. In the end, all feel the consequences of war.

"More people became Ashkali during the war," says Akif Mustafa, 48, a Romani man from the Serb enclave of Plemetina. He draws a circle in the air. "This is a circle of bread. The bread is breaking into pieces," he says, symbolizing the creation of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians. "But you see, it's just broken bread. We are all Roma and we are all still the poorest in the world."

#### *Choosing toxic lead over relocation*

The Roma are the poorest minority group in Kosovo, with the least education and highest unemployment rates. More than a third live in extreme poverty, compared with 4 percent of Serbs and 13 percent of ethnic Albanians, according to UN Development Program reports.

With little money and nowhere to go, many could not flee the region when their houses were burned down in 1999. Those who could not pay a smuggler to get to Germany or escape to family in Serbia wound up in UN-run camps within the protectorate. Almost eight years later, most are still there.

"The Gypsies are worse off now than they were during the Holocaust," says Paul Polansky, founder of Kosovo Roma Refugee Foundation and an amateur Roma scholar. Polansky recently conducted more than 100 oral interviews of Romani Holocaust survivors and says the current situation of the Kosovo Roma is also an atrocity.

Nowhere is the plight of the Kosovo Roma more evident than in the lead-contaminated camps clustered at the edge of northern Mitrovica.

One of them, Cesmin Lug, sits on the edge of Mitrovica's Serb side. Slag heaps, where the lead originates, form the backdrop of this miniature shantytown of haphazard tin shacks.

A trail of drying pink and yellow quilts leads to Sebiha Bajrami's house. Inside, two women punch dough and place it in the thick iron stove that warms the two-room house. Hers is one of 40 families who chose to live in the contaminated camp rather than in the new camp across the road. Called Osterode, it is the UN's solution to the lead contamination in Mitrovica's three camps for internally displaced people.

"In Cesmin Lug there is lead poisoning, and a few meters away in Osterode it's the same," says Bajrami, 35, who does not believe the authorities' assurances that Osterode is a healthier environment. "At least in Cesmin Lug we always have water and it is cleaner because fewer people live here and they clean it." One hundred sixty-six people currently live in the camp, compared with 463 in Osterode.

Bajrami's skepticism stems largely from UNMIK's failure to address the World Health Organization's concern about the camps' lead levels in 2000. The WHO links repeated exposure - often through air, water, and food - to miscarriages and brain damage. Lead most profoundly affects children.

A Romani journalist who works for a local Serbian radio station, Bajrami has helped establish a Romani women's organization that makes beaded necklaces and colorful table coverings in the camp. For all the clothes, food, and services nongovernmental organizations have promised, she complains, the situation has remained the same.

"This would be our fourth camp and we are tired of all the camps," she says. "We want to go back to our neighborhood, not Osterode."

Yet, it's not necessarily safer there. One of only a few camp inhabitants who ventures to southern Mitrovica, Bajrami takes certain precautions when her job takes her there. She never refers to herself as Roma and speaks only Albanian.

Once, Bajrami recalled, she was accosted by an Albanian man who recognized her name. Was she the girl who read the news in Serbian, he demanded. "I said, 'Yes, I am the slave reading other people's news. Find me someplace else to work then,'" she says.

Bajrami hopes to open her own Romani radio station some day, one that plays traditional Romani music and stays away from Balkan politics. First, though, like virtually everyone else in the camps, she wants to go home.

### *The cycle of forgetting*

Outside the tin-roofed encampment and a few steps up the road, a barbed-wire fence and heavy gate separate Bajrami and the rest of Mitrovica from Osterode, the new camp declared "lead-free" by UNMIK.

An Albanian guard stands watch from his small kiosk. Recognizing the white truck of Norwegian Church Aid, he swings the gate forward without the usual interrogation procedures. The nonprofit has taken over management of the camp, a series of one-level white barracks and a brick two-story building.

Despite the brightly colored shirts and towels strung on makeshift laundry poles, the camp has the austere feeling of the French military base it used to be. Paved asphalt replaces the muddy soil on the other side of the gate.

