

Select Cases of Violence against Roma in Hungary 2008-2009

- On August 2, 2009, a Roma woman, 45, was shot dead, and her daughter, 13, seriously injured in an overnight attack of their home in **Kisleta**. The woman's daughter, suffering life-threatening injuries, remains hospitalized. Based on investigation of the crime scene, police are grouping this case with a series of similar violent attacks on Roma. Police stated that until they receive contrary information, they will treat this case the same as the string of Roma attacks.
- On May 27, 2009, in the middle of the night, an intruder, armed with a gun, broke into a Roma home through a window in **Abadszalok**. The perpetrator cut into the neck and chest of the father of the house, and legs of the mother with a razor blade. The family overtook the male intruder who was later arrested by the police. Four people were injured in the attack. The perpetrator, known for making harassing statements about Roma, was connected to the vocal anti-Roma Magyar Garda.¹
- On May 5, 2009, shots were fired at a Roma home on the edge of a rural settlement in **Táska**. No one was hurt, but the house was marked by bullets. Istvan Horvath, head of the household, told the media that this was the second shooting in Taska in the past few weeks. The nature of the violence caused police to believe this case is part of a series of linked armed attacks against Roma. Witnesses claimed shots were fired from a black car, but the police are yet to identify any suspects.²
- On April 22, 2009, 54-year-old Jenő Koka, was shot in the chest a few steps outside his home in **Tiszalök**. The police declared Koka's murder as racially motivated. Authorities have linked Koka's murder with the February 2009 killings in **Tatárszentgyörgy** and November 2008 murders in **Nagycsécs**. In all three cases, the Romani victims lived on the edge of a village, enabling perpetrators to escape rapidly. The police gathered the culprits' DNA and are offering 50 million forints, \$225,000, for information about the killings. The Hungarian National Police High Commissioner has assigned 100 investigators to work on the linked murders. They have not yet been solved.³
- On April 15, 2009, an 18-year-old Roma and three Roma minors waiting for a trolley in **Budapest** were brutally attacked by a group of people wearing hoods. The severity of

¹ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

² Mohit Joshi, "Another Roma Home Targeted in Hungary," www.TopNews.in, May 6, 2009, <http://www.topnews.in/regions/hungary>

³ Nicholas Kulish, "As Economic Turmoil Mounts, So Do Attacks on Hungary's Gypsies," *New York Times*, April 26, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/27/world/europe/27hungary.html>; and John Nadler, "Murder Mystery: Who's Killing Hungary's Gypsies?" *TIME*, May 1, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1895255,00.html>

the beatings put the four young Roma into comas by the time the police arrived. The police are investigating the attack as a racially motivated one.⁴

- On April 7, 2009, the house of the vice-president of the local Roma minority self-government, Lidia Horvath, was set on fire in **Tatarszentgyörgy**. Horvath was on duty as a local community guard set-up to protect Roma neighborhoods from violence and vandalism when her house was set aflame. The investigators of this arson attack are looking into revenge or racism as possible motivations.⁵
- Early in the morning on March 6, 2009, a Molotov cocktail bomb was thrown into a Romani family's house in **Bocföde, Zala-county**. After the explosive broke through a window and landed on the floor, a family member quickly threw the bomb out of the house before a fire started. No one was injured.⁶
- At about 2 a.m. on March 4, 2009, a 7-member Romani family awoke to stones breaking their home's windows in **Zalaegerszeg**. The family reported that a number of stones nearly hit their sleeping children. No one was injured in the attack. This was the last inhabited house in a once predominantly Roma settlement.⁷
- On February 28, 2009, a house was bombed in **Tatárszentgyörgy**. The house was vacant because the previous occupants – a Roma family - had recently moved, fearing the prevalent discriminatory violence. Firemen recovered remnants of a petrol bomb, a device similar to that used in a string of other Roma house bombings. Two individuals were seen fleeing the scene after throwing a bomb into the house, although police claimed the fire may have been caused by a malfunctioning electric radiator.⁸
- On February 23, 2009, Robert Csorba, a 27-year-old farm worker, and his 5-year-old son were shot dead as they ran from their burning home in **Tatárszentgyörgy**. Csorba's wife and two other children were also seriously injured in the arson attack and treated for severe burns. Despite remnants of the bomb, the police originally declared the fire an electrical accident. Similarly, police at first disregarded the 18 bullets found in five-year-old Csorba's body, as they were unwilling to acknowledge the incident as murder. Prime Minister Gyurcsany instructed the competent ministries to conduct an internal inquiry. As a result of the inquiry, disciplinary proceedings were initiated against the local policemen who initially reported the fire and murder as "an accident" to cover up the case. Police have not identified the culprits in the arson attack and murder.

