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A Report Prepared for the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

**By Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Project and
Human Rights Watch/Helsinki**

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We would be in a completely different situation if the majority would come to realize that we have been living together for many decades now, that their history is our history too.

- Ágnes Daróczi, *Magyar Narancs*, July 13, 1995, pp. 8-9.

Summary

As Hungary completes a fifth year of painful restructuring, the economic and social diagnosis for Roma is increasingly desperate. The most immediate and dramatic threat to Roma comes from attacks and harassment by racist hate groups. In the meantime, less visible patterns of endemic discrimination and increasing social marginalization pose an equally serious danger for Hungary's largest minority.

Roma (Gypsy) children in Hungary suffer from unremitting discrimination in schools and in the general community. Barely half of all Roma finish primary school; a large percentage of those have received most of their education in segregated "remedial" classes and schools in which very few Hungarian children are placed. Roma children are already at a disadvantage when they enter school because of their poverty, their parents' lack of education, and direct prejudice. Most Hungarian teachers do not expect Roma children to perform well and shunt them off to special schools that provide them with inferior education. Only a handful of Roma students graduate from, or even attend, academic high schools.

Most urban Roma children live in ghettoized slums, or in the worst housing projects; in the countryside, they live on "Gypsy rows," or increasingly, in separate, all-Roma villages. Many public establishments exclude Roma, often quite openly. Moreover, Roma in Hungary are often the targets of violence carried out by "skinheads" and other extremist groups. Many have been the victims of serious attacks, often with the acquiescence of police and sometimes with their active involvement.

Background

As Hungary completes a fifth year of painful restructuring, the economic and social diagnosis for Roma is increasingly desperate. The most immediate and dramatic threat to Roma comes from attacks and harassment by racist hate groups. In the meantime, less visible patterns of endemic discrimination and increasing social marginalization pose an equally serious danger for Hungary's largest minority.

The major social and structural upheavals in Hungarian society since the collapse of communism, coupled with increasingly open discrimination, have had a disproportionately large and negative impact on Roma, whose low social status, lack of access to education, and isolation make them relatively unable to defend themselves and their interests. Reforms initiated by Hungarian politicians have often been undertaken without considering their devastating impact on the country's Roma. Roma suffer nearly total marginalization within Hungarian society: they are almost entirely absent from the visible political, academic, commercial, and social life of the country.

Roma have borne the heaviest burdens in the economic restructuring that has followed the transition to a market economy. They were the first to be fired from their jobs in 1989 and 1990, and many have been unemployed since. Unemployment among Roma is more than 60 percent; outside of relatively prosperous Budapest, areas with nearly 100 percent unemployment among Roma are not uncommon. Unemployment rates for the entire country, including the high figures for Roma, are about 13 percent. Roma comprise 5-6 percent of the current population of Hungary.

Economic hardship and freedom of expression have led many Hungarians to become increasingly willing to voice negative opinions about Roma; people are less reluctant to state openly anti-Roma views and/or to support government policies or individual actions that directly or indirectly focus on "bringing the Roma into line." Roma complain of an "everyday racism" that colors all of their relations with the majority Hungarian population.

Roma are frequently victims of community violence: many are routinely subjected to harassment and intimidation by skinheads and other extremist elements of society; many have been subjected to physical attack, or to the threat of physical attack. After peaking in 1991, skinhead attacks on Roma and other minorities declined; in the spring of 1995, however, local human rights monitoring groups reported a sudden jump in the number of attacks, perhaps signaling a renewed campaign of anti-Roma

violence. Many of the attacks in recent years have involved not only the acquiescence of local police, but even their active involvement. The national government has consistently denied the existence of racial violence in the country.

There are areas of progress: Roma, like other Hungarian citizens, enjoy new political freedom to form groups and associations, and the number of Roma organizations has grown consistently since 1989. Open expression of Roma cultural and ethnic identity is no longer officially discouraged. President Árpád Göncz has proposed legislation that would specifically address discrimination against Roma, although only the portion dealing with the criminal code has as yet been adopted. Additionally, there have been several potentially important political initiatives by the government since the end of 1995 - including the formation of a Roma Program Commission in the Parliament, as well as a public foundation and a coordinating council to deal with the effects of the economic and political transition of the Roma community. However, these initiatives are not unambiguously positive developments, and to date, they have produced no concrete programs or results.