Parents jiggle wailing children on their hips in a line that winds out of the camp's makeshift clinic. Located in a corner of the compound, the clinic's two rooms are filled with cotton swabs and vitamins. It is here that treatment for lead poisoning has begun. Next door, "cat" and "dog" are scribbled on a white board in a room where youth language classes are held. A flight of stairs leads to the women's center, where classes are offered in hygiene and child-rearing. Despite these services, inhabitants point out that the fundamental reality is that they still can't go home.

"Nothing has changed," says Skender Gusani, the leader of Osterode, Cesmin Lug, and Leposavic camps. "When people moved to Osterode they were promised many things and nothing improved. They were promised 24 hours of water, nonstop electricity, and central heaters. The lead is better but now children get other illnesses because of the conditions."

Water pressure remains inconsistent, as does electricity, but this is the situation all over Mitrovica, says Hasan Kelmendi, the Osterode camp manager employed by Norwegian Church Aid. "I can tell you that Osterode is better than all the camps," he says pointing out the toilet facilities and washers and dryers.

Each family is allotted a small heater but it serves little purpose when the electricity goes out, says Gusani, who recounts stories of families gathering sticks and making fires on the pavement to keep warm.

They are tired of bouncing among camps, constrained by regulations and now these gates. "We live like animals, Gusani says. "Security is always checking our pockets. It's like living in a concentration camp."

Neville Fouche, the UNMIK Roma Task Force coordinator, says the gates are more for safety than obstruction. They allow the agency to monitor what comes into the camps, like car batteries. Fouche believes the burning of these batteries, to extract and sell the lead inside, worsened the lead problem in the previous camps.

He emphasizes that the new Osterode camp, which consolidates three camps into one, is a temporary solution. "We have no intention to make it permanent," he says. "This is a transfer center only for medical conditions." The ultimate goal is for the inhabitants to return to their former neighborhoods, he says.

### *Somewhere in between*

The guttural sound of German syllables collides with the lyrical tone of Romani as Feruz Jahirovic opens the door and greets his extended family, some of the newer camp inhabitants. Unlike Jahirovic, who has spent eight years in the camps and now lives across the pavement in the one-level barracks, nine members of his family spent the past 15 years in Munster, Germany. Up a flight of dimly lit steps, they are squeezed into two rooms in the red-brick building toward the back of Osterode.

Jahirovic's is one of a growing number of Romani families who have lost their refugee status abroad and have been forced to return. The Council of Europe estimates that more than 1,000 Roma have been sent back to Kosovo. One hundred thousand still face forcible return from abroad, predominately from Germany. It's difficult for Jahirovic's children to interact with their cousins since the newer arrivals grew up in Germany and speak German. They landed in Osterode a year and a half ago, leaving their home rather than returning to one.

"They had a life like other kids in Europe," Jahirovic says, shaking his head as he looks at the his teenage nephew and niece, whose English is better than their Serbian. "Now what do they do? What do we do?"

Refugee return has increased pressure on international authorities to find places for Roma to live. In Mitrovica, UNMIK and two nongovernmental organizations have built two gleaming mauve and lavender apartment buildings that leap into view from across the river. Also standing among the ruins are 54 family houses established by the Danish Refugee Council along with two more partially erected apartment complexes funded by Norwegian Church Aid.

They are for people who once lived in the neighborhood where they are being built.

From his vantage point in the north, Jahirovic looks at the new buildings that sit directly across the Ibar river in southern Mitrovica, no longer a careless jaunt across the bridge. He remembers wandering through the spacious rooms of his brother's house before one of the richest and largest Roma neighborhoods in the region was destroyed.

Ninety-four families applied for 48 new apartment spots but Jahirovic is not on the list. He has nine children, the most of anyone in Osterode. Seventy percent of the camps' residents come from that neighborhood on the other side of town. Jahirovic, however, lived in a village nearby that was burned down and, like his relatives from Germany, he did not make the cut.

"Where do we go, live on the street?" he asks about the 30 percent of camp inhabitants who are not originally from the neighborhood that once held 8,000 people. When proper documentation became an issue in assessing who once lived in the neighborhood, the Danish Refugee Council decided to rebuild houses on private land for Roma who could prove ownership. Norwegian Church Aid agreed to build four apartment buildings on municipal land for those without papers. The rest are not sure what to do.