⁴ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

⁵ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

⁶ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

⁷ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

⁸ "Roma house set alight in Tatarszentgyorgy," *Naplo*, February 28, 2009, http://www.naplo-online.hu/fooldal/20090228_roma_tatarszentgyorgy; and Reuters, "Roma house fire not arson - Hungarian officials" *Reuters*, March 1, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSL1545797>.

According to the European Roma Rights Center, Petöfi Attila, manager of the National Bureau of Investigation, noted clear similarities between this attack and several cases since summer 2008. A reward of 10 million forints has been offered for information leading to an arrest.⁹

- In the morning of November 20, 2009, unknown perpetrators threw a Molotov cocktail at a Romani family's house in **Pusztadobos**. Because the bomb exploded outside the house, the four adults and eight children inside were not injured. Later that morning, the family found a printed cartoon attached to their fence that read, "You are going to die!" The family had moved to Pusztadobos from Nyirmada one year earlier after their home was similarly attacked. Police closed this case because they could not confirm the Romani family's story.¹⁰
- On November 18, 2008, a grenade was thrown through the front window of a Romani family's house in **Pécs**. The father, 37, and mother, 31, of the family were killed and the couple's three children survived. Two of the three children were taken to the hospital with injuries and in a state of shock. Before conducting an investigation, the police quickly dismissed racial motivation as the reason for the attack. Instead, police assumed a revenge motive or mafia conflict. The pattern of Roma house bombings proved otherwise to the enraged Roma community who questioned the swift rejection of racial motives. On February 28, 2009, the police announced the arrest of a suspect in the attack.¹¹
- On November 3, 2008, a Romani man, 43, and Romani woman, 40, were shot dead in their home in **Nagycsécs**. According to the official investigation, petrol bombs were thrown into the house before the perpetrators used firearms to murder the couple. Another bomb was also thrown at the couple's neighbor's house, though it did not ignite. According to neighbors, another house in Nagycsécs was bombed less than a week before this incident. The perpetrators have not been identified by Hungarian police.¹²
- On November 3, 2008, two Roma people were shot dead in an attack on two houses in **Galgagyörk**. The police have confirmed they were racially motivated killings. However, suspects of the murder have not been identified by the police.¹³

⁹ "Roma man, son murdered," *The Budapest Times*, February 23, 2009, <http://www.budapesttimes.hu/content/view/11096/27/>.

¹⁰ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

¹¹ Saurav Shukla, "More Roma killings prompt call for Hungarian police to act," www.topnews.in/law, <http://www.topnews.in/law/more-roma-killings-prompt-call-hungarian-police-act>; and Stefan J. Bos, "'Death Brigade' Killing Roma In Hungary, police," www.worthynews.com, February 28, 2009, <http://www.worthynews.com/5116-death-brigade-killing-roma-in-hungary-police>

¹² Reuters, "Two Killed in Attack on Roma houses in Hungary," *Reuters*, November 3, 2008, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L391425.htm>; and "Two Roma Die in Shooting in NE Hungary Village," *The Budapest Times*, November 4, 2008, <http://www.budapesttimes.hu/content/view/9830/27/>.

