

Roma people victims of the French government xenophobia

Using the incidents that happened in the center of France in July 18th 2010 as a pretext, the French President asked for a meeting about “problems that arised behavior from some people inside Travelers and Roma” in order among others, “to decide the deportation of all camps in an irregular situation”. With statements reiterated and fully repeated in the media, French government reactivates a common confusion between two categories inside different populations, both of them are stigmatized: on one hand the “Travelers” (according to an expression that points out someone subjected to an administrative document called “livret de circulation”, literally a “movement record book”) and on the other hand, “Roma” coming from Bulgaria and mostly from Romania.

Roma from central Europe are, once again, targeted, considered as “irregular” or even more as “illegal”. Though, they benefit from freedom of movement inside the European Union even if France keeps them in a “transitional” status. Migreurop network is concerned about amalgams and stereotypes provided by French State’s highest bodies concerning people which are already widely victims of discrimination.

Following suit Italian government and despite heated protests from foreign countries and France (even in their own political party), French authorities have announced the deportation of 850 Roma before the end of August. “We are not inclined to welcome in France all Roma from Romania and Bulgaria” said Minister of Home Affairs in an interview for the French newspaper, *Le Monde* (22-23/8/10). Effectively, the camps’ evacuation by force, then the injunction to people, saying that they have to return to their country without taking into consideration their personal and familial situation, have been widely supported on those supposed common condition of “Roma”. These deportations, against all obviousness, presented as “humanitarian” and “voluntary” are opposite to the principle that forbids collective deportation.

Which indications were given to the police in sight to distinguish a Romanian “Roma” from another Romanian? Do Roma people wear a star on their clothes as a sign of distinction? Fortunately it is not provided by French law or EU texts. How a member of the government (who was in addition condemned recently for his racist declaration toward Arabs) can with impunity designate undesirable foreigners because of their ethnicity? The latter, claimed or not by people to be summonsed, would not base a public policy or allow to derogate to the rule of equality of treatment. The defamatory use of the word “Roma” is an indicator of a new escalation in the scapegoat policy. More generally, Migreurop becomes alarmed of a possible use of any form of ethnicity by European law, at the risk, even under the pretext to protect them, of designating populations as guilty to exist, as it seems to be the case for Roma in several countries in Europe.

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