"As a minority, I don't care who will be the head of Kosovo. I am just interested in the freedom to work, security, and my children," Jahirovic says, looking past the camp's wire fence.

### *Prospects of return*

Until last year, the only evidence of the neighborhood's former inhabitants was caved-in brick buildings and crumbling walls. Now the area mirrors other construction efforts occurring across Kosovo: huge, colorful, and essentially vacant. Nevertheless, the reconstruction of Fabrica Mahala - mahala, a Turkish word for "quarter" meaning the same in both Serbian and Albanian - is the largest Romani return project ever undertaken in the Balkans, according to Fouche.

For those who will settle in the mahala, its location in southern Mitrovica means a switch in services and languages. Those living in the camps have been receiving social services from the Serbian government, and their children have been attending Serbian-language schools. When they return to the mahala most will attend Albanian-language schools and may no longer receive aid from Serbia. With all the uncertainties, some Roma, like long-time leader Gusani, who used to live here, refuse to go back to their old neighborhood.

"Will my son be able to go ahead with his education?" Gusani asks, voicing a concern of many Roma in the camps. "Will he have freedom of movement from his house?" he adds, reflecting the fact that the security of residents in Serb enclaves such as northern Mitrovica is not guaranteed in Albanian territory.

Like Gusani, many Roma are still concerned about returning to the same neighborhood from which they were expelled. Fouche says an international peacekeeping officer will monitor the area and drive by it every two hours. Gusani says Fouche has not mentioned this to him.

"No one can guarantee my children will have a safe future," he says about why he has chosen not to return to the mahala. He travels to the south only when escorted by UNMIK for meetings. If he must go alone he tells people he is coming from an Ashkali neighborhood. "If the Roma and Ashkali return, there will be violence," he says resolutely.

### *Lasting fear*

Tina Gidzic, a Romani woman of 20, gets jabbing pains in her stomach when she drives past her former village, Dobrevo. The town is now a pile of rubble seen from the Pristina-Mitrovica highway. She has no hopes of return. Her family continues to live in Kosovo, but her home is now with her husband in Nis, Serbia's closest big town to the protectorate.

The drive past Dobrevo conjures memories of war more than place for Gidzic. It was destroyed in 1999 when she was 13 and has not been rebuilt. Gidzic remembers growing up with the sounds of bombs a backdrop to her mother's scoldings not to go outside. Her younger brother was born in Preoce, a small Serb enclave 10 kilometers outside of Pristina where her parents fled and now live.

"I am getting nervous," she says, referring not only to the drive past her leveled village but to the uncertain situation regarding Kosovo's status. "The Roma here are Muslims like Albanians but we don't want to hurt the Serbs," who are Orthodox, she says. "We are living with the Serbs all the time, but they will say that we are helping the Albanians."

Even if not always the target, the Roma will get caught in the crossfire, Gidzic believes. "When the Albanians attack Serbs they don't know which house is Serb or Roma so they will burn the whole village. That is how there will be violence against us."

Tina jumps out of the van and closes the gate to her family's new house, a two-story structure that belonged to her grandfather. She joins her mother, warming herself in the one heated room in the house.

Gidzic's mother, Miradija, still cries when she looks at the picture of her crumbled Dobrevo home. Worn from years of touch, the photograph shows Tina's father walking away from a half-destroyed building. Miradija points to it and says one of the few words of English she knows, "home."

### *Attempts at mobilization*

The Roma are not entirely silent on the topic of independence, the young Gidzic least of all. "This is the way it should be," she says, over her second cup of dark, syrupy Turkish coffee in the combination dining room, bedroom, and living room. "The Serbs should go back to Serbia, the Albanians to Albania, and then the Roma can have Kosovo."

After eight years of floating identities in a land that might never be theirs, some Roma are taking action. Romani activists are openly criticizing the UN mission here. They have recently produced a position paper detailing the minority group's desires in an independent Kosovo.

Among their demands are Romani participation in decisions on Kosovo's status as well as a return strategy for refugees. "If we are not clear cut about what the minorities want in Kosovo there will be a whole new set of problems," says Bashkim Ibishi, one of the lead authors of the position paper.

