



Idea Rom Onlus



Opera Nomadi

**PARALLEL SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL  
FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITALY  
UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL  
FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN  
FOR ITS CONSIDERATION AT THE 49th SESSION 11 TO 29 JULY 2011  
CONCERNING THE SITUATION OF ROMANI WOMEN IN ITALY**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC),<sup>1</sup> Idea Rom Onlus<sup>2</sup> and Opera Nomadi Reggio Calabria<sup>3</sup> (partners) jointly submit this parallel report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (Committee) for its July 2011 review of Italy's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
2. This submission is based upon participatory field research conducted by the ERRC and three Romani researchers between February and May 2011 in Turin, Rome and Reggio Calabria.<sup>4</sup> During research, in-depth interviews were conducted with 88 Romani women identified through snowball sampling. The submission also takes into account information from the partners, other grassroots organisations, follow-up interviews by the ERRC and desk research. Figures provided in this submission on experiences of violence and discrimination of Romani women are based on this research sample. This sample is not statistically representative, but it does provide relevant insight into the common experiences of Romani women as compared to non-Romani women in the country.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. In 1985 Italy ratified United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).<sup>5</sup> The Italian Constitution guarantees equal social dignity and equality before the law on the basis of sex and race at Article 3.<sup>6</sup> In 2003, Italy transposed into national law the EU Racial Equality Directive, providing protection against racial and ethnic discrimination.<sup>7</sup>
4. According to the most recent figures, there are approximately 150,000 Roma and Sinti living in Italy, and about half of whom are Italian citizens, while 20-25% are from European Union countries, chiefly Romania, and the remainder from the countries of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>8</sup> Some Roma and Sinti have lived in Italy since the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> New waves of Roma from Central and Eastern Europe have moved to Italy for decades, and there are Roma from the former Yugoslavia who have

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<sup>1</sup> The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is an international public interest law organisation which combats anti-Romani racism and human rights abuses of Roma. The approach of the ERRC involves strategic litigation, international advocacy, research and policy development and training of Romani activists. [www.errc.org](http://www.errc.org).

<sup>2</sup> Idea Rom Onlus (Idea Rom) is a Romani women's NGO working in Turin in districts with the biggest settlements of Romani families. Idea Rom is a member of the Federazione Romani (Italian Romani Federation). In 2010 the association was awarded a Plaque of Honour by the President of the Republic of Italy for its work in promoting social integration of Romani communities. The association is made up of women belonging to different communities, some with professional experience in cultural mediation, needs assessment and project planning and implementation. Idea Rom promotes Romani direct representation. Idea Rom supports educational success, women's entrepreneurship and job placement, access to integrated housing and cultural promotion. [www.idealrom.it](http://www.idealrom.it).

<sup>3</sup> Opera Nomadi is an NGO based in Reggio Calabria engaging in a range of activities based upon an intercultural dialogue between local Romani communities and the majority and aimed at the integration of the Roma in all fields. Activities focus on the creation of job opportunities, professional trainings, raising the quality of formal education, and campaigning and lobbying, especially for integrated housing. Romani mediators work in all of the projects. Advocacy activities have secured integrated housing for many families.

<sup>4</sup> This submission was drafted by Concetta Smedile and edited by Ostalinda Maya Ovalle, Tara Bedard and Rob Kushen. Significant desk research was conducted by Rosi Mangiacavallo, ERRC Human Rights Monitor for Italy, and Debjyoti Ghosh, an ERRC volunteer. Dana Iepure reviewed parts of the text.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 18 December 1979. Available at: [http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtsg\\_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en#EndDec](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en#EndDec) Italy ratified the Convention on 14 March, 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Italy, *Constitution of the Italian Republic*, Article 3, (1948), available at: [http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione\\_inglese.pdf](http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Italy, *Legislative Directive No. 215 Attuazione della direttiva 2000/43/CE per la parità di trattamento tra le persone indipendentemente dalla razza e dall'origine etnica* (9 July 2003), available at: [http://www.lavoro.gov.it/NR/rdonlyres/E9F70DD8-809B-4D6F-9CF1-EE57F6F8C7AF/0/Decreto\\_Legislativo\\_215\\_2003.pdf](http://www.lavoro.gov.it/NR/rdonlyres/E9F70DD8-809B-4D6F-9CF1-EE57F6F8C7AF/0/Decreto_Legislativo_215_2003.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> ERRC et al., *Security a la Italiana: Fingerprinting, Extreme Violence and Harassment of Roma in Italy* (July 2008), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4cda581d1f4.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Karpati, M, "La situazione attuale degli zingari in Italia," in *Lacio Drom* n.3-4-5 (1969): 77-83.

