

PROJECT ON ETHNIC RELATIONS

The Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) was founded in 1991 in anticipation of the serious interethnic conflicts that were to erupt following the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. PER conducts programs of high-level intervention and dialogue and serves as a neutral mediator in several major disputes in the region. PER also conducts programs of training, education, and research at international, national, and community levels.

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R e p o r t

MARCH 13-14, 2000



BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA

ROMA AND THE GOVERNMENT
IN SLOVAKIA: THE DEBATE
OVER MIGRATION

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PREFACE

Whether because of racial persecution or economic deprivation, many Roma from Slovakia have attempted to seek new lives in Western countries. The consequences of Romani emigration have been great, not only for the Roma but for Slovakia as a whole. Increasing numbers of Romani refugees have given the international community reason to increase pressure on the Slovak government to improve the lives of the Roma. Indeed, improvement of the situation of the Roma has become a stipulation for accession to the European Union. Romani emigration has also become part of an intense debate concerning the free movement of people in an expanding European Union.

The response by most countries to the arrival of Romani refugees has been less than cordial. In most cases, they have been repatriated immediately upon their arrival. Furthermore, in order to curtail the number of Romani refugees, some destination countries have imposed temporary visa restrictions on all Slovak citizens.

Why are the Roma leaving, and what should be done to improve their situation in Slovakia?

In September 1999, the government announced a program to improve the situation of Romani communities. In May 2000, a second, more detailed strategy was introduced, designating a portion of the fiscal-year budget for specific Romani projects. Nonetheless, many Roma believe that the current programs and policies have been insufficient. Some charge that the government is not fully devoted to carrying out its announced intentions, and others have questioned the effectiveness of



Marek Balaz and Anna Koptova.



Vincent Danihel and Jan Fizik.

government programs and policies in actually improving life in Romani communities. The government insists, however, that its programs and policies do provide a basis for solutions, and it points out that ministries have been assigned specific tasks concerning Romani education, employment, and housing.

On March 13 and 14, 2000, in Bratislava, Slovakia, the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER), together with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), convened a roundtable discussion to address the issues surrounding the emigration of Roma. The goal was to encourage government officials and Romani representatives to share their perspectives on programs and policies affecting the Roma and thus to bolster their efforts to ameliorate the plight of the Roma.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Romani participants organized a working group that was to formulate a unified approach to the most serious issues involving their communities. One of its goals was to clarify the Roma's views on migration and on their situation in Slovakia. A few weeks after the roundtable, this group met in Poprad, Slovakia, and drew up a statement demanding that the Roma's rights to security and freedom of movement be recognized and that significant changes be made in the treatment of the Romani community by the government and by the media as well.

PER's cooperation with ODIHR's Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues was an invaluable asset in the organization of the meeting. PER and ODIHR will continue to support future initiatives of the working group.

This report summarizes the proceedings of the roundtable discussion and also presents the working group's statement. It was prepared by Ann Marie Grocholski, PER program officer and assistant to the executive director, and it was edited by Robert A. Feldmesser, PER's senior editor. The participants in the meeting have not reviewed the text, for which PER assumes full responsibility.

Livia Plaks, *Executive Director*
Princeton, New Jersey
August 2000

INTRODUCTION

The issue of migration has both political and social repercussions for the Roma and their countries of origin. Since improvement in the situation of the Roma is one of the conditions for accession to the European Union, Slovakia and other East European countries fear that their accession may be threatened by the increasing numbers of Roma who are leaving based on claims of human rights violations. For the Roma, leaving has been anything but an easy solution to their problems. In many cases, the consequences of migration have been adverse both for those who leave their home countries, as well as for those who remain. In the countries to which they have migrated, Roma are often denigrated by sensationalist media attention, their asylum claims are often not taken seriously, and in many cases they are deported immediately. Meanwhile, in their home countries, members of the majority population often blame the Roma for the inconvenience of the visa requirements imposed on them by the countries where other Roma have sought asylum.