Perhaps the single most important development in the past two and one-half years is the establishment of a system of minority self-government for Hungary's thirteen recognized minorities, including the Roma. The Law on Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities, passed in July 1993, proposed an ambitious and progressive system of minority rights, including the election of local and national councils, or self-governments, with authority over the cultural, linguistic, and educational concerns of the respective minorities. Elections for the local self-governments were held in late 1994, and the national assemblies were formed in early 1995.

However, the new minorities system has largely failed to deliver on its promise. The self-governments are only nominally funded and are completely dependent on the local Hungarian councils. There is strong evidence that the government interfered with the election of the national Roma self-government, effectively violating the autonomy it had just granted to its largest minority.

Many observers believe the law's real purpose was to bolster Hungary's foreign policy goals and image in the West and that there was never any real commitment to improving the situation of minorities, especially Roma, within the country. It is perhaps telling that, in the first draft of the legislation creating the new self-government system, Roma were not on the list of protected minorities; only after vociferous protests did the Parliament include them.

Many Roma feel that the promises of democratic political reform, so strong in 1989, have amounted to very little for them. The initial interest that some of the liberal, Western-oriented parties showed in minority affairs has largely been jettisoned in the face of widespread hostility from the majority Hungarian populace. Roma remain on the periphery - isolated, despised, and denied effective participation in the process that is shaping the new Hungary and the role of minorities within it

Education

"Educate them? We ought to shoot them." - Hungarian man from Nagykanizsa, giving his opinion on plans to open a private high school for Roma students.

Lack of access to education continues to be one of the greatest barriers separating Roma from the larger Hungarian society. Almost no Roma complete high school or university; more than half effectively drop out of the school system before completing eighth grade. Throughout the country, Roma leaders and parents interviewed by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki cited improvement in the educational possibilities for Roma youth as one of their most pressing concerns.

Where Roma do attend school, they do not receive the same educational opportunities as Hungarians. Roma children are frequently isolated in segregated classes; in the larger cities, schools are increasingly divided into "Gypsified" and "Gypsy-free schools", and the system of "remedial" schools is used as a means of warehousing Roma students.

Roma have historically been excluded from the parallel system of schools designed to teach minority children in their own language and culture; the post-communist governments have made only marginal efforts to improve this situation. Resistance to cultural education for Roma is very strong within the mainstream society, though there is broad acceptance of cultural education for Hungary's other

minorities.

Before the second world war, Roma did not attend school in any significant numbers, and their schooling rates remained very low through the first decades of communist rule. Roma attendance and graduation rates for primary school improved markedly through the 1970s and 1980s, as the government completed programs aimed at bringing Roma into the main workforce. However, very few went on to academic high schools or received more than a rudimentary education.

Under the communist system, Roma were excluded from the government program that provided limited language and cultural education for other minorities. All so-called "national minorities" had the right to be educated in their mother language and culture; while this right was never fully realized in practice, most of the minorities did have grade schools and high schools that taught mostly or partly in the native language. The Roma, as an "ethnic minority," did not have the right to their own educational facilities. While a few grade schools for Roma were opened, they were designed as experiments in remedial education, rather than as ethnic educational facilities such as those established for the other minorities.

More widespread were separate Roma class forms, which were legalized for a period in the 1970s but then outlawed again. These separate forms did not actually teach Roma language or culture however, again being seen as a form of remedial education. Roma language and culture were not taught, either to Roma or to Hungarians, in the pre-1989 educational system.

Formal educational possibilities for Roma changed dramatically following 1989, although educational practice has changed little. Recent laws have accorded Roma the same status before the law as other minorities, including the right to educational facilities that teach the minority language and culture.