been living in Italy for up to 40 years and have become Italian citizens. During the wars of the 1990s, a new wave of Roma from the former Yugoslavia migrated to Italy, often seeking political asylum. Some, but not all, Romani asylum applicants were successful: there is a large population of Romani refugees living in Italy, while others are at risk of deportation due to a lack of documents or employment, despite having resided in Italy for more than 30 years.<sup>10</sup> There are also stateless Roma in Italy whose status is extremely precarious.<sup>11</sup> Roma from Romania have been migrating in increasing numbers to Italy over approximately the past 10 years. The lifting of the visa regime in 2002 and the January 2007 accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU have led to increased movement of Roma from these countries to Italy.<sup>12</sup>

5. In Italy, there is no Governmental policy to promote Roma and Sinti inclusion and Government actors have largely approached the situation of Roma and Sinti from a social control and security perspective. Sinti and Romani individuals have never been elected to the National Parliament or any regional or provincial council. There is no Romani or Sinti political party in Italy.
6. Underpinning the Italian government's approach to Roma and Sinti is the conviction that they are "nomads", although almost all Roma in Italy are sedentary.<sup>13</sup> The construction of segregated "nomad" camps reflects the official housing policy directed at them since the 1980s. Camps located on the periphery of cities and towns host around one third of the Roma living in Italy.<sup>14</sup>
7. Since May 2008 when the current Italian government was formed, it has adopted a new series of legal and policy measures which are explicitly discriminatory against Roma and Sinti in Italy. Namely, on 21 May 2008, the Italian Government adopted its "Declaration of the state of emergency with regard to settlements of nomad communities in the territories of Campania, Lazio and Lombardia regions", defining the presence of "nomads" as the cause of great social alarm with potentially grave consequences for public order and security. Since 2009 the State of Emergency also includes Piemonte and Veneto<sup>15</sup> and has been extended annually through the end of 2011. In this context, local municipalities have undertaken targeted measures which violate the human rights of Romani communities, including identification, census taking and photographing of camp residents (as well as finger-printing in a number of communities), expulsion and removal of persons with irregular status from formal camps and the destruction of informal camps.
8. Anti-Roma sentiment also plagues the Italian judiciary system, which often means a presumption of guilt by judges in the case of Roma.<sup>16</sup> According to the judge in the trial of a 16-year-old Romani girl

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<sup>10</sup> These Roma are without resident permits either due to a lack of formal employment or because they do not have their original documents.

<sup>11</sup> These Roma have their birth certificates, but do not have legal residence and thus cannot have either identity cards or passports. In order to gain legal residence, a foreigner must have a residence permit (*permesso di soggiorno*). Without this, legal residence, driver's licenses or access to social welfare is not given. Italian Ministry of the Interior, *Nuove norme sulla cittadinanza 91/1992, 5 February 1992 on citizenship*, available at:

[http://www.interno.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/servizi/legislazione/cittadinanza/legislazione\\_30.html](http://www.interno.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/servizi/legislazione/cittadinanza/legislazione_30.html). See also Nando Sigona and Lorenzo Monasta. *Imperfect Citizenship: Research Into Patterns of Racial Discrimination against Roma and Sinti in Italy (osservazione*, June 2006), available at: [http://www.osservazione.org/documenti/OA\\_imperfectcitizenship.pdf](http://www.osservazione.org/documenti/OA_imperfectcitizenship.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> ERRC et al., *Security a la Italiana: Fingerprinting, Extreme Violence and Harassment of Roma in Italy* (July 2008), available at: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/m00000428.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> According to a 2008 report by the Institute for Public Opinion Studies, 84% of Italians think Roma are *nomads*. See: Italian Senato della Repubblica, *Commissione Straordinaria Per La Tutela E La Promozione Dei Diritti Umani: Rapporto conclusivo dell'indagine sulla condizione di Rom, Sinti e Caminanti in Italia* (2011), available at: [http://www.roma-intercultura.it/userfiles/Rapporto%20indagine%20rom\\_sinti%20e%20caminanti.pdf](http://www.roma-intercultura.it/userfiles/Rapporto%20indagine%20rom_sinti%20e%20caminanti.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights, *the Housing Conditions of Roma and Travelers in the EU* (October 2009), available at: [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/ROMA-Housing-Comparative-Report\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/ROMA-Housing-Comparative-Report_en.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> ERRC et al. Submission Of The European Roma Rights Centre, Osservazione and Amalipé Romanò Concerning Italy for Consideration Under the Universal Periodic Review by the United Nations Human Rights Council at its 7th Session (February 2010), available at: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/04/29/m00000429.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Silvia Governatori, "La Debolezza Dei Rom Di Fronte Al Diritto-Spunti Dall Esperienza Di U N Giudice," in *Stato Di Diritto E Identita' Rom, L' Harmatan Italia*, ed. Alessandro Simoni (Torino: 2005). See also: Sabrina Tosi Cambini, "Nelle carte e nelle aule del tribunale, La costruzione della credibilita', il senso comune e la ragionevolezza", in *La Zingara Rapiitrice, Racconti, denunce, sentenze (1986-2007)* (CISU, Roma, 2008).

