

**Date:**

**To:**

**Subject: Stop the violence against Roma in Italy**

Dear Mr. or Mrs.....

**(Choose heading 1, 2 or 3 as applicable)**

- 1. As representatives of a non-governmental organizations who's aim is to combat racism, exclusion and other forms of discrimination, we firmly condemn the recent hateful attacks against the Roma community in Italy.**
- 2. As citizen of (country) I firmly condemn the recent hateful attacks against the Roma community in Italy.**
- 3. As concerned individual I firmly condemn the recent hateful attacks against the Roma community in Italy.**

Last week several Roma settlements near Naples were attacked and set on fire by residents from neighboring communities. Hundreds of Roma are reported to have fled their settlements for fear of further attacks or have been relocated by the authorities for security reasons. Immigrants from Romania, in particular those of Roma origin, are widely blamed by politicians and in the media for an increase in crime in Italy.

The Italian police have arrested hundreds of suspected illegal immigrants in raids across the country. Expulsion orders were issued for several dozen of those detained. The Italian concern about immigrant crime has tended to focus on the Roma. Meanwhile the Italian government is preparing a controversial anti-immigration law. It is expected that illegal immigration will be made a criminal offence, aimed mainly against Romanian immigrants and eastern European Roma people.

The images of the attack on the Roma camp in the Napels suburb of Ponticelli are reminiscent of the fire bombings or asylum seekers centers in Rostock, Solingen and many other places in East-Germany during the early nineties; crowds of people standing around, either uncaring or cheering on the violence, while the police is nowhere to be found. Prompted by the arrest of a Roma teenager allegedly attempting to kidnap a six-month-old baby in Naples, which echoes the old antisemitic blood libel, and further incited by governmental incitement against Roma and migrants, a nation-wide hysteria and a pogrom-like atmosphere is taking over Italy.

Roma and migrants are being deprived of their human dignity, living in an increasing intimidating, hostile and offensive environment that has been created not just by the Italian media, but also by the government itself. The Italian government has seriously violated the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC), which was unanimously adopted by the Member States of the European Union in the year 2000. The directive prohibits discrimination on ground of race and ethnic origin and covers the fields of inter alia housing, social protection and employment.

**(Choose closing paragraph 1 or 2 as applicable)**

1. We urge the member states of the European Union, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the Participating states of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations to take all the necessary measures to stop the persecution of the Roma in Italy, the racist campaign carried out through the media, the attempts to bypass the international laws against racism and for the protection and equal treatment of all citizens in the EU.

2. **(if send to your minister of foreign affairs, your congressman, your foreign secretary or the U.S. Helsinki Commission:)**

We urge you to use your influence and ask the member states of the European Union, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the Participating states of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations to take all the necessary measures to stop the persecution of the Roma in Italy, the racist campaign carried out through the media, the attempts to bypass the international laws against racism and for the protection and equal treatment of all citizens in the EU.

Yours sincerely,

Signed by: