

Committee: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

Issue: Combating discrimination against Roma people around the world

Student Officer: Artemis Tsapa

Position: Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Artemis Tsapa and I have the great honor to serve as a Co-Chair of the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee of the 4th DSTMUN.

First of all, I would like to congratulate you all for your participation in this conference. Through your participation, not only will you have the chance to extend your knowledge on issues on which you will later debate upon, but you will also be able to socialize, as well as ameliorate your English.

The issue of "Combating discrimination against Roma people around the world" might seem confusing at first, however, I am sure you will be able to debate on the matter successfully!

This Study Guide aims at helping you understand the topic better by providing you with the basic information. So as to understand the topic, please study the guide meticulously, yet make some research of your own to find out more about your country's view on the matter.

Do not hesitate to contact me via email at artemis.tsapa@gmail.com for any questions that may arise.

I am looking forward to the conference!

Sincerely,

Artemis Tsapa

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The Romani people migrated from India 1500 years ago, and approximately 900 years ago they arrived in Europe and spread across the Balkan region. Today, more than 10 million Romani people live in Europe, making up one of Europe's largest minority groups.

There are multiple examples of discrimination Romani people have been facing the past few centuries. For instance, during the Holocaust, approximately 250,000 - 500,000 Romani people were killed due to being considered «racially inferior». They were marked with a «Z» in front of the number they were tattooed with upon arrival to the concentration camps and were killed soon after, whether due to exhaustion and bad living conditions or due to the gas chambers. During World War Two, communist nations accused the Roma people of "assimilation", and sterilized Romani women to lower their birth rate and minimize reproduction.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also significantly impacted the lives of the Roma people. Primarily, health measures proposed by governments are inadequate and insufficient for Roma people, whereas proper health aid is only provided to citizens covered by insurance, which many Romani people do not have.

Moreover, online learning has led to a large number of Roma children to temporarily leave school due to limited or no access to technology and is expected to cause a rise in the already existing dropout rates amongst those communities.

Furthermore, Roma people are also being falsely presented as a public health threat by many political figures. Due to their inability to follow some imposed health measures, such as social distancing, they are seen as irresponsible and undisciplined, exacerbating the already existing anti-Roma sentiments.

Roma people, mainly working in low-wage jobs or in the cultural sector have been seriously damaged financially since the focus of governments during the pandemic has been put on other more profitable sectors.

During the past few decades, there has been a wave of violent attacks against Roma people, such as the murder of three Romani people in 1993 in Romania or the suffocation of a Roma man in 2021. Even though all these cases are clearly a violation of human rights, justice is rarely delivered due to the prejudiced ideas against Roma that prevail in our society.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Marginalization

The act of relegating to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group. Many minorities have been victims of marginalization, including people of color and Roma people, and this has had a social and economic impact on their lives.

Ethnic minority

A group of people that live in a country that are from a different race or nationality. This often leads to the creation of ghettos.

Social exclusion

A state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state. This prevents minorities from becoming active members of the society¹.

Prejudice

Discrimination based off of stereotypes and preconceived notions of a certain community. This may result in harm or injury inflicted on the certain marginalized community, which is considered a hate crime.

Antiziganism

Hostility, prejudice, discrimination or racism specifically directed at Romani people. This hostility is often expressed through acts of violence or verbal insults.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Holocaust during World War II

During World War II, 250,000 - 500,000 Roma people were killed by the Nazis. The Nazis deemed them as "underdeveloped", "antisocial", and unable to take care of themselves, all of which were racist stereotypes. Many the Roma people were brutally murdered in gas chambers, had no civil rights, were subject to forced sterilization and medical experiments against their will, and worked as slaves in the concentration camps, which in most cases led to their death. According to a citation by Ian Hancock, approximately 1.5 million Romas died during the Holocaust. After 1945, the surviving Roma returned to Czechoslovakia, however, they were still seen as pariahs. The genocide was only recognized in 1982 by West Germany, yet due to

¹ Un.org. 2021. [online] Available at: <<https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/chapter1.pdf>> [Accessed 11 September 2021].

lack of education and awareness raising on the matter, a large number of people is still not aware of the atrocities.



Figure 1: Deportation of Romani civilians during the Second World War²

Post-World War II years (1945-1990)

Women's Rights

After WWII, Roma women were illegally and, in most cases, non-consensually sterilized in many Eastern European regions. Although the policy of forced sterilization was abolished after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, many doctors continued performing such operations illegally.