However, the level of education among Roma in Hungary continues to be extremely low. As economist Gábor Kertesi notes, "[t]he participation of young Roma in higher education has always been marginal. In recent years, however, it has shrunk to the point of near invisibility." Despite a rise in the number of Roma children who finish primary school and a subsequent rise in the literacy rate (today between 60 to 75 percent of Roma children finish grade school), it is still extremely rare for these children to advance beyond this level. Although nearly half of all Hungarian children continue their studies beyond the eighth grade at a secondary school, only 3 percent of all Roma children are admitted to secondary school, and of these a mere .1 percent go on to university." Report of the Research on the Hungarian Roma Community between October 1993 and February 1994," conducted by István Kemény, Gábor Havas, and Gábor Kertesi for the Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, p. 8.

Roma children experience endemic discrimination at every level of the school system. Most Roma children are already at a disadvantage when they enter school because of poverty, parents' lack of education, and direct prejudice. Roma parents interviewed by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki reported that their children were treated differently from others in school. József Bogdán of Kölked, where more than 50 percent of the primary school population is Roma, remarked:

Gypsy children enter school with a completely different background. They know different "rules." But when they don't behave the same way as Hungarian children, when they don't eat correctly or even speak correctly . . . the teacher doesn't understand - she just thinks they are stupid. I have had to teach my daughter to expect to work twice as hard to receive the same grade as her Hungarian classmates. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with József Bogdán, president of Gypsy minority council, Kölked, June 30, 1995.

Most teachers do not expect Roma students to perform well, and view Roma children and good students as mutually exclusive categories. One primary school teacher interviewed by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki in the town of N. described a pair of twins, two of her best students:

Although they are half-Gypsy, their skin is very light and they are so well-behaved and clever that you would almost think they were Hungarians. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with a teacher in town of N., June 29, 1995.

This kind of discrimination continues for those few Roma who do go on to high school or even university. Ern_ Kala described the reaction of the examining board when he applied for university:

When I went to sit for the university examinations, I was the only Gypsy student there. When I entered the examinations room, the first thing they asked me was, "Excuse me, are you looking for someone?" They almost fainted when they realized I was there for an examination. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Ern_ Kala, Miskolc, July 21, 1995.

The difficulties faced by Roma children are rendered more intractable by the segregation of Roma children into different classes or even different schools as early as the first grades of primary school; this has created an increasingly polarized educational system in Hungary. Despite being a minority of only 5 percent of the total population, Roma are much more likely to study with other Roma than with Hungarians.

Roma children are routinely shifted into separate classes. While the formation of 100 percent Roma class is relatively rare, it is quite common for a single class in a school to have a much higher percentage of Roma students than the other classes of the same age group, or than the population in the community as a whole.

In many communities, these concentrations of Roma are found in so-called remedial classes. These classes in theory provide students with extra help and aim to reintegrate them into the mainstream educational system at a later grade; in reality, such reintegration almost never takes place. In an interview with Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, the mayor and principal of the primary school in the town of Z. in Zala County, openly discussed these "separate forms:"

There is a need for separate classes, I admit. But there are reasons for this. The parents do not prepare their children for school, or help them or encourage them in their schoolwork. If we put the kids who aren't ready for school together with those who are, the better prepared kids suffer. We make separate classes so that the teacher will have the opportunity to spend more time with those children who can't keep up. If there is an outstanding Gypsy student we move him/her over to the "normal" class. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview, principal and mayor of Z., July 9, 1995.

Roma families interviewed in the town insisted that their children were ignored in the "special class," and that even the brighter, more prepared Roma children were kept there. Tibor Szegedi, a Roma serving on the city council of the nearby city of Barcs, protested the formation of an all-Roma class at the local primary school in 1994:

Last September, the school organized a Gypsy class. It was a completely separate, completely Gypsy class. The parents were very upset - some tried to transfer their children to the only other primary school in town, but they were told it was already full. So I organized a meeting with the principal, at which he assured the parents that this class would benefit their children. I went to visit later in the year to observe the class, and I saw that the kids were not getting any special attention. The teacher simply wasn't dealing with them. I know all of the children in that Gypsy class; some of them are very intelligent. If my child had been that age, I wouldn't have let him go to school there. I would have kept him at home. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Tibor Szegedi, Barcs, July 3, 1995.

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has also received reports of forms in which the letter "C" (for "*cigány*," i.e., Gypsy) was placed on the wall at the front of the "special class," as recently as 1993.