Ibishi, a Romani man, is also the UN minority affairs officer for Kosovo. "There is no program of assistance because nobody wants to deal with us," he says.

Fifty kilometers away, Saffet Ramic doesn't have plans to remove the screwdriver from his pocket anytime soon. He flips the plates absent-mindedly and mentions a discussion he had with a man from Kosovo Polje. They are considering starting a business importing shoes from Albania and selling them cheaply in Kosovo.

"That's my plan," he says jumping into the worn driver's seat. Then he pauses, a wan smile appearing on his face as he pulls the van onto the darkening road. "If we still exist."

*Jessica Meyers is a student at the University of California-Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism.*

Source: Transition Online

<http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=206&NrSection=3&NrArticle=18364&tpid=35>

---

### **Russia will not force Serbia over Kosovo-Lavrov**

22 February 2007

MOSCOW, Feb 22 (Reuters) - Russia will not be part of any effort to force Serbia to recognise the independence of the breakaway province of Kosovo, Russian news agencies quoted Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as saying on Thursday.

"Only the two sides (Serbs and Kosovars) can make a decision on Kosovo and no one can impose a decision on them," it quoted Lavrov as saying in Berlin, where he has taken part in big power talks on the Middle East.

"At least Russia will not be part of any such scheme."

Russia opposed the NATO bombings of Serbia in 1999, which were launched to stop ethnic cleansing by Serbian forces in Kosovo.

A longtime ally of Serbia, Moscow is now resisting a plan by U.N. envoy Martti Ahtisaari to grant effective independence to the province, perhaps by September, despite Belgrade's objections. Russia has a decisive say on the issue in the U.N. Security Council where it holds a veto.

"I certainly respect Martti Ahtisaari," Lavrov said according to Interfax news agency. "But it is not up to him to decide if the time is right to make a decision."

"We back Ahtisaari's activities in preparing proposals on Kosovo to be presented to both sides," he added. "That is what we have subscribed to, nothing else."

Lavrov said Russia was not happy with the way a previous U.N. resolution on Kosovo had been implemented.

"We note that only the parts of resolution 1244 which suit Kosovo Albanians have been carried out," he said.

"Ninety percent of Kosovan Serbs, Gypsies and other minorities cannot return home," he added. "Despite a massive presence of international forces and a U.N. office, safety has not been provided."

Source: Reuters

<http://today.reuters.com/News/CrisesArticle.aspx?storyId=L22249165>

---

## **Unabhängig - von allen Minderheiten?**

22 Februar 2007

*Ein unabhängiger Kosovo müsse sich auch der eigenen Vergangenheit im Umgang mit Minderheiten stellen, fordert Stephan Müller*

Ein unabhängiger Kosovo, wie ihn der Ahtisaari-Vorschlag vorsieht, droht Kosovo-Albaner und Serben gegenüber zahlreichen ethnischen Minderheiten zu privilegieren. Letztere warten zudem weiterhin darauf, dass auch Verbrechen von albanischer Seite aufgearbeitet werden.

Die Kosovo-Albaner, die Vereinigten Staaten und die EU wollten es so: Der Kosovo soll unabhängig werden. Das Ziel ist jetzt zum Greifen nahe. Unter den Kosovo-Albanern wird man kaum einen Menschen finden, der nicht die Unabhängigkeit wünschte. Einige wollen sie mit Gewalt und sofort. Allerdings gibt es auch viele, die Angst vor der Unabhängigkeit haben, denn sie trauen es ihren eigenen Leuten (noch) nicht zu, dass sie einen unabhängigen Staat führen können. Mangelnde Erfahrung, Korruption, keine Aussicht auf eine Verbesserung der wirtschaftlichen Lage und ein zu großer Einfluss von Strukturen, die woanders als organisierte Kriminalität bezeichnet werden würden, sind die Hauptsorgen.