What factors have instigated the migration of Roma to other countries? Are they political, social or economic factors? What is the attitude of the Roma toward migration? What must be done to resolve the factors causing migration? Representatives of the Slovak police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office of the Commissioner of the Slovak Government Responsible for Solutions to the Problems of the Roma, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization on Migration (IOM), and Romani nongovernmental organizations were brought together to discuss these and related questions, particularly as they applied to Slovakia at the roundtable in Bratislava.

THE RISE OF STRICTER IMMIGRATION POLICIES

In order to understand why migration is a critical issue for discussion in relation to the Roma, it is necessary to provide some contextual background. Countries that signed the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees are obligated to provide for the protection of refugees. The EU has pledged to develop a common position concerning refugees within the European Convention on Human Rights, a position reflecting the humanitarian principles in the Geneva Convention. In her introductory remarks, PER's executive director said that a common approach to the protection of refugees by the EU is crucial, espe-

cially in the case of the Roma. She pointed out that the OSCE, in its Copenhagen Document of 1990, required participating states to take measures to protect Roma against “any acts that constitute incitement to violence” and against “threat or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence.” Unfortunately, steps to achieve these goals have yet to be taken. This has become most evident in the negative response of several countries to Romani asylum-seekers.

The rise in the number of asylum-seekers in European countries has coincided with the imposition of new restrictions on immigration by several West European countries, she continued. Such restrictions, together with other laws and procedures designed to reduce immigration, threaten to undermine the basic principles of refugee protection. One of the most salient examples is illustrated by a 1999 report by the Council of Europe’s Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography. According to this report, in July 1999 Italian authorities announced their intention to treat persons, including Roma, who were fleeing from Kosovo as illegal immigrants instead of providing them with protection as refugees.¹

Approximately 366,000 people applied for asylum in Western Europe last year. Although the majority of them came from war-torn Yugoslavia, the small number of Roma from Central and Eastern Europe has received the most negative attention. This has been especially the case with Romani asylum seekers from Slovakia. A representative of the Slovak consular department of migration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told the group that approximately 2,000 Roma from his country had applied for asylum in 1998. (Official estimates of the total number of Roma living in Slovakia are between 420,000 – 500,000².) The majority of them had gone to Great Britain, but toward the end of the year, several had attempted to enter Belgium, Finland, and the Netherlands.

Using Finland as an example, a representative of ODIHR discussed the common reaction of countries to Romani asylum-seekers. During June 1999, more than 1,500 Slovak Roma requested asylum in Finland. The Finnish government denied the right of asylum to all of them. Then, on July 6, 1999, Finland introduced a new visa requirement for all citizens of Slovakia, fearing what officials called “another wave” of Romani asylum-seekers. According to this participant, Great Britain, Norway, and Belgium have also imposed visa requirements on Slovakia because of the influx of Romani asylum-seekers to their countries.³

Belgium has been one of the most active countries in its attempts to rid the country of Romani asylum-seekers. In 1999, Belgian authorities returned 74 Romani asylum-seekers to Slovakia. According to reports, many of them had asylum claims pending in court. In the spring of 2000, Belgian authorities announced plans to again deport Roma to Slovakia. On April 18, a Belgian newspaper reported that a “New Collective Expulsion of Gypsies” was being planned.⁴ In addition, the government imposed visa requirements on all Slovak citizens.

The response of Great Britain to increasing numbers of immigrants provides another example of the efforts of some countries to become less attractive to asylum-seekers in general. Great Britain has been the second largest recipient of asylum-seekers in Europe (Germany being the first). Approximately 70,000 people applied for asylum there in 1999, compared to 5,000 before the end of communism in 1989. Indeed, this was a 53 percent increase even from 1998.⁵

Laws and procedures designed to reduce immigration threaten to undermine the basic principles of refugee protection.

In an attempt to curtail the number of immigrants flowing into the country, Great Britain has added new restrictions to its immigration policy. Under the previous policy, asylum-seekers had received welfare benefits upon their arrival in the country, and local governments supported those seekers who were awaiting a decision. These benefits could be as much as \$200 a week per family. Officials maintain this level of support is truly taxing the social welfare system. Now, instead of cash benefits, asylum-seekers receive vouchers that are redeemable for approximately \$60 a week. Official decisions regarding whether or not to grant asylum status have also been expedited.