In many towns, one school has a remedial form serving all of the grade schools in the town; larger towns often have a completely separate remedial school. These schools are supposed to provide extra assistance for students who cannot keep the same pace as in the regular schools, and while in theory students graduating from such schools have the same right to go on to study in high school as any other student, in practice the remedial schools are dead end institutions, offering very little chance for placement to their graduates. A Roma parent in Ózd complained:

When our kids are ready for school, we go just hoping that they'll take them. Lots of times, though, before even seeing the child, they direct him/her to the "special school." What do they mean "special

school?" In plain language, that means Gypsy school or remedial school. Why do they send our children there without even examining them? Even though my child knows as much as a Hungarian child, they still sent him to the "special school," and that school isn't worth anything. That means that he'll attend nine forms and come out with only two forms worth of knowledge. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interviews in Roma settlement, Ózd, July 26, 1995.

Students are sent to these remedial schools (or placed in the remedial form within a school) following the recommendation of a teacher and a test, usually administered during or immediately after the two years of nursery school. Roma parents often complain that their children are shunted off to segregated "remedial" classes and schools, and that they are helpless to prevent this from happening. Parents do have the right to refuse such a placement for their child; however, many Roma parents are not fully aware of their rights. One teacher in a remedial school in Ózd described the procedure by which children are evaluated:

There is an education committee in the town that examines children who seem to be having trouble in nursery school/kindergarten, to decide whether they should go to a regular school or come here. Gypsy parents, even though they have the right to challenge a decision by the committee, rarely do so. In fact, sometimes Gypsy parents bring a child directly here, because his brothers and sisters are already here. Hungarian parents, on the other hand, often refuse to send their children here even if the committee has recommended it. They just won't allow their children to study in a school that is "full of Gypsies." Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Szilvia Pusztai, Ózd, July 26, 1995.

One member of the education committee responsible for recommending children for remedial school in the same town, suggested in a newspaper interview that Roma may belong to a "weakened genetic type." György Kerényi and József Makai, "Csupa fekete" (Pure Black), *Magyar Narancs*, May 19, 1994, pp. 12-13.

In practice, very few Hungarian children are ever even tested, while effectively all Roma children are, with a sizable percentage eventually being recommended for remedial school or remedial classes. One parent told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that in his town, where the remedial class is 100 percent Roma, Roma make up 40 percent of the population in the village and 50 percent of the school population. Roma children are automatically placed into the remedial class to ensure work for the remedial class teacher.

The effect of this practice is a marked isolation of Roma students from the rest of the population, and a further reduction in their opportunity to attend secondary school:

This is the first appearance of discrimination in the school system - that the children are separated into "special classes" and "special schools" - where, even if a child has excellent capabilities and would have the native ability to continue his studies, he is essentially off the playing field from day one. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Judit Sz_ke, Budapest, June 20, 1995.

Even where there is not a remedial program in place, a similar process has developed in which certain schools are becoming "Gypsified," while surrounding schools operate in an increasingly "Gypsy-free" environment, especially in the larger cities. In Budapest's District VIII, where Roma make up about 15-20 percent of the population, certain schools have Roma populations approaching 90 percent, while others have much lower rates. One school that is in the district but run by the city government has almost no Roma students. Almost all the other schools in the district have Roma populations out of proportion to the Roma population in the district as a whole, because many Hungarian parents have moved their children to schools in other districts, in a local variant of "white flight." As education specialist and director of an VIII district Roma organization Judit Sz_ke commented, this tendency has been accelerated by the reforms enacted in the period since the change of government:

It is completely within the law for these schools to become established - schools which become Gypsy schools - not because someone explicitly wants or orders it, but because those who have the means to bring their children elsewhere will do so. This is a new trend - that parents are free to choose which school their children may attend, and thus the schools operating in poor material circumstances are becoming "Gypsified." It is because there are parents who aren't able to defend their interests and the interests of their children that these schools are coming into existence, and this is not good. It's

not good that "Gypsy schools" should be established in this way - they should be established with a goal, and a [pedagogical] conception, because these other schools, established out of necessity, don't open any perspective before [Gypsy] children. Now, kids with problems are bunched in one place, and no one has any conception of how to deal with them - there is no extra money that could compensate for the terrible material conditions. Clearly this is a dysfunctional system, and before long it discriminates against these children. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Judit Sz_ke, Budapest, June 20, 1995.