Noch größere Sorgen haben die Nicht-Albaner im Kosovo. Und das sind nicht nur die Serben, sondern auch die Roma, Ashkali, Ägypter, Türken, Bosniaken, Gorani und Kroaten. Sie befürchten, dass es für sie keinen Platz im Kosovo geben wird und sie fragen sich, wohin sie sollen, wenn es für sie keinen Platz im Kosovo gibt. Der Ahtisaari-Vorschlag hat diese Sorgen nur verstärkt, denn die Bedürfnisse und Forderungen all dieser ethnischen Gruppen wurden in dem Vorschlag nicht berücksichtigt. Wie auch - sie wurden ja auch nicht gefragt.

### *Verquerrer Denkansatz*

Mit einem verquerten Denkansatz, der bestimmten ethnischen Gruppen bestimmte Rechte zuschreibt, genau diese Rechte aber anderen ethnischen Gruppen zugleich vorenthält und den Ansatz, welcher auf einer Zivil- oder Bürgergesellschaft aufbaut, ignoriert, wird im Europa des 21. Jahrhunderts ein ethnisch definiertes, hierarchisches Kastensystem eingeführt. Mit diesem Anachronismus versucht man nun einen modernen, demokratischen und multi-ethnischen Staat aufzubauen. Ob das wohl gut geht?

Dass die ethnischen Minderheiten im Ahtisaari-Vorschlag nicht berücksichtigt worden sind, ist nur die zynische Höhepunkt der Politik der internationalen Staatengemeinschaft und der letzten Jahre. Es spiegelt auch das Verhältnis der Kosovo-Albaner und der serbischen Regierung zu diesen ethnischen Gruppen wider. Serbien reklamiert zwar, dass Kosovo Teil Serbiens sei, in den Verhandlungen ging es Serbien aber nur um die Rechte und Privilegien der Serben im

Kosovo. Eine moderne, demokratisch gesinnte Regierung hätte auch die Verantwortung für ihre anderen "ehemaligen" Staatsbürger übernommen und auch die Bedürfnisse und Forderungen der Roma, Ashkali, Ägypter, Türken, Bosniaken, Gorani und Kroaten vertreten.

#### *Alle zukünftigen Staatsbürger*

Und eine kosovo-albanische Regierung, die tatsächlich einen "demokratischen, multi-ethnischen" Kosovo schaffen möchte, hätte in den Verhandlungen auch die Bedürfnisse und Forderungen all ihrer "zukünftigen" Staatsbürger - der Roma, Ashkali, Ägypter, Türken, Bosniaken, Gorani und Kroaten und der Serben - vertreten. Und sie hätte nicht nur ein Gremium mit Angehörigen dieser Volksgruppen eingerichtet, dessen einzige Aufgabe darin besteht, die Vorschläge der Kosovo-Albaner abzunicken.

Internationale Vermittler, die tatsächlich an einem "multi-ethnischen" Kosovo, in dem alle ethnischen Gruppen gleichberechtigt leben können, interessiert gewesen wären, hätten gerade die Bedürfnisse und Forderungen dieser Gruppen aufnehmen müssen, da es sonst niemand tat - vor allem, weil die Vermittler von den Vereinten Nationen dazu auch den Auftrag bekommen hatten.

#### *Der eigenen Vergangenheit stellen*

Im Ausgleich für die Unabhängigkeit sollte es den Albanern und der internationalen Staatengemeinschaft ernst damit sein, eine moderne Gesellschaft im Kosovo aufzubauen: eine moderne Gesellschaft, in der die archaischen Gesellschaftsstrukturen unter den Kosovo-Albanern aufgebrochen, der Einfluss von informellen Strukturen zurückgedrängt wird und in der man sich endlich der eigenen Vergangenheit stellt: Nicht nur die Verbrechen, die an Albanern begangen wurden, sondern auch die Verbrechen, die Albaner an Angehörigen anderer ethnischer Gruppen seit 1999 begangen haben, müssen endlich aufgearbeitet werden. Man sollte endlich mit der Überführung und Verhaftung der Täter und Schreibtischtäter auf albanischer Seite beginnen. Dies ist eine Grundvoraussetzung für das Gelingen eines demokratischen, "multi-ethnischen" Kosovos.

