



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL ROMA DAY

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council
Vienna, 16 April 2015

Mr. Chairman,

The Roma arrived in Norway in the second half of the 19th century. Estimated to approximately 500 people, they constitute the smallest national minority in my country.

Mr. Chairman,

The Norwegian Roma have been systematically oppressed and discriminated.

In the interwar period they were victims of exclusion policies by the Norwegian authorities. These culminated in the passing of a law in 1927, introducing the so-called «gypsy paragraph». From this time, Roma were denied access to Norway.

In 1934, a group of 68 Norwegian Roma travelling in Europe were denied re-entry to Norway. They were left on their own in a time when Europe was becoming increasingly dangerous for them. As a consequence, many of them perished in nazi concentration camps.

Exclusion policies in Norway continued in the decades after the war. The so-called «gypsy paragraph» was enforced until a change in public opinion led to its removal in 1956. The total number and identities of the Norwegian Roma that ended up in nazi concentration camps were not known until a government commissioned report was issued a few weeks ago.

Mr. Chairman,

Last week, Norway's Prime Minister Erna Solberg celebrated the International Roma Day with Norwegian Roma. She expressed her deepest regrets for what she described as a dark part of Norwegian history.

It is time for a moral reckoning, the Prime Minister said. The State must acknowledge responsibility for its wrongdoings and the injustice experienced by the Norwegian Roma. On behalf of the Norwegian State I would like to express my regrets to the Norwegian Roma, she said.

The Prime Minister also regretted the racist exclusion policies in the decades before and after the Second World War and the fatal consequences these policies had for the Norwegian Roma during the Holocaust.

The Prime Minister promised that the government will pay collective reparations. How will be determined through dialogue with representatives of the Norwegian Roma.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.