

Commission on Human Rights
Sub-Commission on the Promotion
and Protection of Human Rights
Working Group on Minorities
Ninth session, 12-16 May 2003
Geneva
Agenda Item: 3b

Jorge Bernal-Argentina
Nadir Redzepi-Macedonia

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving me the floor again,

This intervention is a joint initiative of Roma representatives by Cultural Association for the Identity of Romani People, from Argentina and Rroma Humanitarian Association "Sun", from Macedonia. As this agenda item is for discussing solutions to situations involving minorities, I would like to present some ideas concerning our experiences with international networking among Roma peoples, and some requests for support from the United Nations for this work. Let me introduce very briefly the International Rroma movement, in order to better present possible solutions concerning relations of Rroma and non-Rroma populations in the world. The Rroma international movement was initiated in 1936 in Poland, but due to the infamous Holocaust during World War II, it started really to exist from 1971 when the First World Romani Congress was organized. At this Congress 4 main decisions were taken for the future of Rroma and proclaimed throughout the world. These are:

1. Our Rromani flag has green and blue colour with Chokra wheel in the middle, which shows our road to the all parts of the world.
2. The Rromani anthem is the song "Djelem djelem" also related to our travelling in the history
3. The common name for whole groups of our population is Rroma and shall be used in communication with all other nations. We condemn the terms Gipsy, Gitan, Sinti, Gitano, Cigan and many others as insulting one.
4. Recommendation to all existing Rroma groups in the world to unify under this name and stop migration from one country to another in order to ensure the integration of coming generations.

Since than 5 congresses are organized, and the next one is going to be organized in London 2004. Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentleman, I want to turn your attention to the extreme marginalized position of Rroma people where ever they live. Their position in socio-economic, educational, and institutional participation is the lowest that exists nowadays. The political changes in Europe, especially in South-East Europe, influenced new wave of racism and exodus of Rroma. There is no one official census on the number of Rroma; each country estimates and calculates our number as they want to present it. Our people are still fighting for basic needs in their life, as food and housing, while the thousand year-old prejudices of non Rroma are transformed in skinhead movement and new asylum policy of the developed countries. Rroma are fleeing from each country where they face discrimination, no matter if it is a developed or developing country, they do not react in any way to the violations. Some accessing states to EU such as Czech Republic and Slovakia use the methods of control of our birth rate with sterilization of Roma women or not giving them citizenship, passports and keeping them under police control to stop them travelling out of the country, only for the reason of fulfilment of EU standards. I can provide sources of information to support these allegations if anyone is interested. Under these circumstances we had to organize our people and create a real movement that will protect our families, and at the same time show our wish to live as a human beings. All this resulted in creation of many Rroma programs in Brussels and Strasbourg, Rroma networks and leadership, but we see that new problems affect our

people in the American continent. Through MRG training and findings on how Working Group develop its tasks and concerns, we have presented our claims and complaints, and we have concluded that we should propose follow-up mechanisms and methods, which should improve the relation among Rroma and non Rroma:

1. We invite the Working Group to propose to the United Nations to organize an International Conference of Rroma people, in order to establish a relevant body and mechanism for democratic integration of our people
2. To create Observer status for Rroma in the UN bodies such as that held by the Holy See, or to find a similar mechanism, which shall protect the status of Rroma refugees and asylum seekers.
3. To start constructive dialogue with existing Rroma networks and leaders

For this initiative it is necessary to ensure that relevant and competent Rroma activists are selected, and at the same time it will give them responsibility and motivation to work for the benefit of own population. Under the umbrella of UN a global process of reintegration and reconciliation of Rroma people should be initiated. We think that there is still good faith among us for sincere cooperation with the International community either until now there was only weak cooperation between Rroma peoples and non-Rroma.

Thank you Mr.Chairman