

Charalampos Athanasiou

Minister of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights
Presidency of the Council of the European Union

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS OFFICE

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Dear Mr Athanasiou,

Subject: Amnesty International report on racist violence against Roma

Amnesty International would like to draw your attention to our new briefing, *"We ask for justice": Europe's failure to protect Roma from racist violence*, launched today, on International Roma Day (please find enclosed). The briefing reveals that discrimination, including hate motivated violence against Roma people and communities by the police, private individuals, and groups are widespread throughout the European Union (EU). It looks at emblematic cases in three countries - the Czech Republic, France and Greece - and highlights that the response of the authorities to date has been inadequate. Law enforcement agencies are failing to prevent attacks and to ensure the proper investigation of hate motivated crimes. At the same time, the racist attitudes entrenched within many police forces is often denied or left unaddressed.

For its part, the EU has been reluctant to take decisive action to address hate motivated violence against Roma. For example the issue was not addressed at the European Roma Summit last week where European leaders came together to renew their commitment to end discrimination against Roma.

We are also concerned that the provisions of the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia (2008/913/JHA) are insufficient to guarantee the thorough investigation of any alleged hate motivated crime. This is in contrast with the provisions of the EU Directive on victims' rights (2012/29/EU) which explicitly protects victims of crimes committed with a discriminatory motive.

Amnesty International calls on the EU to consider the findings from our briefing in order to strengthen its policies to combat discrimination and hate motivated violence. **In particular, we call on the Council of the EU to follow-up on the Council conclusions on combating hate crime in the EU from last December, and:**

- Ensure that the fight against discrimination and hate motivated violence features as a key objective in the future strategic guidelines on justice and home affairs to be adopted by the European Council
- Examine further whether the implementation of the provisions of the Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA effectively ensures that racist and xenophobic motives are properly unmasked and adequately addressed; and explore the need for new legislative and/or other policy measures to fill in the existing protection gaps
- Pay particular attention to the protection and rights of victims of hate crime in the context of the transposition of Article 22 of the Directive on victims' rights

We thank you for your attention and look forward to your response. We remain at your disposal to discuss further the issues raised in this letter and the new briefing of Amnesty International.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Nicolas J. Beger
Director
Amnesty International European Institutions Office