

Central Council of German Sinti and Roma

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Press statement

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The planned deportation of Roma to Kosovo will lead to new tensions and persecution of minorities in Kosovo

The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma appeals to the Federal Government and international institutions

Ten years after the end of the war in Kosovo, which led to the complete displacement of Roma, Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians by the Kosovo Albanians, the German Federal Government is now planning, in spite of insistent warnings from international institutions and organizations, to deport nearly 10,000 Roma to Kosovo.

The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma appeals to the Federal Government and the governments of the German Länder to suspend the repatriation agreement with Kosovo and to grant permanent residence to the members of Kosovar minorities, some of which have lived in Germany for more than 10 years.

Contrary to information provided by the Federal Government, Roma are still the victims of daily violence in Kosovo. All international organizations and institutions report on this common threat to minorities, especially to the Roma in Kosovo. The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma is convinced that the planned deportation of thousands of Roma to Kosovo will result in new and sharp tensions between minorities and Kosovo Albanians that will severely threaten the safety of the families concerned.

The deported families have literally nothing in Kosovo – no infrastructure on the part of the Kosovar government, no jobs or housing. Roma, Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians usually owned houses in Kosovo; immediately after the war, Kosovo Albanians destroyed thousands of houses, often entire villages, to ensure that the displaced population could not return. In the cities, the houses were either destroyed or taken by Albanians. The returning families simply have no way of regaining their property – any attempt to do so would result in an immediate outbreak of violence. A functioning judiciary does not exist in Kosovo.

A return to Kosovo would be a disaster, especially for the children of the families concerned. They have lived in Germany for almost ten years, many children were born here and speak neither Albanian nor Serbian; their native language is German. The school system in Kosovo is not even remotely prepared for the repatriates, besides the fact that the children of the Roma minority are not accepted in the schools.

Neither the new constitution of Kosovo nor the new legislation offer effective protection to the minorities of Kosovo – Bosniaks, Croatians, Gorani, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians and others; rather, some of the new laws pose additional problems for the minorities. The new law for the local self-administration in Kosovo, for instance, abolishes the proportional participation of minorities in public service.

Today, the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma addresses the international organizations responsible, the UNHCR, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the OSCE, to express its concern about a new spiral of violence in Kosovo. Romani Rose appeals to the Federal Government and the governments of the Länder to give priority to the safety of the people concerned and discontinue plans to deport minority members to Kosovo.

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