



The Center for Legal Resources and Romani CRISS condemn the racist statements of MoFA Andrei Marga

Bucharest, 21.05.2012

During the televised show *Realitatea la raport (Reality under review)*, from 17.05.2012, asked how he is going to manage the problem of the “scandal with the beggars in London”, Minister Marga replied: “We have this problem. (...) In London there was a pretty embarrassing situation. There were recorded, at least by the British press, many Roma buying vodka, enjoying themselves and sitting on the clean streets of London for the passersby to see them.” The Minister continues explaining that social workers and police officers have been sent to support London authorities in order to keep the problem under control, adding: “It is understood that the London Olympics is now attracting, and many people, not only from Romania, from this level of the society, is heading towards London. Let us hope that we will be able to keep under control. Certainly, our concern is, if you like, very intense in this direction. Why? An accident, an incident in this area would endanger our effort, more persistent than ever, to close the Schengen file, to get access to other facilities, such as the American visas, etc., etc.”

For the first time, a high ranking Romanian dignitary, Romania’s representative in foreign affairs, considers as embarrassing the simple presence of persons belonging to a certain ethnicity in a particular space. From his point of view, the fact that London passersby see the Roma enjoying themselves on their “clean streets” triggers damage to Romania’s image. And the damage is so big, that it endangers the country’s entry into the Schengen area, and, more than that, the access to the US visa waiver. Furthermore, the Minister associates the Roma with: “a certain level of the society”, also a problematic one.

These people the Minister is talking about are Romanian citizens whose rights the Minister of Foreign Affairs is supposed to defend, whose situation is supposed to concern him. In return, Minister Marga reveals a racist philosophy, in an aggravating combination with a class philosophy specific to those centuries which had not known modern democracy and human rights, let alone the duty of the state to create the framework where all have equal chances, regardless of ethnicity, social origin, etc.

In line with his predecessors at the helm of Romanian external affairs, instead of asserting and defending the rights of Romanian citizens in the EU space, regardless of their ethnicity, Minister Marga declares his full availability to work together with the other states, in order to contain the “shame” of the presence of Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity in other EU countries. By consequence, aside from the discriminatory attitude with regards to the Roma in general, the Minister himself denies the right of Romanian citizens to freedom of movement in the EU, a right which has nothing to do with the entry into the Schengen area, a right which has existed already for a long time.

Minister Marga directly transforms the Roma into scapegoats for the incapacity of the Romanian diplomacy to obtain Romania’s entry into the Schengen area, and, in addition, to obtain the US visa waiver. Putting the blame on the Roma for the fact that Romanians still need visas for the US is a new thing in the populist-discriminatory rhetoric of Romanian high-level dignitaries. Obviously, the Roma have nothing to do with this diplomatic file in the sense invoked by the Minister. They might however be connected to it through the fact that the structural discrimination and social exclusion to which the Roma are being subject raise serious questions as to the democratic functioning and the rule of law in Romania.

We consider Minister Marga’s statements and attitude unacceptable and extremely dangerous, as they fuel and justify discrimination against the Roma in Romania.

Contact persons: Delia Niță, Anti-discrimination Program Manager - CLR, 0729120383

Marian Mandache, Executive Director – Romani CRISS, 0728878383

Note to editors:

The recording of the show *Realitatea la Raport (Reality under review)* from 17.05.2012 is available at: <http://www.realitatea.net/realitatealaraport.html> (accessed at: 20.05.2012)