

Mr Milan Chovanec
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic
Postbox 21
Prague 7 – Letná 170 34
Czech Republic

Ref ► SRSG Roma/2016/L/20/VN/RR

Strasbourg, 7 November 2016

Dear Minister,

I am deeply concerned over the reported death of Miroslav Demeter, a young Roma man who died on 18 October 2016 in a pizzeria in Žatec.

According to an article published in [Roma.cz](#) and [denik.cz](#), “the police arrived at the scene and allegedly beat the Romani man further, or at the very least failed to protect the man from his attackers, at which point he collapsed to the floor and was restrained by officers.” As far as I know, indeed as I write this letter, no suspects have been detained, nor have the police pressed charges as of today.

I am aware that the police often works in a difficult context and that the everyday reality of combating crime poses real challenges that need to be met.

I am also well aware that racism and racial discrimination, including racial profiling, is still a problem among police forces all over Europe. Neither racism and discrimination nor ethnic profiling can be accepted as possible responses to any challenges in our Europe that puts the respect for human rights at its core.

Reinforcing prejudice and stereotypes about certain minority groups and legitimising racism and racial discrimination against them are issues that result from such approaches. Racial profiling is proven to be ineffective and conducive to less, not more, human security. I believe that it is trust in the police by all segments of society that enhances overall security. It is not possible for the police to work effectively, including against specific security challenges, without the co-operation of all components of society, majority and minority.


In 2014, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities regretted that, despite efforts, the Roma continue to face serious difficulties and discrimination, in particular as regards access to employment, health services, mainstream and higher education, housing segregation, eviction from town centres, widespread anti-Gypsyism, and hate speech.

It is fundamental to ensure that any police action respects human rights standards and does not give rise to any suspicions of rights violations. The use of force by the police needs to be proportionate, lawful and necessary. I would be grateful if you would conduct an independent, thorough and effective investigation into the death of Miroslav Demeter, the young Roma man from Žatec and Drienovec, and take the necessary legal action.

In addition, it would be helpful if the Czech authorities would establish dialogue and co-operation between the police and members of Roma community. Such dialogue is a crucial element in successfully combating racism and racial discrimination and avoiding racial profiling.

I remain at your disposal to support and contribute to any of the above-mentioned actions, in particular the process of setting up a dialogue mechanism between the police and the members of the Roma community.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Valeriu Nicolae', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Valeriu Nicolae

Copy to:

Mr Emil RUFFER, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the Council of Europe