

## CZECH ROMANI ACTIVISTS TAKE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST ONLINE HATE FOLLOWING RELEASE OF NEO-NAZIS FROM PRISON



**Prague, Brussels 21 August 2023:** The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and Forum for Human Rights (FORUM), in cooperation with young Romani volunteers at [Romea.cz](https://romea.cz), have filed five new criminal complaints against individuals who have repeatedly posted racist statements calling for violence against Roma on social media in the Czech Republic. Most of these emerging cases of online hate speech against Roma are linked to the [news of the parole of two neo-Nazis](#) responsible for a firebomb attack on a Romani family in Vítkov in 2009. The complaints were filed with the Police Presidium between 13 July 2023 and 9 August 2023.

*“Online hate speech against the Romani community is still extremely widespread on social media. Haters behind computers often believe they are untouchable. But judging from previous cases, we know that the Czech police can find and prosecute these people. With these efforts we hope that social media will become a safer space for everyone,”* said Alexandra Dubová, Senior Lawyer at FORUM.

The organisations argue that the individuals' online statements violate Section 355 of the Czech Criminal Code (for defamation of an ethnic group) as well as Section 356 (incitement of hatred toward a group of persons) and Section 364 (inciting a criminal act). There are several instances of harmful and offensive comments made by the individuals on various social media platforms. They include comments which promote the genocide of Roma, call for race wars, celebrate the murder of Roma at Lety u Písek concentration camp, and praise the actions of the two neo-Nazis whose attack in 2009 caused severe burns to a 2-year-old Romani girl.

*"We have a zero-tolerance approach to hate speech" said the ERRC's President, Đorđe Jovanović. "Hate speech, whether it is used online or offline, frequently leads to real-world violence for Romani communities. We have compiled evidence of the devastating impact of online hate speech on Romani lives, especially when it is exploited by far-right groups. As online hate speech transcends national borders, we must have a coordinated response to monitor and report online hate speech, to create counter-narratives, and to gather evidence for legal actions. Criminal complaints such as these warn, remind, and reinforce the law which says that such behaviour is unacceptable and has severe consequences."*

The evidence supporting these legal actions was gathered by young Roma volunteering with Czech Romani news portal Romea.cz, as part of the ERRC's project: Challenging Digital Antigypsyism. The project aims to challenge hate speech online through volunteer-led action, as well as bring legal complaints to tackle hate speech in the online sphere directly.

Previous criminal complaints brought by the organisations in [October 2022](#) and March 2023 have been investigated by the Czech Police, two perpetrators were already punished in criminal and misdemeanour proceedings. The ERRC and Forum for Human Rights will closely monitor the next steps taken by the Czech Police in the criminal complaints. At the same time, this project will continue to explore other legal and non-legal avenues to ensure digital antigypsyism is effectively challenged online.

This project was supported by the [EVZ Foundation](#).

### **Background to the attack in Vítkov:**

Two neo-Nazis, part of a North Moravian group responsible for the Molotov cocktail firebomb attack on a Romani family in Vítkov, Opava Region 2009, [were released on parole](#) after serving two-thirds of their 20-year sentence. The attack injured three people, including toddler Natálka Kudrikova, who suffered severe burns. The arsonists argued that they were young and naive at the time. The decision to release them on parole shocked the government representative for Roma minority affairs, as well as the victim's family and supporters. Natálka's mother expressed disgust and fear for her daughter's safety.

[The attack was part of a broader upsurge in deadly anti-Roma](#) violence orchestrated by neo-Nazi groups across Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic between 2008 and 2010. The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) recorded 48 attacks against Romani lives and property in Hungary, resulting in nine deaths, including two minors. In the Czech Republic, 17 anti-Roma attacks left 11 people, including two

children, with injuries, two of which were life-threatening. In Slovakia, ten attacks claimed the lives of two Roma and wounded eight, including two minors. The ERRC also monitored the State response in 44 of the most violent anti-Roma attacks reported to police in the three countries. It found that the judgment in the Vítkov arson case was "far from the standard response to anti-Roma violence in the Czech Republic."

**For further information, or to arrange an interview contact:**

Jonathan Lee (in English)  
Advocacy & Communications Manager  
European Roma Rights Centre  
[jonathan.lee@errc.org](mailto:jonathan.lee@errc.org)  
+32 49 288 7679

Alexandra Dubová (in Czech)  
Senior Lawyer  
Forum for Human Rights  
[dubova@forumhr.eu](mailto:dubova@forumhr.eu)  
+420 725 548 872