While adding restrictions to immigration policies in order to avoid the economic cost of an increased number of refugees is understandable, imposing visa requirements on another country because of a little more than 1,000 Romani asylum-seekers out of a total of 70,000 asylum-seekers, as in the case of Great Britain, seems quite extreme to many Romani activists.

Why does a small number of Roma generate such a negative response from the countries where they are seeking asylum? Sensationalist media

attention backed by right-wing political parties has fed a growing public perception that asylum-seekers are abusing the benefits offered to them. The media's portrayal of Roma as beggars in the streets, accompanied by

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their young children, has built public resentment toward Romani asylum-seekers. In a recent news report, the British Home Office minister has been quoted as saying, "We have a situation at the moment where we have manifestly unfounded claims that are coming into the system, undermining its integrity. They [the Roma] are seeking

recourse to a better life in this country through economic migrancy, and the system can't sustain them."⁶

THE PERSPECTIVES OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS

The following sections of this report highlight the different perspectives of the participants of the roundtable discussion toward Romani migration and their suggestions for improving the lot of the Roma in Slovakia. The discussion provided a venue through which Slovak government officials, international experts and Romani representatives from Slovakia participated in a constructive dialogue which aimed to clarify why the Roma are leaving Slovakia. During the first day of discussion, representatives of international organizations and governmental institutions discussed the relations between police and the Roma, skinhead violence, discrimination, and low socioeconomic status as factors contributing to the migration of Roma from Slovakia. Different forms of migration and the legitimacy of Romani requests for asylum in the context of international laws were also topics of discussion.

Racial violence has become a defining feature of the Romani experience. The deputy head of the Slovak police department offered a picture of the situation facing the Roma in Slovakia. The Roma, he said, do not trust the police to protect them, and this mistrust is exacerbated by the rise of skinhead violence against Romani communities. He explained that skinhead organizations cannot be prohibited from meeting publicly, because they have the right to freedom of assembly. Although the Ministry of the

Interior does not register these organizations, he estimated that there are about ten of them, with a total of about 1,000 members. The police are trying to pay more attention to them, especially to their public gatherings. He pointed out that, although the Roma have been victims of skinhead violence and of the actions of other extremist groups, the victims have also included foreigners.

In order to fully understand the magnitude of the Roma's persecution, it is important to identify, in addition to skinhead groups, other perpetrators of violence toward them. Several Romani participants declared that, in some cases, it has been the police who were actually the perpetrators of violence. Such cases naturally reinforce the Roma's mistrust not only of the police but of government authorities in general. Of course, violence against the Roma violates their fundamental rights to life and security.

A participant representing the UNHCR pointed out that the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as "a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable to, or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." He explained that direct persecution by the state and failure of a state to adequately protect its citizens from persecution are forms of persecution that warrant the granting of asylum to individuals who have fled that state.

Despite the fact that several Romani communities and individuals have been victims of discrimination and violence, Roma who seek asylum in other countries are usually denied refugee status. The defense of this policy has been that the Roma seem to be fleeing economic deprivation, not persecution. According to several government officials from asylum countries, since the Roma come from what are now considered democratic countries, it is the responsibility of their governments to protect them. Several Romani activists argued, however, that this reasoning does not take into account the fact that discrimination continues to exist in democratic countries, even though their laws and constitutions forbid it. One Romani participant said that governments often lack the political will to see to it that such laws are enforced.

A representative of ODIHR who is also a Romani activist observed that migration has historically been common among several ethnic groups, especially when they face conflict and danger. Is this not true of the

Slovak Roma? he asked. Are their lives threatened in this country? A report issued by the UNHCR on the conditions facing the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe stated clearly that the Roma may well be able to substantiate refugee claims based on severe discrimination on ethnic grounds. The report also said, “the fact that the reasons for their departure from countries may also include economic elements does not mean that their refugee claims hold no merit. Asylum claims must be assessed individually to establish if the discrimination experienced amounts to persecution.”⁷

He then turned the discussion toward divergent opinions of Romani migration. In doing so, he noted that there are two different perceptions of migration, “spontaneous” and “organized.” Both convey different connotations. According to this participant, “spontaneous” migration refers to people who leave for security reasons or in order to find a better life for themselves. This is viewed in a more or less positive light. “Organized” migration, on the other hand, implies something illegal, perhaps some kind of underground organization behind the movement.

