



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Stop to anti-Roma violence in Italy!

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) strongly condemns the violent attacks on Roma settlements in Italy last week and urges all relevant EU institutions to take action to denounce these events.

Last week, a number of Roma settlements around Naples and Milan were set on fire by inhabitants following reports of a Roma girl allegedly having attempted to steal a baby.

ENAR is seriously concerned by the political and media discourse used in Italy to build a “Roma emergency”. The Italian authorities are conducting arbitrary detentions and expulsions, making provisions for discriminatory anti-Romani and anti-Romanian laws and measures and openly inciting its population to racially motivated violence. The Italian Interior Minister Mr. Roberto Maroni on 11 May stated that “all Roma camps will have to be dismantled, and the inhabitants will be either expelled or incarcerated”. It seems also that the Italian government is about to adopt a new security decree to control or expel immigrants, especially the Roma.

These measures and the current xenophobic discourse are propagating prejudice and encouraging the double identification Roma/criminals. A recent opinion poll showed that 70% of Italians would like to “expel” the Roma from Italy, regardless of the fact that a little more than 50% of them are Italian nationals and 20% are EU citizens.

Presenting the Roma as a threat to public security stigmatises an entire ethnic minority and goes against the very principles and values upon which the European Union is founded. ENAR therefore urgently calls on the Italian authorities to stop making anti-Roma discourses and to take all the necessary measures to ensure the protection of the Roma community. ENAR also urges all EU institutions to condemn and take action against the anti-Roma hate speech and discriminatory actions taken by Italian authorities.

ENAR President Mohammed Aziz said: “We are extremely worried by the anti-Roma and anti-immigrant rhetoric currently being used in Italy, resulting in the introduction of discriminatory measures and in fuelling racist sentiment. Italian and EU politicians must stand up to the EU commitment to fundamental rights and focus on promoting the social inclusion of Roma and implementing anti-discrimination policies.”

*The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is a network of European NGOs working to combat racism in all EU member states and represents more than 600 NGOs spread around the European Union. Its establishment was a major outcome of the 1997 European Year Against Racism. ENAR aims to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national initiatives with European initiatives.*

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