Some schools have converted themselves into "specialty schools" focusing on intensive education in one subject; these schools can then attract students from a wide geographic area, and often employ entrance examinations that further restrict access by Roma. Within a single school, a single grade is often divided into regular and specialized classes, with the Roma students concentrated in the regular classes, while Hungarian students take advanced courses.

Many of the decisions as to where a child shall study are made without any open discussion, disclosure of reasons, or right to appeal. One Roma parent registered this typical complaint:

They don't accept our children to the school we would like. They simply say "no" - they don't even explain why they won't accept our children to the schools we would like them to attend. They don't accept our children because we are Gypsies. They judge us by looking at us - they don't want to increase the numbers of Gypsy students studying at their school, and they turn us away. Parental complaint at the District VIII city offices.

There are also increasing economic barriers preventing Roma children from completing school. Following the removal or reduction of state subsidies for books, transportation, and dormitory space, the cost of equipping a child for school has risen dramatically; many Hungarians are finding it difficult to pay for books, and the generally poorer Roma have even less opportunity. One Roma parent from Baranya county lamented: "Either he'll have books or shoes. I can't afford both." A Hungarian teacher in the Northeast reported:

I have students who can't come to school because they have no shoes; many of my students have no winter clothes, and so in the winter they have to stay home. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Szilvia Pusztai, Ózd, July 26, 1995.

Many Hungarians send their children to large towns for secondary school, where they live in dormitories; increasingly, Hungarians are having their children commute to schools that offer stronger educational programs, and where Roma do not attend. The village of Nagyharsány in Baranya county, for example, is the seat for a grade school that also serves several surrounding villages, many of which have Roma majorities. Nagyharsány itself is majority Hungarian, but the school is almost entirely Roma; the Hungarian children of Nagyharsány almost all attend school in Siklos, a larger town nearby. Poorer Roma cannot afford to send their children away to school, and instead must rely on the nearest village school, where often the level of instruction is not as high.

Ethnically segregated educational facilities are not illegal in Hungary, and in fact the state operates a number of schools specifically dedicated to the purpose of providing minority children with an education in their own culture and language; Roma, who are Hungary's largest minority, have no state-operated schools. There is one private school which has received state funding for Roma students, the Gandhi secondary school. See below. (see above section on *Discrimination in Education before 1989*). However, in the main body of schools, separation of students by ethnicity is illegal; since 1992, educators have been forbidden even to keep statistics on the ethnicity of students (such statistics were compulsory up to that time).

This ban on "ethnic statistics" has made it virtually impossible to monitor the administration of the normative allowance allocated by the government to schools where minority children study. This money is directed to schools according to the number of minority children who study there; A yearly allowance of 16,500 forints per Roma child in primary school and 5,500 forints per Roma child in kindergarten. however, "the ridiculous thing is that they are supposed to count the minority children to determine how much 'minority money' the school will receive, but they are forbidden from determining which children belong to minorities." Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Judit Sz_ke, Budapest, June 20, 1995. The normative allowance is theoretically to be spent on improving the

cultural and educational opportunities of all minority children. However, education specialist Judit Sz_ke pointed out that the reality where Roma children are concerned is quite different. While many schools provide minority language and cultural classes for other minorities, many school administrators indicated that the money allocated for their Roma students was used to provide all students at the school with remedial classes, or to buy materials or equipment for the whole school:

The law specifies what this money is to be used for, but there is no accountability. Most of the money [allocated to a town] ends up being spent on other things, and never reaches those for whom it was intended. They give scraps to [Gypsy children], and then buy a video for a school which not even one Gypsy child attends. The remedial school - where the Gypsy children of the community are very neatly segregated - there the toilet is in the yard."