Several government officials have asserted that Romani migration is indeed “organized,” and they offer statistical evidence for this assertion. In 1999, the number of Roma who emigrated to Finland increased from 12 during one month to 714 four months later. It is highly unlikely, said the participant, that such an increase was spontaneous. Nevertheless, he added, the Roma should not be intimidated by this presumption. Rather, they should speak openly about the reasons for migration, whether “spontaneous” or “organized,” because in that way they will begin to identify solutions. Is it possible, he asked, that the recent movement of the Roma is not a new phenomenon but is part of a historical pattern? By searching for the true causes of the migration of the Roma, one will be able to infer legitimate solutions.

A representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs continued the discussion by highlighting what she considers to be the root causes of the problems facing the Roma in Slovakia. Since 1989, she said, the Roma in Slovakia have suffered from high levels of unemployment, poverty, poor health conditions, and violence. In some areas of Slovakia, unemployment among the Roma is 90 or even 100 percent. Combined with a social welfare system that does not provide an incentive to work, this has caused the Roma to become increasingly marginalized. She suggested that there are two main reasons for this high level of unemployment: dis-

crimination in the labor market and a lack of education. Discrimination in the labor market has been officially addressed in the Czech Republic, she said, but not yet in Slovakia. But, since the most vulnerable groups in the labor market are those who have had little education, the main solution to the Roma’s problems in Slovakia must be education, she concluded.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY EXPERTS AND OFFICIALS: ARE THERE SOLUTIONS FOR THE ROMA?

Participants offered a number of recommendations for actions that they believed could improve the situation of the Roma in Slovakia.

The representative of the police described a police-training program that was initiated by the Slovak government in 1999. In response to the increase in the number of asylum-seekers to Finland that was mentioned earlier, the government organized a committee with members coming from several different ministries, including foreign affairs, interior, and education. This committee has been meeting periodically to devise measures to reduce migration. The police-training program was one of the main outcomes of this committee’s deliberations. The goal of the program is to increase the confidence of the Roma, as well as of the rest of the population, in the police’s ability to protect their communities. This participant claimed that the police are being made increasingly aware of the need to prevent incidents of racially motivated crimes, and there is evidence that racial violence is at least not increasing.

By searching for the true causes of the migration of the Roma, one will be able to infer legitimate solutions.

A participant pointed out that the migration of Roma is not an issue only for Slovakia; but rather, it affects the region as a whole. He mentioned that at a European Commission meeting in October 1999, delegates discussed the necessity for uniform asylum policies and procedures. Such uniformity would ensure that one country would not impose greater restrictions on another country in response to incidents of mass migration. The participant suggested that it is crucial, with the impending enlargement of the EU, that countries in

Europe have the same policies and procedures for asylum-seekers.

Another participant re-stated that education is vital to the improvement of the social situation of the Roma. For most Roma, an inadequate education is the first step toward continued impoverishment and marginalization.

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She urged that the school system be evaluated and that programs be implemented to increase the educational attainment of the Roma. This participant also encouraged Romani organizations to work together in promoting a common initiative to improve the education of their people and the lives of their

communities. She suggested that a specific meeting be organized in which Romani organizations come together to agree upon a common initiative for education.

THE ROMANI VIEWPOINT

The second day of discussion was reserved for the Romani participants to provide them with an opportunity to share their perspectives about migration, and to respond to the observations made by the other participants on the previous day. During the discussion, the Romani participants expressed their concerns regarding the consequences of migration on Romani communities at home and abroad; they set forth what they considered to be the primary causes of migration; and they agreed on a uniform approach to the resolution of these issues.

To begin with, several Romani participants objected to the imposition of visa requirements on Slovakia by Finland, Great Britain, and Belgium, which they said has been detrimental to Romani communities. According to one participant, people blame the Roma for the inconvenience of visa requirements, instead of recognizing the dangers and injustices in society that have forced so many Roma to leave. Other Romani participants pointed out that both the negative response to Romani asylum-seekers by governments and the pejorative stereotypes presented by the media have damaged the image of the Roma on an international scale. They said it was therefore incumbent upon the Roma to decide how they should respond to the issues involved in migration.

