

To: Mr Nicolas Sarkozy
President of the French Republic

Mr President

ENAR-Cyprus Structure and KISA, in cooperation with migrant communities and other human rights NGOs, are protesting today in front of the French embassy in Nicosia, Cyprus, to express their concern over the measures put in place by France against French Travelers, migrant Roma and migrants in general. This protest is part of the European-wide mobilisation organised by ENAR (European Network Against Racism) and other European networks against your government's xenophobic and discriminatory policies.

The organisers of the protest are gravely concerned that the proposals for the extension of the possibilities of removing the French nationality from French citizens of foreign origin who commit certain crimes are contrary to the Republic's fundamental principle of equality between all citizens. Proposals made by members of your government to extend this possibility to cases of polygamy or excision are of particular concern, as such measures may have the effect of linking whole parts of the population with these marginal practices, and thereby instigating further prejudice, discrimination and racism.

We are also gravely concerned about the associations made in the political discourse engaged by members of your government between Roma and criminal behaviour. Making blanket characterizations and linking Roma communities to illegal settlements, illicit trafficking and exploitation of children for begging, prostitution or crime risks reinforcing prejudices and discriminatory perceptions about this ethnic group that is already the most discriminated against in the EU.

The organisers are very worried that the Roma and migrants in general have become the target of organised racist violence in several European countries, and calls on France and the other Member States of the EU to refrain from making statements which inflame public opinion against them.

We are also alarmed at France's systematic dismantling of "illegal" settlements, while its own law requiring that towns whose populations exceed 5,000 provide suitable camping grounds for Traveller communities is not fully implemented. Moreover, we urge you to ensure France's obligations to comply with international law during any treatment of Roma or Travelers are respected. Any relocations, even from unlawful settlements, should only take place following consultations and the consent of the affected residents.

Furthermore, we urge France and the other EU Member States to guarantee that each EU citizen is sufficiently protected from potential abuse of power by the State regarding their expulsion policies.

In view of your repeated calls to the EU institutions to act for Roma integration, we hope France and other European Governments will now focus on combating the long-standing legal and societal discrimination that Roma and Travellers face, instead of embarking on a populist and security driven agenda. ENAR calls on the EU and its Member States to ensure the integration of Roma in Europe in a strategic, coordinated and inclusive manner.

We call for a comprehensive EU Roma strategy which should ensure that Roma communities are protected from discrimination, have equal access to education, employment, healthcare and housing, and are empowered through participation in the civic and economic life of their country.

We call on France and the other EU Member States to proceed more systematically to the integration of Roma and migrants in general, so as to ensure their protection from discrimination and racism and that they enjoy their human rights in full, as these are enshrined in the basic principles of the European Union and the republican principles of France.

Signed by:

KISA - Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism – ENAR-Cyprus Coordination – Nepalese Equality Partner Association for Liberty (NEPAL) – Anatropi Magazine – ANTIGONE-Information & Documentation Centre on racism, ecology, peace and non violence – Cyprus Community Media Centre – Cyprus Greens (Youth) - Cyprus Greek Teachers' Organisation (POED) – Cyprus Labour Institute (INEK-PEO) – Enosi Anarchigon – HFC “Hope For Children” UNCRC Policy Center – Kenyan Welfare Association in Cyprus – Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies (MIGS) - New Cyprus Party (YKP) – Overseas Filipino Workers Family Club-Cyprus chapter – Palestinian Community House – Palestinian Community in Cyprus – Stop the War Coalition – Symfiliosi – The Management Centre – Tinig Pinoy- Filipino Voice (Politis) – United Democratic Youth Organization (EDON) – Workers Democracy – Youth Against Nationalism

Nicosia, 6 September 2010