

Neo-Nazi movement against Roma in Hungary & Canadian Complicity

Violence and Discrimination

“In the last five years in Hungary, the establishment of vigilante groups and hate crimes against Roma and other minority groups has characterized a climate of increasing social and economic exclusion. Despite the adoption of European Union (EU) anti-discrimination regulations and laws, extremist organizations, private individuals, and state officials in Hungary continue to widely and openly discriminate against Roma at an alarming rate and through a variety of methods:

- State officials and members of mainstream parties often use racist public statements that incite hate against the Roma and other minority groups.
- Extreme right parties are consolidating their power. The most visible party is the Jobbik Party, whose 47 seats have made it the third largest group in the Hungarian Parliament. [Jobbik made more gains in April 2014 elections, winning over 20% of vote.]
- [...] recently established paramilitary extremist groups and organizations are increasingly using distinct anti-Roma rhetoric. These groups have organized anti-Roma rallies in several villages and cities. They wear special uniforms with Nazi or nationalistic symbols which create a threatening social environment. [...]
- Several instances of racially motivated crimes and violence by both extremists groups and civilians have been recorded by civil society organizations and the media, including the killing or injuring of Roma victims, the use of firearms, firebombs, grenades, and Molotov cocktails against Roma, and the humiliation of Roma children and adults.”

-- from “*Accelerating patterns of anti-Roma violence in Hungary*, Harvard School of Public Health,” February 2014, http://fxb.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2014/02/FXB-Hungary-Report_Released-February-4-2014.pdf

- **Further selection of articles and reports on violence and discrimination against Roma in Hungary can be found here:** <http://www.solidarityacrossborders.org/anti-roma-discrimination-in-hungary>

- **The following two organizations provide up-to-date news and reports on the situation of Roma in Hungary:**

European Roma Rights Centre

<http://www.errc.org/>

Has latest on anti-roma stuff in europe and sometimes specifically hungary

Hungarian Civil Liberties Union

<http://tasz.hu/en>

- **More background specifically around the situation of children can be obtained from the Chance for Children Foundation, www.cfef.hu**
- **“Without a Chance,” a documentary produced by the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union and released on January 7, 2014 can be viewed at <http://tasz.hu/en/romaprogram/without-chance-experiences-hclus-romaprogram>**

Systemic Discrimination: Selected Statistics

Unemployment

- A study carried out in Hungary in 2006 revealed that 80% of employers interviewed rarely or never employed Roma and that this was not dependent on the qualifications of Roma applicants.¹
- This is consistent with statistics from an EU survey in 2011 showing that 42% of Roma over 16 experienced discrimination when looking for work in the past five years.²
- A field researcher for a forthcoming European Union study, completed in October in the North-Eastern part of Hungary, found that “almost all (!) of our interviewees reported discrimination at the labor market. Typically, employees offered jobs but the applicants were told that the position had been filled if Roma applied.”³
- There is an important problem of unemployment or under-employment among Roma in Hungary. The employment rate of Roma was only 27%, out of which only 23% are permanently employed and 40% have work considered unstable. The employment rate of the general population is considerably higher – nearly twice as high – than the Roma population.⁴
- The 2011 EU survey found that only 26% of Roma men over 16 in Hungary have paid work. This rises to about 35% for over 20-year olds, but only 72% of these have full-time work. 39% of Roma men in Hungary consider themselves to be unemployed.⁵

Poverty

- The 2011 EU survey found that 82% of Roma households in Hungary are at risk of poverty.⁶
- Hunger, another key indicator of poverty, is high, with 36% of Roma households reporting that they could not afford enough food to meet needs at least once in the past month (more than three times higher in Roma as opposed to non-Roma households).
- “Severe material deprivation”, a composite indicator meaning that people live “under conditions constrained by a severe lack of resources”, is also high throughout Hungary, especially among the Roma population, where it reaches 92%.⁷
- Roma in Hungary often live in extremely poor housing conditions. 44% of Roma in Hungary

1 Gabor Hera, researcher, 4 November 2013.

2 “The situation of Roma in 11 EU member states: Survey results at a glance” FRA, 2011, p. 19 http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf

3 Letter by Gabor Hera, 4 November 2013.

4 Letter by Gabor Hera, 4 November 2013.

5 “Analysis of FRA Roma survey results by gender,” p.9-12. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2013. <http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ep-request-roma-women.pdf>

6 “The situation of Roma in 11 EU member states: Survey results at a glance” FRA, 2011, p. 24. At risk of poverty defined as “60% of national median equivalised disposable income”.