In their discussion of the causes of Romani migration, the Romani participants agreed that these causes included the effects of harmful stereotypes on the security of Romani communities, anti-Roma discrimination, violations of fundamental human rights, and the failure of the government to fulfill its obligation to protect the country's Romani population.

As an example of the misconceptions held by the public concerning the Roma, one Romani participant said that the public believes that some kind of Romani organization illegally arranged an "exodus" of Roma to other countries. But no organization is necessary to encourage the Roma to leave, he said. The Roma simply want what is best for themselves and their children. In many respects, migration is a security issue: the Roma want to live in safety.

In response to the suggestions that had been made by some of the experts that the Roma be given increased opportunities for education, another participant stated that education would not be enough to improve the lives of the Roma in Slovakia. Even an educated Rom faces discrimination at every level of society. Furthermore, he explained, many Roma reject the education provided by the majority because it does not include training in their own language and culture. In contrast to other citizens, the Roma have not been granted fundamental rights and freedoms.

Several Roma responded strongly to the statements by government officials and international experts about Romani migration. One Rom said that these statements reflected the ideas of the majority population; they did not represent the actual needs of Romani communities.

The problems of the Roma are the result of the lack of a political voice in society.

The problems of the Roma, he went on, are not a result of economic deficiencies but rather of the lack of a political voice in society. Several other participants concurred with this point, and they added that the attitudes of government officials toward the Roma have themselves contributed to the migration of the Roma. This was shown, for example, by the government's failure to fully implement a strategy to improve the situation of the Roma. Another participant, though not disagreeing, encouraged his fellow participants not to disregard the economic problems of the Roma. The economic marginalization of the Roma, he said, is part of the reason for their lack of decision-making powers in society.

On the other hand, said a Romani participant, the Roma's lack of political representation is also part of the reason why their economic and other needs are not being addressed. However, he pointed out, since the Roma are marginalized in every society, emigrating from Slovakia is not a solution. Instead, efforts must be made to create changes within Slovakia, politically and socially. Such changes require political will. These changes would be facilitated if the Roma were given more opportunities to cooperate with the government in creating solutions to their own problems. Increasing the number of Roma in the police forces is one example of an effective form of cooperation, he suggested.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE ROMA: DETERMINING SOLUTIONS FOR THEIR COMMUNITIES

By way of summary, one of the participants from ODIHR suggested that the political will of the government together with increased participation by the Roma in the political process were necessary for sustainable solutions to be found. The Roma should have an integral role in creating a comprehensive government policy that addresses not only migration, but all of the problems facing the Roma.

A Romani participant maintained that prejudice against the Roma can be eradicated only by promoting a more positive image of the Roma both in Slovakia and abroad. This would have to begin with reforms in the media. Not only should the media promote a more positive image of Romani culture, said this participant; the Roma should also participate in a broad initiative to raise awareness of the problems facing them in Slovakia.

The same participant from ODIHR emphasized that it is not enough for advocates and NGOs to simply express concern for the Roma; they must take action. He said that it was clear that a crisis provoked the flight of Roma from Kosovo, but what about the emigration of Roma from Slovakia? The situation in Slovakia needs to be thoroughly assessed in order to determine the forces that have caused so many Roma to leave. If the situation could be clearly defined, new and legitimate policies in Slovakia could be formulated.

According to reports issued by UNHCR, this participant continued, the Roma may well be able to substantiate refugee claims based on severe dis-

crimination on ethnic grounds. Unfortunately, countries such as Finland have not applied this judgment to their immigration policies toward the Roma. He concluded his statement by calling on officials in countries where the emigration of Roma has been particularly high to take steps to thoroughly assess the causes.

Overall, the Romani participants argued that the emigration of Roma from Slovakia was justified by the social disadvantages and lack of security that many Roma experienced there. Many also agreed that these problems are not unique to Slovakia, but are common throughout Europe. If one examines the international political environment, suggested one Romani participant, it is evident that racism and discrimination against the Roma exist not only in Slovakia, but in the whole of Europe. Thus, solutions have to be implemented at all levels—international, national, and local.

