

Press Release

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PACE President stresses there must be 'no witch-hunt of Romanians in Italy'

Strasbourg, 07.11.2007 – René van der Linden, President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), today called for calm and a balanced response from the Italian government, following its steps to crackdown on Romanian migrants, including Romanian Roma living in Italy.

"The Italian Government and the Italian people are right to be angered following the brutal murder of an Italian woman outside a Rome train station," Mr van der Linden said. "The arrest of a Romanian suspect in this murder should not, however, lead to a witch-hunt of Romanians. The Italian Government may well have the right to expel a number of persons on public safety grounds, but all decisions must be subject to judicial review and taken on an individual basis rather than collectively."

Mr van der Linden pointed to Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 to the European Convention on Human Rights, ratified by Italy, which explicitly prohibits the collective expulsion of aliens.

He expressed serious concern about reports that masked assailants carrying knives and clubs had stabbed and beaten four Romanians in Rome last week, and that a rudimentary bomb exploded outside a Romanian shop near the capital. "It is generally agreed that serious offences motivated by racism and xenophobia are not prevalent in Italy. I therefore hope that these apparent reprisal attacks will remain isolated incidents."

The President concluded by welcoming the news that the Prime Ministers of Italy and Romania will meet to defuse tension over the issue of the treatment of Romanians in Italy.

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).