7 “The situation of Roma in 11 EU member states: Survey results at a glance” FRA, 2011 http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf

are living in households without basic amenities (defined as having at least one of indoor kitchen, indoor toilet, indoor shower/bath, electricity). Similarly, 56% of Roma in Hungary live in “deprived housing”, defined as “the household does not have piped water and/or no connection to the sewage system or a sewage tank, and/or does not have electricity”. Finally, Roma households tend to be over-crowded, with almost twice as many people occupying the same number of rooms relative to non-Roma households.⁸

Education

- Discrimination against Roma is very prevalent in Hungarian schools. In a 2009 survey, 39% of Roma in Hungary reported experiencing discrimination by school personnel in the previous five years.⁹
- 33% of Roma women drop out of school before the age of 16¹⁰.
- Only 22% of Roma in Hungary as opposed to 62% of non-Roma in Hungary finish upper secondary general or vocational education, which “is a pre-requisite to skilled employment and access to higher education.”¹¹

Canadian Complicity

When the Nemeth family arrived in Canada in 2012, the Canadian government was in the process of establishing Bill C-31, also known as the Refugee Exclusion Act. To overcome public opposition¹² to the harsh new rules, government officials stirred up anti-migrant sentiment, speaking of “bogus refugees” and “queue-jumpers”.

Jason Kenney was the Immigration Minister behind the market-friendly, anti-refugee changes to the immigration system. In his media campaign, he singled out Roma asylum-seekers, relying on racist stereotypes to make extravagant claims that the Roma were “abusing” Canada's refugee system and that “virtually none” of their claims were “valid”.¹³

A highly mediatized arrest of 40 Roma asylum-seekers, including children, on 5 December 2012, ushered in the new legislation (it came into effect on 15 December 2012). They and 45 others were labelled “**irregular arrivals**” (or “**designated foreign nationals**”) and subject to new rules which allows the government to jail designated individuals for six months without possibility of bail, and would make it more difficult for them to remain in Canada and to achieve long-term stability

8 “The situation of Roma in 11 EU member states: Survey results at a glance” FRA, 2011, p. 24-46
http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf

9 EU-MIDIS Main Results Report, FRA, 2009. pp 160-163

10 “Analysis of FRA Roma survey results by gender,” p.8. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2013. <http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ep-request-roma-women.pdf>

11 “The situation of Roma in 11 EU member states: Survey results at a glance” FRA, 2011, p. 17
http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf

12 See for example, “Protect Refugees from Bill C-31: Joint Statement”, <http://ccrweb.ca/en/protect-refugees-c31-statement>.

13 See for example, “Efforts to keep bogus Roma refugees out have failed: Jason Kenney”, *National Post*, April 22nd, 2004 <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/04/22/efforts-to-keep-bogus-roma-refugees-out-have-failed-jason-kenney/>; “Federal Government considers detaining Roma refugee claimants report suggests”, *Globe and Mail*, 18 August 2012, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/federal-government-considers-detaining-roma-refugee-claimants-report-suggests/article4487855/>; or “Kenney assertive on Roma refugees but critics argue the details”, *Macleans*, 14 December 2012, www2.macleans.ca/2012/12/14/kenney-assertive-on-roma-refugees-but-critics-argue-the-details/.

(permanent residence, family reunification).¹⁴

Hungary was among the first countries placed on the Minister's newly created “**safe country**” list. People from countries on this list (referred to as “**designated countries of origin**” or **DCOs**), have shorter timelines to complete their applications, are not allowed to appeal their refugee decisions, and must wait three years after their refugee claim is rejected before they can apply for a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRRA) - which in most cases means they will be deported before they can apply. Despite these considerable barriers and despite a government-created climate encouraging refugee board commissioners to view Roma claims with suspicion, in the first half of 2013, Hungary was still the third country by number of refugees accepted in Canada, with 183 Hungarian nationals accepted.¹⁵ This gives the lie to the Minister's claims that Hungary is a safe country.

The impact of the new regime was immediate: the first half of 2013 had the lowest acceptance rate for refugees in the history of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), 33% nationally.¹⁶

The Nemeth family's refugee claim was heard in this context, in May 2013. Moreover, the Nemeth family had the bad fortune to get **refugee board commissioner Anna Brychcy**. The Toronto Star reported in 2011¹⁷ that Brychcy, a Kenney appointee with no background in law or immigration¹⁸, accepted only 6.45 per cent of the cases before her in 2010. (The rest of the Nemeth family, who came later, had better luck with their board member; though their story was very similar, they were accepted.) The family was rejected, denied an appeal and denied access to a pre-removal risk assessment even a year later.

Fact Sheet compiled by Solidarity Across Borders
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¹⁴“Romanian Human Smuggling Ring Busted,” CBC, 5 December 2012,

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/romanian-human-smuggling-ring-busted-in-ontario-1.1292783>

¹⁵ IRB statistics for the Refugee Protection Division (RPD) for the first half of 2013, analysis by the Canadian Council for Refugees.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “Getting Asylum, the luck of the Draw?”, Nicholas Keung, Toronto Star, 4 March 2011.

http://www.thestar.com/news/investigations/2011/03/04/getting_asylum_theLuck_of_the_Draw.html

¹⁸ “Minister Kenney Announces Appointments and Designation to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada,” 10 September 2009, www.marketwired.com/press-release/minister-kenney-announces-appointments-designation-immigration-refugee-board-canada-1043079.htm