The Roma should have an integral role in creating a comprehensive government policy that addresses not only migration, but all of the problems facing the Roma.

THE WORKING GROUP OF ROMA

Romani participants agreed to become a “working group” that would draw up a statement on migration to be disseminated among government officials and to the media. Upon this decision, the Romani participants offered suggestions as to what the goals and outcomes of their work should be. Some recommended that the statement point out that the problems spurring migration are not only societal but political as well. In doing so, it must show how the government has failed to make sufficient improvements in the situation of the Roma. Following these critical remarks, they said, the statement should outline proposals for concrete solutions.

The participants discussed some of the most prominent issues to be covered in the document. Several stressed the importance of drawing attention to the negative influence of the media in promoting stereotypes. In addition, the participants concurred that the document should describe how skinhead violence has created a precarious life for Romani individuals as well as entire communities. Furthermore, it is crucial to empha-

size that repeated acts of racism and discrimination toward Romani communities is in violation of the ratified international treaties on human rights and the Slovak constitution. All of the issues illustrated by the statement, they said, could be presented not only relative to Slovakia, but in an international context as well.

Another Romani participant suggested that the aim of their work could be to define and analyze the situation facing the Roma in Slovakia as compared to other minorities. The working group could also go one step further and organize itself politically to become an advocate for Romani communities in Slovakia, while offering practical solutions to the problems these communities face. In order to accomplish these goals, said this participant, the working group should cooperate with government officials.

Representatives of PER offered to assist the group in taking the next steps.

The participants then divided themselves into four subgroups, each with three to six members. Each subgroup appointed one member who would submit the results of its work to the chair of the whole group. Another was designated to edit the statement. The final statement is to consist of five sections: an introduction, a summary of human rights abuses, an analysis of unemployment as a cause of migration, the impact of the media, and statements of Roma from regions where migration is highest. The statement is to be completed by autumn 2000.

At a meeting of the working group in Poprad, Slovakia, on April 8, 2000, the following preliminary memorandum, acting as a preface to the forthcoming statement, was drafted.

The Memorandum of the Working Group of Roma from Slovakia on the Migration of Roma

We recognize every Slovak citizen's right to seek political asylum when politically or racially persecuted. Emigration is a historic phenomenon common to twentieth century Europe. In Slovakia's past, citizens attempted to flee the country when their individual security, human rights or political rights were threatened, especially during times of war and political oppression.

Similarly, the emigration of Roma from Slovakia is a result of racial persecution, discrimination and the government's failure to protect their human rights. Furthermore, their rights for ethnic development, within economic and social realms, have been neglected. Such infringements upon their fun-

damental human rights have given the Roma cause to seek asylum in other countries.

We reject the notion that Romani communities have emigrated from Slovakia for solely economic reasons. Romani emigration is not simply a social phenomenon; on the contrary, it is the consequence of long-lasting, political and ethnic discrimination. Society fails to recognize the existence of discrimination against the Roma. Instead, their focus is on how mass movements of the Roma are organized, rather than the actual causes of their emigration.

We believe that the apathetic response of some government officials and the police toward racial violence by skinheads, whether it is directed at the Roma or other citizens, is truly unjust. We condemn cooperative efforts among skinhead groups and specific political parties which aim to force entire Romani communities to leave.

Similarly, we are disturbed by the position of some EU countries toward Romani asylum seekers. We consider their policies toward Slovakia in reaction to Romani asylum seekers as incongruous with principles of human rights present in several international treaties.

We implore Slovak political leaders and citizens to adhere to the following demands:

- *Slovak governmental institutions should publicly condemn racist attitudes and violence toward Romani communities. Without political condemnation of such acts, the situation of the Romani minority in Slovakia continues to deteriorate.*
- *Legislation prohibiting discrimination against the Roma must be established. Furthermore, punishment for racially motivated crimes should be strictly enforced.*
- *The state authorities, the police and the justice system must abide by the rule of law and treat the Roma as equal, Slovak citizens.*
- *Government authorities should not describe the emigration of Roma from Slovakia as unjustified, or as solely a reaction to the Roma's low economic status.*
- *Government agencies should publish particular cases of unfounded claims for asylum, if there is evidence of such.*
- *The media should be encouraged to produce a more positive image of the Romani minority.*