Sz_ke explains that the problem can not be put down to a simple misallocation of funds; rather, the law itself treats Roma differently from other minorities:

The law itself is indicative of the general attitude towards Gypsies. The first point of the law says that all minority students are entitled to extra money for the purpose of minority education. The second point says that Gypsy students may receive extra money for remedial classes. So for the Armenian student, remedial classes are not allowed by the law, while the Gypsy student is not entitled to extra classes or activities dealing with his history, culture, language, etc. The law itself is fundamentally flawed, because it specifies remedial classes only for Gypsy children. Not every Gypsy child needs remedial classes and not only Gypsy children need remedial classes. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Judit Sz_ke, Budapest, June 20, 1995.

Anna Csongor, director of the Autonomy Foundation, adds that the law effectively equates "Roma identity" with "disadvantaged situation:"

The essence of the problem is that there exists a minority normative allowance, which may be used in one of two ways. First, there are "the other minorities" - in other words, not the Gypsies - the national minorities - for them there is normative money specifically for cultural activities. In their cases the normative money is distributed so they can study their mother tongue, preserve their own culture, etc. In the case of the Gypsies the language of the law specifies that the normative money is specifically for remedial classes. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Anna Csongor, Budapest, June 21, 1995.

There are at most a handful of primary schools in which Romany is taught, and only one school in which Beash Beash, a variant of Romanian, is spoken by a group of Roma who live in southwestern Hungary, northern Croatia and Vojvodina in Serbia. is taught. These few instances of Romany language teaching all result from local or personal initiatives; they are not state organized programs. Over the course of numerous interviews with school officials conducted throughout the country, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki did not find any instances of Romany language or cultural classes being organized by a school for the benefit of Roma students, despite the fact that many schools reported receiving the normative minority funds.

Lots of Gypsy kids need remedial classes; but so do lots of kids who merely come from disadvantaged backgrounds. I don't know on what grounds it has been decided that Gypsy children should be shut out from the same possibilities available to children of any other nationality - they have a culture, too; they have a language, too. This money is for national minorities, but some children are accorded positive discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity - cultural classes, national song and dance, language classes - while others, the Gypsies, because of their socially disadvantaged situation, are determined to be in need of remedial classes - as if possessed of some special disadvantage on the basis of their ethnicity. In all the other cases the law is positive; the same law, however, treats Gypsies as a kind of "negative minority," which has yet to be brought up to the level of all the others. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Anna Csongor, Budapest, June 21, 1995.

Other minorities most often consider their minority identity a positive value and willingly claim their minority membership, whereas many Roma are reluctant to admit to their minority identity, because, as one parent put it, "It's not so good to be a Gypsy here." Roma suffer from an organizational disadvantage as well; the funds set aside for other minorities are generally funneled through well-

established political and cultural organizations (often supported by the "mother country") and spent effectively on language classes and cultural activities.

Roma, having no mother country, are completely reliant upon the Hungarian government, which has failed to provide the material support for Roma cultural education or to develop a curriculum that includes or even recognizes the existence of Roma: there is no state or county-level program for Romany language teaching, nor for the development of a corps of teachers capable of teaching Romany languages. Hungarian textbooks make no mention of Roma history, culture, folk-tales, music; they make no mention of Roma at all.

Not surprisingly, there is a total lack of information within the educational system about Roma and Roma culture; the word "Gypsy" has overwhelmingly negative associations. An informal survey conducted by a Roma social worker in a high school in northeastern Hungary revealed how little most students and teachers know about Roma and Gypsy culture:

I asked them a series of questions - very simple questions about Gypsies, like "Where do Gypsies come from, and when did they arrive in Hungary?"; "Do Gypsies have their own language?"; "What are the traditional trades practiced by Gypsies?"; and "How many Gypsies live in Hungary?". I was astounded by the answers, first, because the teacher knew no more than the students, and second, because they all knew more about North American Indians than about the Gypsies who live in their own country! They knew nothing about us. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Jen_ Sötét, Budapest, July 19, 1995.

Many school administrators and government officials assert that Roma do not want special schools or educational programs, claiming that Roma "don't have a culture" or "just want to assimilate." Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interviews with various Gypsy families revealed that there is in fact a wide range of opinion on this subject within the Roma community. Many Roma expressed a strong desire to see that their children learn their traditional language and maintain their culture. A Roma self-government representative, a young father, insisted that "we would like to have education in the Beash language, but we don't have any money, and without money we can't get a program off the ground. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with József Kosztics, Sikolosnagyfalu, July 31, 1995.