Es gab und gibt so gut wie keine Gerichtsverfahren gegen die Täter dieser Verbrechen auf albanischer Seite. Zehntausende Menschen wurden aus ihren Häusern vertrieben. Hunderte ermordet. Hunderte verschwanden spurlos. Geschäfte, Wohnungen, Landbesitz wurden illegal okkupiert.

#### *Mörder laufen frei herum*

Mörder laufen frei herum, Menschen leben in Häusern, die andere Familien für sich gebaut hatten und aus denen sie von denen mit Gewalt vertrieben wurden, die jetzt darin leben. Andere verdienen ihr Geld durch Geschäfte, die sich jemand aufgebaut hat, der vielleicht jetzt in Serbien, Montenegro, Mazedonien oder Deutschland in einem Flüchtlingslager ohne Einkommen lebt; landwirtschaftliche Anbauflächen werden jetzt vom albanischen Nachbarn bebaut, während der Besitzer dieser Anbauflächen entweder von Lebensmittelhilfe im Nachbardorf oder irgendwo in Serbien lebt.

In sieben Jahren UN-Verwaltung blieb Gerechtigkeit für die meisten Minderheiten im Kosovo ein Traum. Die meisten Minderheitenangehörigen haben auch das Verhalten der internationalen

Streitkräfte im Sommer 1999 nicht vergessen, als die schlimmsten Verbrechen begangen worden sind. Wie z. B. das Roma-Viertel im Mitrovica, einst bewohnt von ca. 8000 Menschen, das von einem albanischen Mob unter den Augen und den Kameras der internationalen militärischen Schutztruppe für den Kosovo niedergebrannt wurde. Zahlreiche Menschen wurden dabei getötet.

#### *Roma leben in menschenunwürdigen Lagern*

Es ist auch ein Verbrechen, dass die UN-Verwaltung Roma, die 1999 aus ihren Häusern vertrieben worden sind, in menschenunwürdigen Lagern im Kosovo untergebracht hat, deren Boden extrem mit Blei verseucht war. Dies war den Behörden der Vereinten Nationen über Jahre hinweg bekannt. Doch erst nach sieben Jahren bequemte man sich dazu, sie in andere Lager zu übersenden; aber nicht in ihre ehemaligen Häuser, wie man vielleicht hätte annehmen können. Denn das Land gehört jetzt den Kosovo-Albanern und diese müssen zustimmen, wenn jemand in seinen Heimatort zurückkehren will.

Vor dem Krieg lebten bis zu 150.000 Roma, Ashkali und Ägypter im Kosovo. Jetzt sind es noch 35.000. In Prishtina alleine lebten vor dem Krieg geschätzt ca. 15.000, jetzt ca. 300. Ihre Häuser, ganze Siedlungen sind inzwischen von Albanern bewohnt. Illegal. Und ohne Mietzahlungen, aber mit Duldung der internationalen Staatengemeinschaft und der kosovo-albanischen Politiker.

#### *Minderheiten verlassen den Kosovo*

Bis zu 100.000 Serben und um die 100.000 Roma, Ashkali, Ägypter, Türken, Bosniaken, Gorani und Kroaten leben noch im Kosovo. Es sollte zu denken geben, dass während sieben Jahren UN-Verwaltung mehr Minderheitenangehörige den Kosovo verlassen haben, als Vertriebene in den Kosovo zurückgekehrt sind. Und warum und wie soll das in einem unabhängigen Kosovo besser werden?

Bis heute noch trauen sich nur wenige Minderheitenangehörige an der Universität in Prishtina zu studieren. Die Albaner haben ihre Universität in Prishtina, die Serben in Mitrovica. Aber wo sollen die anderen studieren?

#### *Kein Thema*

Dies alles war nicht Thema bei den Statusverhandlungen und findet sich auch nicht im Ahtisaari-Vorschlag berücksichtigt. Denn dem verqueren Verständnis des Verhandlungsteams nach ist der Kosovo erstmal für die Albaner und dann für die Serben da (denn ihnen gehört ja jetzt das Land). Dass das jetzt besser werden soll, nachdem mit dem Vorschlag von Ahtisaari kein Hindernis mehr auf dem Weg zur Unabhängigkeit existiert und der Kosovo ab Sommer 2007 unabhängig von Kosovo-Albanern regiert werden soll, kann nur ein Mensch glauben, der nicht daran interessiert ist, dass es anders wird.