There are many difficulties that have arisen in the effort to make up for the abovementioned events and deliver justice to the victims. First of all, the lack of complaints on the part of sterilized women due to their being ashamed, feared etc., makes it difficult to build a strong case. Additionally, due to the fact that doctors have managed to extort some women's signatures, either because they told them that it was crucial for their survival or because they were in exhaustion and pain and had in many cases difficulty

² "Romani Genocide - Wikipedia". *En.Wikipedia.Org*, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romani_genocide#/media/File:Bundesarchiv_R_165_Bild-244-48,_Asperg,_Deportation_von_Sinti_und_Roma.jpg. Accessed 11 Sept 2021.

understanding Czech, the sterilization of these women can be considered legal.

Economy

According to a study on discrimination in the workplace the highest unemployment rates in Europe are among the Roma people³. Another study of the European Roma Rights Center has proven that systemic discrimination against Roma people is prevalent in the realm of employment too and is more significant than originally speculated.⁴

Nowadays, due to the false belief that Roma people do not have the same qualities (dedication, diligence etc.) as other citizens or due to the insufficient education that Roma people usually have, many non-Roma employers decide against Roma. As a result, Roma people work in low-wage, menial jobs such as tailors, cleaners or machine workers. Only few of them work in restaurants or hotels, which proves that discrimination in the workplace prevents Roma from being employed in jobs that involve contact with the public or the preparation and service of food.

Healthcare

Despite the Roma supposedly being an equal member of the society, thus deserving equal access to many services, among other healthcare, Roma people have limited to no access to healthcare, and when they do, it is usually of poor quality. Roma people are at great risk, mainly due to their unhealthy lifestyle, and when they suffer from a health problem they are unable to treat it. According to research, Roma people suffer poorer health outcomes too, meaning that even if they are provided with health aid the bad living conditions put them at risk of infection, which can even be fatal.

The impact of COVID-19

Health measures to combat COVID-19 are inadequate for a financially unstable minority such as the Roma or require health coverage, which many Roma people lack. Even the most mainstream health measures such as washing one's hands with warm water are inaccessible to them. Although some communities have

³ "DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ROMA". Ilo.Org, 2021, https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/video/video-news-releases/WCMS_074514/lang--en/index.htm.

⁴ "Systemic Exclusion Of Roma From Employment - European Roma Rights Centre". *European Roma Rights Centre*, 2021, <http://www.errc.org/roma-rights-journal/systemic-exclusion-of-roma-from-employment>.

provided Roma with emergency aid, there still is a lack of proper health aid, putting the Roma people's health at risk.

Additionally, online learning is expected to cause the dropout rates of Roma children to increase since only a small number of Roma children have access to utilities, such as internet or electricity, to technology or even to school supplies that would normally be provided to them at school.

Roma people are also being blamed for the spread of the COVID-19 virus and are presented as a public health threat by many political figures, causing the already existing hatred against Roma people to be reinforced.

Lastly, many Roma people work in low-wage, menial jobs or in the informal sector. Despite the high number of people working in these sectors, the socioeconomic measures taken by many governments to tackle the pandemic do not refer to people working in these sectors and only to refer to the people having formal or regular jobs.

Education

Roma people have limited access to sufficient education and the chances of them leaving school are high in comparison to other children, potentially leading to their being mistreated and taken advantage of in the future. According to studies, only one out of two Roma children attend preschool or kindergarten⁵, and even less continue schooling after compulsory education has elapsed.⁶ Despite multiple initiatives on the part of the UN, for instance the Sustainable Development Goals and more specifically the fourth one which states that all children should receive sufficient education, EU or the Roma Education Fund, the fundamental right of education is still not granted to the Roma children.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

France

A law written in 1912 by the French government, which aimed at the tracking of Roma people's movements, refers to the Roma as «nomads». This categorization was used afterwards, during WW2, to track them. In 2010, after two fatal accidents, the French government forcibly repatriated Roma people by planning to evict 539

⁵ *Fra.Europa.Eu*, 2021, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-roma-survey-dif-education-1_en.pdf.

⁶ *Fra.Europa.Eu*, 2021, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf.

Roma camps.⁷ By the time the European Union intervened, France had already demolished 51 camps.⁸ The EU Justice Commissioner, Viviane Reding, stated in a September 2010, briefing that the situation in France was "a disgrace", went on to say that the EU might take legal action against France since the country's government violated EU law, which explicitly states that no discrimination against any ethnic group or nationality will be accepted.

Between 25.03.19 and 9.04.19, there were 25 attacks against Roma people.⁹ These attacks were mainly organised by locals, who belonged in poor or immigrant families, and lived in areas in which Roma people lived as well. The attacks were a result of the false rumour that Roma people in a white van were abducting children and were planning to sexually harass them or sell their organs. This incident of hatred reinforced the already existing discriminatory behavior against Roma in the area.

According to studies, the majority of French citizens are hostile towards Roma people, whereas more than half of the French population believes that Roma are not willing to integrate in France and constitute a threat to the French people.