¹³ Siobhan Dowling, "Hungary's Roma Bear Brunt of Downturn," *New York Times*, February 24, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,609669,00.html>

- On November 1, 2008, two pubs in **Sajószöged** and **Sajóörös** were destroyed during the night with petrol bombs. The bombings were thought to be motivated by anti-Roma bias because they were located in Roma neighborhoods and owned by Roma. Police suspect the culprits to be the same as the Nagycsécs bombers; however, they have not yet been identified.¹⁴
- On September 29, 2008, four Romani homes in **Tarnabod** were attacked by Molotov cocktails and gunfire. No one was injured. Three local people were interrogated as suspects.¹⁵
- At dawn, on September 17, 2008, a grenade was thrown into the yard of a Romani family's house in **Siofok**. The house was damaged, but no one was injured.¹⁶
- On the night of September 5, 2008, unknown perpetrators shot at a Roma home in **Nyíradony-Tamásipusztá**. No one was injured.¹⁷
- On August 19, 2008, a group of teens threw stones at a Roma home in **Székesfehérvár** and seriously injured a 12-year-old Roma girl. The perpetrators, self-declared "skinheads," were arrested by police.¹⁸
- On August 8, 2008, Molotov cocktails were thrown at two Roma houses in **Piricse**. When a woman ran out of her house to escape the explosive, perpetrators shot her in the leg.¹⁹
- On July 21, 2008, shortly after midnight, 10 to 15 shots were fired at three Roma houses in **Galgagyörk**. No one was injured.²⁰
- On June 15, 2008, a 14-year-old Romani boy was stabbed to death by a 40-year-old man following a verbal argument in front of a pub in **Fényeslitke**. The man also seriously injured the boy's brother. The perpetrator shouted that he would, "kill all the Roma in the village."²¹

¹⁴ Siobhan Dowling, "Hungary's Roma Bear Brunt of Downturn," *New York Times*, February 24, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,609669,00.html>

¹⁵ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

¹⁶ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

¹⁷ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

¹⁸ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

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- On June 3, 2008, three volunteer police guards threw six Molotov cocktails at three Romani houses in **Pátka**. At the close of the investigation, police recommended an indictment for attempted murder.²²
- On March 15, 2008, two 17-year-olds severely beat and kicked a 32-year-old Romani man on the street for no apparent reason in **Tapolca**. The Romani man slipped into a coma and was taken to the hospital in critical condition.²³
- On March 1, 2008, the house of Roma minority self-government representative of **Kunmadaras** was set on fire in Tiszaroff. Prior to this arson attack, racial epithets had been painted on the house exterior.²⁴
- On February 22, 2008, a Romani family's home was vandalized with threatening statements in **Putnok**. The family was not at home during the incident.²⁵
- On January 22, 2008, five young men, ages 19-24, under the influence of alcohol, boarded a train from Barcs to Pécs. Because they did not have tickets, the conductor ordered them to get off at Szigetvár. In **Szigetvár**, the young people covered their faces and attacked a Romani woman and her daughter crossing a park on their way home. The assailants beat and kicked the mother while her daughter managed to escape and call for help. When the attackers were detained by police, they admitted to assaulting the woman and child because of their ethnicity. Later, the group withdrew their statement, claiming that alcohol consumption caused their aggressive behavior. Although the five men were charged with assault on an ethnic minority, the judge claimed that there was "reasonable doubt" as to whether the assault was racially motivated. However, in April 2009, the second-instance court, presided by Judge Bela Wirth, ruled that a racial motivation was proven by the attackers racist symbols on their clothes and as tattoos. The perpetrators received prison sentences ranging from one to two-and-a-half years.²⁶

²² European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

²³ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

²⁴ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

²⁵ European Roma Rights Centre, *Attacks against Roma in Hungary January 2008-June 2009*, <http://www.errc.org/>, 15 July 2009, <http://www.errc.org/db/03/FF/m000003FF.pdf>

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