Stephan Müller

Source: Der Standard  
<http://derstandard.at/?url=/?id=2778114>

### **Project Manager and Project Assistant**

The European Roma and Travellers Forum is looking for a Project Manager and a Project Assistant to set up its new subsidiary in Brussels.

#### **Job Description (Project Manager)**

- in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Forum, set up and maintain a functional office in Brussels,
- establish and maintain good working relations with the European Commission, Parliament and other EU institutions and national government representations,
- liaise with the national member organizations and the Secretariat in Strasbourg and keep them informed about relevant developments affecting Roma at EU level,
- in cooperation with the ERTF Secretariat, draft regular reports on specific policy areas,
- in cooperation with the Secretariat and the network members issue policy recommendations to the EU institutions on specific policy areas and policies affecting Roma,
- establish and maintain good working relations with civil society organizations working in Brussels, in particular with the Commission sponsored networks.

#### **Requirements**

- University degree in Social Sciences or Law,
- minimum of three years of experience in a similar position with a national NGO or public administration,
- knowledge and understanding of the situation of Roma in Europe,
- knowledge and understanding of EU politics, in particular on areas which particularly affect Roma,
- good communication and writing skills,
- professional fluency in English and good knowledge of Romani compulsory,
- additional language skills in particular of French will be considered as an asset.

#### **Job Description (Project Assistant)**

- assist the project manager in his/her daily duties,
- perform administrative tasks including book-keeping.

#### **Requirements**

- University degree in Social Sciences or Law or commensurate professional experience,
- professional fluency in English and good knowledge of Romani compulsory,
- additional language in particular of French and Dutch will be considered as an asset,
- flexibility and adaptability.

Candidates must be nationals of a Council of Europe member State and must be aged under 55 on the closing date of the vacancy notice.

Both positions are initially limited until 15 December 2007.

#### **Applications**

Interested persons should send their application together with a cover letter and CV outlining their interest and experience in English, French or Romani to:

European Roma and Travellers Forum  
c/o Council of Europe  
rue Toreau  
F - 67075 Strasbourg

E-mail: [ertf@ertf.org](mailto:ertf@ertf.org)

Letters of recommendation from Roma or Traveller NGOs as well as of recommendation from a former employer will be appreciated.

---

### **Part-time assistants on Human Rights, Social Cohesion and Culture**

The European Roma and Travellers Forum is looking for part-time assistants to support the work of its directorates Human Rights (Czech Republic), Social Cohesion (Romania) and Culture (Poland).

Under the direction of the directors of the directorates the assistants will be in charge of following up on any important developments in their field and assure a smooth communication flow between the directorates, the Forum's delegates and the Forum's central offices. They will also support the directors in administrative tasks and provide logistic support to the organisation of meetings.

Minimum requirements:

- Undergraduate studies in a relevant field such as social sciences, law or economics
- Good knowledge and experience on Roma issues
- Experience in drafting and writing of reports
- Administrative and logistic skills
- Good knowledge of English and Romani compulsory

The positions are on a consultancy basis (300 Euros per month) and do not constitute a full-time employment.

Interested persons should send their application (letter of motivation plus CV) to the

ERTF Secretariat at: [ertf@ertf.org](mailto:ertf@ertf.org)

For further information:  
European Roma and Travellers Forum  
Tel.: + 33 3 90 21 4331

---

Established in 2004, the European Roma and Travellers Forum is a international Roma umbrella organisation which gathers Romani organisations from all over Europe. Its aim is to promote the effective exercise by Roma and Travellers of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as protected by the legal instruments of the Council of Europe and other international legal instruments. A partnership agreement with the Council of Europe gives the Forum a unique status and makes it a prime interlocutor for the Council of Europe and national governments on issues affecting Roma communities.

ERTF Update is an information bulletin on Roma issues. The views represented in the articles and comments do not necessarily represent the view of the European Roma and Travellers Forum. For reactions and comments please write to [ertf@ertf.org](mailto:ertf@ertf.org).