European Union

One of the European Union's main aims is to ensure that no EU citizen is discriminated against. The EU recognizes that the Roma community is very commonly a victim of discrimination and therefore many efforts have been made on the part of the EU to protect the Roma people and ensure that they are not being discriminated against. For example, the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the EU strategic framework for equality, inclusion, and participation both focus in acknowledging discrimination against Roma people and minimizing events of discrimination to ensure the Roma people's well-being.

Russia

According to studies before the Fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the attitude of Russians toward the Roma people was mixed. However, after the collapse, due to the rise of national fascism, the Roma minority has become a victim of serious prejudice and discrimination. The Russian people have connected the high

⁷ Severance. "France's Expulsion Of Roma Migrants: A Test Case For Europe". *Migrationpolicy.Org*, 2021, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frances-expulsion-roma-migrants-test-case-europe>.

⁸ "Deportation Of Roma Migrants From France - Wikipedia". *En.Wikipedia.Org*, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deportation_of_Roma_migrants_from_France.

⁹ "Why Are Roma People Being Attacked In France?". *The Conversation*, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/why-are-roma-people-being-attacked-in-france-115030>.

criminality rates with Roma people, leading to the false belief that Roma are "distrustful parasites"¹⁰ that resort to stealing and other criminal acts instead of working to make a living.

European Roma Rights Centre

The European Roma Rights Centre is a Roma-led law organisation that aims at eliminating discrimination against Roma people. It produced the report "Roma in an Enlarged European Union" that is one of the most significant policy documents on Roma and their rights.

Italy

Italy's prejudiced behavior towards Roma people dates to World War II, when Roma people faced internment and were sent to Nazi concentration camps. Ever since, Roma people are constantly associated with high rates of criminality. In 2016, Matteo Salvini, former Deputy PM of Italy, and Minister of the Interior, visited a Roma camp and accused Roma people of being too otiose and promised to close the camp.¹¹ In March 2019, the camp went under the control of the military, implicating that the Roma are not an ethnic minority that should be taken care of, but a security issue that should be dealt with to ensure the Italian citizens' well-being.¹²

Germany

Germany's Roma history dates back to the Second World War, when a large number of Roma people were murdered by the Nazis in concentration camps. Approximately 23,000 Roma were deported to Auschwitz and 19,000 were then killed.¹³ Thousands of Roma people were sent to other concentration camps too, for example to the SS concentration camp Dachau or to Buchenwald. Even though decades have passed ever since, the Roma community still struggles to become part of German society due to the prejudiced behavior towards them.

¹⁰ Refugees, United. "Refworld | Russia: Situation Of Gypsies In Russia, Their Culture And Traditional Occupations, Their Clans, The Use Of Romani Language, The Average Levels Of Education And Employment, And General Living Conditions (1996-2001)". *Refworld*, 2021, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3df4bea114.html>.

^{11, 12} "Salvini Is Escalating War On Italy'S Roma Community By Deploying Soldiers". *Opendemocracy*, 2021, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/salvini-is-escalating-war-on-italys-roma-community-by-deploying-soldiers/>.

¹³ Margalit, Gilad, and Yaron Matras. "Gypsies In Germany—German Gypsies? Identity And Politics Of Sinti And Roma In Germany". *Books.Openedition.Org*, 2021, <https://books.openedition.org/ceup/1417>.

Czech Republic

After WW2 the Czech Republic performed many forced sterilizations to women of Roma origin, most of the time without their consent. Although in 1990 the sterilization of women was declared illegal, many doctors kept on performing those operations. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) condemned the Czech Government for the violation of article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which explicitly states that no torture, inhumane or degrading treatment should be tolerated. In 2009 the Czech Prime Minister publicly apologized because of some complaints filed in 2004.¹⁴ Yet, only two women until today have received compensation, one in 2011 in Slovakia and one in 2007 in the Czech Republic. Furthermore, on the 19th of June 2021 a Romany man who was knelt on by a Czech police officer lost his life. Despite the existing video footage, that shows the Czech police officer pressing the Romany man forcefully, Czech police claim the cause of his death was intoxication.



Figure 2: Romany man knelt on by a Czech police officer on the 19th June 2021¹⁵

¹⁴ "Czech Prime Minister Apologises To Victims Of Coercive Sterilisation - European Roma Rights Centre". *European Roma Rights Centre*, 2021, <http://www.errc.org/press-releases/czech-prime-minister-apologises-to-victims-of-coercive-sterilisation>.