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Romani Participants from Slovakia

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Jozef Cervenak, Roma Gemer

Jaroslav Drapak, Civic Association for the Emancipation and Integration of Roma

Igor Duzda, Slovak Radio, Programs for Minorities

Ladislav Fizik, Roma Foundation for an Improved Life in Slovakia

Emil Gombar, Civic Association for Unemployment

Anna Jurova, Academy of Sciences

Ingrid Kapelova, Civic Association of Slovak Romani Women

Jan Kopnický, International Romani Union (ROI)

Anna Koptova, Foundation “Kesaj”

Jarmila Kotlarova, Director of Romani “Ternipen” Youth Center

Rene Luzica, Center for Documents and Publicity, Slovak TV (STV)

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Jozef Ravasz, Science and Art Association of Roma in Slovakia, Party for the Protection of Roma Rights in Slovakia

Ladislav Richter, Civic Association for the Emancipation and Integration of Roma

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Edit Bauer, Representative, Ministry of Social Affairs, Slovakia

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Mirek Karas, Representative, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovakia

Risto Laakkonen, Representative, Ministry of Labor, Police and Migration Affairs, Finland

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OTHER PER PUBLICATIONS

- *Romanian-American Symposium on Inter-Ethnic Relations (1991)*
- *The Romanies in Central and Eastern Europe: Illusions and Reality (1992)*
- *Nationality Policy in the Russian Federation (1992)*
- *Interethnic Relations in Serbia/Yugoslavia: Alternatives for the Future (1993)*
- *The Media of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union: Reporting on Interethnic Relations (1994)*
- *Managing Ethnic Conflict: The Kona Statement (1994)*
- *Countering Anti-Roma Violence in Eastern Europe: The Snagov Conference and Related Efforts (1994)*
- *Ethnonationalism: Fears, Dangers, and Policies in the Post-Communist World (1995)*
- *Slovakia Roundtable in the United States (1995)*
- *Democratic Processes and Ethnic Relations in Yugoslavia (1995)*
- *Russia and Eastern and Central Europe: Old Divisions and New Bridges (1996)*
- *Second Slovakia Roundtable (1996)*
- *Ethnic Relations: A Selected Bibliography (1996)*
- *Reporting in a Post-Conflict Environment: Bosnian and Croat Journalists Meet (1996)*
- *The Media and the Roma in Contemporary Europe: Facts and Fictions (1996)*
- *The Roma in the Twenty-First Century: A Policy Paper (1997)*
- *Prevention of Violence and Discrimination Against the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe (1997)*
- *Enhancing Regional Security: Russian and Central European Perspectives (1997)*
- *The New York Roundtable: Toward Peaceful Accommodation in Kosovo (1997)*
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- *Toward Community Policing: The Police and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary (2000)*
- *Albanians and Their Neighbors: Unfinished Business (2000)*

NOTES

- ¹ Tsilevich, Boris. *Restrictions on Asylum in the Member States of the Council of Europe and the European Union*. Council of Europe. December 21, 1999.
- ² Vasecka, Michal. "The Roma." *Slovakia 1998-1999: A Global Report on the State of Society*. The Institute of Public Affairs. Bratislava. 1999.
- ³ Please note: Finland, on July 16, 2000, and Belgium, on August 1, 2000, revoked their previously enforced visa restrictions for citizens of Slovakia. However, both countries have declared that if another "wave" of Romani asylum-seekers occurs, the restrictions will be reinstated.
- ³ European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) letter to Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, April 2000.
- ⁴ UNHCR Statistics: *Trends in Asylum Applications in Europe in 1999*.
- ⁵ Lyall, Sarah, "Britain Raises Barriers High Against Asylum Seekers." *The New York Times*. April 3, 2000.
- ⁶ UNHCR. *Guidelines Relating to the Eligibility of Slovak Roma Asylum Seekers. An analysis of the conditions in the country of origin, and the application of UNHCR criteria for granting refugee status*. February 10, 1998.
- ⁷ UNHCR. *Monthly asylum applications lodged in European countries 1999 – Origin Slovakia*.