One Hungarian teacher explained that the relative lack of demand for education in the Romany language is itself a product of the former government's policies towards educating Roma, and hardly justifies continuing that policy today. "Gypsy languages were prohibited and discouraged for so long that. . .it would be naive to think that there could be a lot of demand right now. . .when the language has been denigrated for so many years. This doesn't mean that there couldn't be a demand within a few years, if things changed. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with primary school teacher in Tolna County, August 1995.

There has been some evidence of limited improvement in the educational status of Roma since the change of government. Sociologist and editor Gábor Havas identifies grade schools as "the one area in which the situation for Roma has improved in the last fifteen years." Basic literacy rates have risen, and more than half of all Roma now finish the eight grades of primary school. Havas goes on to note that "now, the real point of decision is between primary school and secondary school," Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Gábor Havas, Budapest, July 14, 1995. with almost no Roma continuing on to ninth grade. The situation at the secondary school level has probably worsened since 1989. Up to that time, some Roma were able to continue their studies in apprentice programs with state companies, a system that has now all but collapsed.

A major improvement has been the opening of Hungary's first high school for Roma. In February 1994, the Gandhi high school, a private high school with state funding, opened in Pécs in southwestern Hungary. The school is not exclusively for Roma - one fifth of its students are Hungarian - nor is it formally an ethnic Roma school, but it does focus on Roma cultural issues and teaches both the Romany and Beash languages. János Bogdán, the principal and himself a Beash Roma, spoke to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki about the significance of this new effort:

. . . one of the school's greatest successes has been its effect outside of the school. By its very existence, it has stimulated local schools in the region to change, because more attention has been

focused on them by our search for talented Gypsy students. Moreover, it has created a competitive atmosphere in which Gypsy students have some possibility held out to them - a focus for their ambitions. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with János Bogdán, Pécs, July 2, 1995.

As an example, Bogdán cites his own home village, Görgeteg, in Somogy County: "Gypsies have been in Görgeteg for 500 years, and only four have received high school diplomas in all that time; in the past two years, two students have begun studying in the Gandhi high school." Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with János Bogdán, Pécs, July 2, 1995.

At present, there are still no state-run high schools (or non-experimental grade schools) for Roma in Hungary, although the other minorities continue to maintain networks of schools with government funding. While Human Rights Watch/Helsinki was researching this report, the school's foundation and the government were negotiating to recreate the school as a state foundation. Many Roma leaders see the creation of more schools like the Gandhi as a step that needs to be taken to equalize the situation between Roma and other Hungarian minorities. The government presently has no plans to open any special Roma schools, however.

According to Péter Radó, an official in the Ministry of Culture and Education responsible for minority programs, the state budget presently being prepared will include a proposal for a network of dormitories for high-school-aged Roma who have already been accepted to regular high schools. These students will receive additional tutoring and education related to Roma culture and history at the dormitory. Dormitories for high school students are quite common in Hungary; of the few Roma who are admitted to high schools, 90 percent drop out within a year, and according to one study most of these cited the dormitory, where they are almost certainly isolated from the Roma community, as one of the most difficult elements of their experience. Radó says that the proposed project will aim to reduce this dropout rate. As yet, however, no money has been allocated for this project. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Péter Radó, Budapest, July 12, 1995.

It is frequently noted by Hungarian educators and politicians that, in the present economic transition, it is simply unreasonable to expect the state to find the funds to support new educational initiatives. Reservations about the high costs of such programs during times of economic hardship must also be set in context, however. Following 1990, the government embarked on a massive program to retrain Russian teachers as English teachers, with a goal of training 10,000 new teachers. The costs of the two-year program were paid for in full by the state. Additionally, although the system of minority schools was already built and paid for, the state recently allocated funds for the creation of a brand new high school following the split of the formerly unified Serb-Croat minority high school. There has been, or is planned to be, some financial outlay on Roma education projects since 1989 - the Gandhi secondary school and the proposed dormitory network - but not in sums proportional to their share of the population, nor reflecting a concerted desire to counterbalance previous government policies of repression and neglect.