¹⁵ "Death Of Romany Man Knelt On By Czech Police Compared To That Of George Floyd". *The Guardian*, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/22/death-of-romany-man-knelt-on-by-czech-police-compared-to-george-floyd>.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
500 B.C.	Roma people left India and within 500 years they had spread in the entire central and northwest India. Then they moved on to Persia and Armenia and in the 10th-11th century they reached Istanbul.
1100	Roma arrives in Europe and spread across the Balkan region
1 September 1939 - 2 September 1945	250.000-500.000 Roma were killed during the World War II. ¹⁶
1945-1990	Period during which women with Roma origin were forcefully sterilized. Although this was officially made illegal in 1990 the operations kept on taking place.
20 September 1993	Three Romani people were killed by a mob in Hadareni, Romania.
1996	The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is founded in Budapest, Hungary.
23 November 2009	Czech Prime Minister publicly apologizes for the illegal sterilizations performed from the 1960s until 1990.
April 2019	Violent attacks on homes and property of Roma people in Gabrovo, Bulgaria, organized by groups of young men.
July 2019	Six men were found guilty of planning an attack against a camp, where Roma people lived, after having spread rumors that Roma people are kidnapping children around Bobigny, France.

¹⁶ "Genocide Of European Roma (Gypsies), 1939–1945". *Encyclopedia.Ushmm.Org*, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/genocide-of-european-roma-gypsies-1939-1945>.

19 June 2021	Romani man dies after being apprehended by the Czech police.
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RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Human Rights Council resolution: A/HRC/RES/26/4

This resolution condemns any racist, xenophobic, discriminatory idea against Roma people and calls for the Member States' action, mainly in the form of scientific studies, to collect more information on Roma people to educate citizens.

Human Rights Council resolution: A/HRC/46/44

A guidance notes which acknowledges the negative impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on minorities, emphasizes on the connection between social and financial status, healthcare provision and ethnicity and urges Member States to protect minorities in order for them to ensure their participation in decisions that affect them. Initiatives such as the UNAMI's cooperation with NGOs and with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights which provided food to poor minorities or the OHCHR with the Republic of Moldova, which proposed the involvement of an NGO as well as the one of a task forces, especially created for COVID-19 and its impact on human rights to identify the problems that minorities face, were congratulated.

UN Commission on Human Rights resolution: E/CN.4/RES/1992/65

Suggests that a study on the types of discrimination minorities face as well as on some possible solutions is made and explicitly states that Member States should take any measures needed to ensure that any form of discrimination against the Roma is eliminated.

The Race Equality Directive/ Council Directive 2000/43/EC

This directive emphasizes on the importance of protection provision regardless of ethnic or racial origin and states that any act of discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic origin which covers various fields such as employment, education, health aid etc shall be prohibited.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

UN's minority fellowship program

OHCHR's Minorities Fellowship Program is a training program for human rights activists who belong to national, ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities. After their training they will be fully able to educate other people belonging to their minorities on their rights. The program's curriculum entails the provision of UN knowledge, focusing on instruments and mechanisms which protect human rights of minorities. The program also gives activists the opportunity to build dialogue with NGO's, the UN, and other activists around the world. Afterwards, activists can spread the knowledge they acquire to educate not only their communities, but also the public. Although this program can be a gradual solution to discrimination against Roma, as it can make Roma people feel more integrated in society, it does not guarantee the end of systemic Antiziganism. To completely integrate Roma people, the community must have government backing.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

To combat discrimination against the Roma minority it is of crucial importance that countries recognize the deep-rooted and widespread intolerance for Roma, which has been preventing the implementation of laws and programs aiming at ameliorating the lives of Romani people.

Education

As far as education is concerned, Member States should achieve educational desegregation, by incorporating tolerance, multiculturalism and the history and culture of Romani people in the national curricula. Additionally, to reduce incidents of police brutality against Roma, the police forces should be trained to be culturally sensitive towards the Roma. Through the collection of data on the social, political, and economic status of the Roma, citizens as well as the authorities will familiarize with the Roma people and their culture, and it will be evident to them through scientific data that the conditions in which Roma people are living need to be changed. Lastly, by investing money in digital literacy programs, Roma students will be provided with sufficient knowledge to work in sectors other than the low-wage one in the future.

Punishment

Anyone who discriminates against Roma in the employment, healthcare or housing sector will be subject to penalty (most probably and practically financial). Furthermore, countries in which discrimination against Roma is institutional and systemic can be penalized by the EU the UN or other regional and international union organizations accordingly.

Health

A system which will consist of citizens of all social classes, including Roma people, could be established, aiming at controlling the quality of health aid and assistance Roma people have.

Security

Roma camps will be provided with protection, granted by each country's government or by the UN, to minimize or eliminate the number of attacks by far-right, extremist groups. Moreover, any police officers who brutalize Roma will face sizeable consequences, ranging from social work to long-term imprisonment and depending on the severity of the brutal incident.

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