



National Roma Network

02/07/2021

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney TD

Department of Foreign Affairs

St Stephens Green Dublin 2

Dear Minister

I am writing on behalf of the National Roma Network, a network of organisations working to improve the lives of Roma living in Ireland. As a Network, we would like to bring to your attention the recent death of Stanislav Tomáš, a Roma man in the Czech Republic, and request that the Irish Government joins in the call for an urgent, thorough, and independent investigation in this tragic event.

Our members are deeply saddened and concerned about the death of Stanislav Tomáš, a Roma man from Teplice, Czech Republic. He died soon after two police officers applied excessive force to his neck during his arrest. These last moments were captured on distressing video footage and comparisons are being drawn between the circumstances of his death and the death of George Floyd in America.

The official responses from Czech police, and Government have been disturbing. Preliminary statements by the police deny that the officers' behaviour could have caused or contributed to Stanislav's death. And more concerning, high-ranking members of the Czech government, particularly the Minister of Interior and the Prime Minister, have backed the police officers, pre-empting the findings of an official investigation. Both Ministers have also characterized Stanislav Tomáš in discriminatory, and derogatory ways in an attempt to justify the police actions.

As you are aware, Roma (inclusive of Travellers) are among the most marginalised and excluded individuals and groups living in Ireland and across Europe. In the 2018 Irish National Roma Needs Assessment (DJE & Pavee Point), Roma reported extremely high levels of racism and discrimination in all areas of life, including discrimination on the street (81%) and being regularly stopped for ID by an Garda Síochána (78%).

Evidence from the Council of Europe, in particular the European Committee against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) shows that Roma and Travellers in Europe still suffer from widespread and persistent racism. This manifests in stark health inequalities, poor accommodation conditions, poverty, low educational attainment, and high levels of unemployment. Unfortunately, there have been increased reports of anti-Traveller and Roma racism across Europe in recent years, which has intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Commitments to addressing this widespread racism and discrimination faced by Roma (and Travellers) have been made at both European and National level in the EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025, the EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020-30, National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, and new National Action Plan Against Racism (under development).

We have recently seen Ireland take the lead, along with other EU member states to object to anti-LGBT laws in Hungary, and we believe it is vital that Ireland continues to stand publicly against prejudice, and shows solidarity with the Roma community against this extreme form of Anti Roma Racism.

The National Roma Network requests that the Minister:

- Raises this issue with your counterparts in the EU, particularly the Czech Republic, and highlights the concerns outlined above
- Joins the Council of Europe, Amnesty International, and National and European Roma Organisations in their call for an urgent, thorough, and independent investigation into the recent death of Stanislav Tomáš, which includes safeguarding of all parties involved.
- Takes a clear stance against Anti-Roma racism and police violence in a public statement, which also calls on Czech political representatives and the Czech media to refrain from using racist or inflammatory language; blaming the victim; and stigmatizing his family and loved ones or the Roma community.

**Signed:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Signing on behalf of</b>
Martin Collins, Co-Director Ronnie Faye, Co- Director	Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
Noel Neenan, Ann Hetherington, Information and advocacy officer	Crosscare Information & Advocacy Services
Kirsty Donnellan, Roma Project Coordinator	Clare Local Development Company
Ann Daly, Traveller and Roma Support Coordinator	County Kildare Leader Partnership
Joleen Kuyper, Community Development and Advocacy Worker working with Roma	Donegal Travellers Project
Dr. Angela Skuce, Medical Director	Safetynet Primary Care
Alex Petrovics, Roma Community Inclusion Programme Lead Emma Plesca, Roma Education Project	Ferns Diocesan Youth Service
Eilis Barry, Chief Executive	FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres)
Marianna Prontera and Danut Nae, National Roma Infoline	Cairde: Challenging Ethnic Minorities Inequalities
Ekaterina Okonkwo, Migrant Support Worker	Galway City Partnership
Jim Bruton, Roma training coordinator and advocate	U-Casadh Roma Training Programme
Patricia Tallon, Community Outreach Worker	Daughters of Charity Community Services
Kieran Vulker, Project Leader	Focus Ireland
Noel Wardick, Chief Executive Officer Rares Mihai Nicula, Roma Programme	Dublin City Community Cooperative
Gina Miyagawa, Education Support Worker	Cork STAR Pilot Project - NTRIS Education
Jessica Farnan, Manager	CDETB YES for Refugees and Migrants