

Statement of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on recent events affecting Roma and immigrants in Italy

(adopted on 20 June 2008 at ECRI's 46th plenary meeting)

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) wishes to express its deep concern about recent events affecting Roma and many immigrants in Italy.

Roma and immigrants have been the subject of violent racist attacks and entire communities have been held responsible for criminal acts committed, or allegedly committed, by individuals from these communities. In this context, ECRI particularly regrets the persistent racist and xenophobic discourse by some Italian politicians, even at the highest levels, and in the media. It is also concerned that, in this critical situation, the Italian authorities are taking measures whose conformity with national and international human rights standards is questionable. ECRI notes that these events have affected persons of Roma origin from Romania and other countries, but also Italian citizens of Roma origin, Romanian citizens generally, and immigrants, whether with or without legal status in Italy.

In keeping with the recommendations contained in its third report on Italy published on 16 May 2006, ECRI emphasises the urgent need for the Italian authorities to take a firm stand against all forms of racism and xenophobia, including hate speech, so as to curb and prevent the development of these phenomena in Italian society. The Italian authorities must ensure that law enforcement personnel protect every individual, including Roma and immigrants. ECRI calls on the Italian authorities to ensure that in respect of Roma and immigrants the rule of law is maintained and the principle of non-discrimination as embodied in Council of Europe standards is strictly observed.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) is the Council of Europe's independent human rights monitoring body in the field of combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance. ECRI's action covers all the measures needed to combat violence, discrimination and prejudice against persons or groups of persons on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin. ECRI's programme of activities comprises three aspects: (1) country-by-country monitoring; (2) work on general themes; and (3) activities in relation with civil society.