Human Rights Watch Recommendations

Human Rights Watch has urged the Hungarian government to:

- Abide by and fully implement its obligations under international law and the obligations towards its minority citizens that the nation has undertaken in its own laws. This should include:
 - (1) ensuring to all its citizens, whether Hungarian, Roma, or of another minority, equal protection of the laws;
 - (2) guaranteeing the security of all persons, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or background, from violent attack or bodily harm, whether inflicted by agents of the government or by individuals
 - (3) prohibiting all forms of discrimination against Roma or other minorities in the governmental, public, and commercial spheres; and
 - (4) enacting President Göncz's three legislative suggestions for improving the status of minorities.

- Deter and punish private violence against Roma. This will require that the government:
 - (1) prosecute any individuals or groups of individuals, including citizens' guards, who attack Roma or other minorities under Paragraph 156 or similar legislation;
 - (2) investigate reports of police failing to respond to attacks on Roma or other minorities, failing to investigate such attacks, or shielding assailants from prosecution; make public the findings of such investigations; and
 - (3) investigate the activities of skinhead groups or other groups that commit acts of violence against

minorities and publish the results of any investigation.

- Deter and punish police violence against Roma. Of primary importance will be measures taken to:
(1) prosecute any policemen participating in attacks on Roma or other minorities under Paragraph 156 or similar legislation;

- (2) investigate reports of beatings, forced interrogation, unlawful imprisonment, harassment during identity checks and other mistreatment during official procedures; make public the findings of the investigation, including the number of complaints, their disposition, and the results of disciplinary actions.

- Establish a fully independent and permanent internal affairs review board, with a separate staff and budget, to investigate complaints against policemen. Make public any findings of such a review board.

- Ensure that the regional investigating prosecutors offices have sufficient staff, technical resources, and funding to carry out their own investigations independent of the police when they are inquiring into complaints against policemen.

- End large-scale raids by commando squads against Roma settlements; prosecute and punish and police or private citizens found to have taken part or authorized such raids.

- Create an effective independent channel for lodging citizen complaints against the police. Expand and enforce the authority of the newly created ombudsman's office, and give it adequate and independent financing.

- Increase training in human and civil rights and limited use of force for policemen.

- Encourage the recruitment of Roma into the police force.

- In the field of education, it is of primary importance that steps are taken to:

- (1) reform the selection process for remedial classes and schools. Investigate any remedial class or school in which Roma children make up a disproportionately large share of the students. Require objective standards for whom to test and how to test them;

- (2) investigate and reform the admissions policies and practices of high schools to ensure they are not discriminatory against Roma students; and

- (3) allow local school authorities to keep confidential and 'blind' statistics on ethnicity for the purpose of monitoring compliance with the above-mentioned measures.

- To combat discrimination in the labor market, the government must:

- (1) enforce and expand the existing prohibitions against discrimination in employment; and

- (2) investigate reports of racial coding and discriminatory treatment of Roma applicants at government employment agencies. Establish disciplinary procedures for agency workers who fail to report a client's request for only non-Roma applicants.

- To prevent continued discrimination against Roma in access to housing and land, the government should:

- (1) prohibit, in statute and practice, discrimination against Roma or other minorities in the extension of credit for housing, and enforce such a prohibition;

- (2) prohibit, in statute and practice, discrimination against Roma or other minorities in the sale or rental of housing, and enforce such a prohibition;

- (3) prohibit the eviction of tenants and squatter tenants without due process; investigate cases in which a large number of Roma are being evicted; and

- (4) investigate the operations of the coupon compensation program to determine if Roma who worked on collectives were denied equal access to compensation.

- In order to combat a persistent pattern of discrimination against Roma in access to government services, the government should:

- (1) prohibit discrimination against Roma or other minorities in public establishments, and provide substantive punishments - in the form of heavy fines, loss of license or closure - for owners or merchants who continue to bar Roma from their establishments;

- (2) prohibit and punish criminal harassment of Roma or other minorities on public transportation and in

public spaces; and

(3) ensure that Roma are accorded full and equal access to government offices and services.

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