

# Press Release

## Directorate of Communication

Ref: 296a09

Tel. +33 3 88 41 25 60

Fax +33 3 88 41 39 11

Internet: [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

e-mail: [pressunit@coe.int](mailto:pressunit@coe.int)



### 47 member States

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Malta  
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Slovakia  
Slovenia  
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Switzerland  
"The former Yugoslav  
Republic of  
Macedonia"  
Turkey  
Ukraine  
United Kingdom

## International Roma Day on 8 April 2009

### *Statement by Secretary General Terry Davis*

Strasbourg, 07.04.2009 - "As a result of their turbulent history and constant uprooting, the Roma have become a specific type of disadvantaged and vulnerable minority [...] they therefore require special protection". This is a quotation from a judgment by the European Court of Human Rights. Unfortunately, it is as relevant today as it was when it was issued in 2007.

In all democratic societies racist attacks and murders must be condemned and the perpetrators punished. Recent attacks on Roma in different parts of Europe should make us face the full horror of the situation and force us to question it.

Despite having implemented national integration policies for over a decade, stereotypes and irrational fears about Roma are still strong, and they have even grown stronger in some cases.

To act effectively against discrimination, there is an urgent need to review and redesign integration policies for Roma. We must ensure that safeguards against discrimination are included in these policies, and that everyone is taught tolerance and respect for people who may be different, but are still equal. History shows that the fight against racism can only be successful if it is embraced by the majority of the population.

In some countries, Roma are seen as a social problem or - worse still - a security problem, and it is disturbing to observe how racial and ethnic profiling has re-emerged as part of some security policies.

International Roma Day 2009 provides an opportunity for everyone, governments, international organizations and civil society to prove that, despite the current economic downturn, they intend to devote time, energy and resources to ensure that all Roma in Europe enjoy human rights on an equal footing with all other European citizens.

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