accused of kidnapping in Naples in 2008: “She is fully inserted into the traditions typical of Romani culture [...] which by common experience shows an inherent lack of respect for rules.”<sup>17</sup>

9. The findings of research for this submission reveal that, due to multiple discrimination, Romani women are vulnerable to police violence, domestic violence and discrimination in access to employment, education and health care by both State and non-State actors.

## **VIOLATIONS OF ROMANI WOMEN’S RIGHTS IN ITALY**

### **Police Violence**

10. The Article 1 definition of discrimination in CEDAW incorporated gender-based violence: “It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. Gender-based violence may breach specific provisions of the Convention, regardless of whether those provisions expressly mention violence.”<sup>18</sup> At Article 2(d) CEDAW calls on states to “refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation.”<sup>19</sup>
11. The ERRC has been documenting instances of violence against Roma by State and non-State actors since 1998.<sup>20</sup> Research for this submission indicates that violence and other rights violations against Roma continue and that Romani women are particularly affected by:
  - Violence, including verbal abuse and sexual harassment committed by law enforcement officials
  - Violence by non-state actors, including domestic violence and the failure of law enforcement to protect against domestic violence and punish offenders.
12. Violent acts directed against Romani women are influenced by a number of factors including, but not limited to, membership in a despised ethnic minority, immigration status, statelessness, economic and social exclusion and false categorisation as “nomads”.
13. Sixty-one of 88 Romani women interviewed for this submission answered questions about attacks perpetrated by the police. Twenty-seven respondents refused to answer questions due to fear of retaliation against them or their family members:

Many of them confessed to me after the interviews that they were forced by the police to do things that they did not want to. They have been psychologically and sexually abused and were unable to report these abuses because they were told that their brothers, fathers or other family members would be taken from the streets, forced into cars, then beaten up and kept in jail by law enforcement officers. These women felt they could not report such incidents because they felt that nobody would believe them because of the high levels of prejudice against them because they are Roma. They feel that Romani women cannot rely on anyone.<sup>21</sup>

14. Twenty of 61 (33%) respondents recalled specific cases of police attacks against other Romani women. Sixteen (26%) respondents declared that they personally suffered attacks perpetrated by the police - in most cases the same person experienced multiple forms of violence during the same incident, including:

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<sup>17</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Everyday Intolerance: Racist and Xenophobic Violence in Italy* (March 2011), available at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/97231/section/1>.

<sup>18</sup> CEDAW, *General Recommendation No. 19* (1992). available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom19>.

<sup>19</sup> See: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article2>

<sup>20</sup> ERRC, *Campland: Racial Segregation of Roma in Italy* (October 2000), available at: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/00/0F/m0000000F.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Field researcher's notes. Rome, Italy: 3 May 2011.

- Physical violence such as slapping in the face and being beaten, punched or kicked (seven cases including four respondents who were pregnant at the time):

I have been stopped by police many times; once I was with my friends and they accused us of having stolen something. But we did not do anything! They kept us in jail. They beat us up while shouting, and forced us to watch a porno movie. I did not report it because everyone prefers to believe the Italian police over Roma;<sup>22</sup>

- Degrading treatment (12 cases) including intimate strip searches (eight cases), sometimes by officials of the opposite sex (three cases),<sup>23</sup> or haircutting (two cases).<sup>24</sup>

I was begging when the police came and then took me to the police station. There police women took off my clothes and I was forced to do push ups on the floor. I was completely naked.<sup>25</sup>

On 29 April 2005 Ms E.L. was accused of carrying cocaine on her person. She was then strip searched by a policeman in broad daylight near the Padova police station. A witness took pictures of Ms E.L. half naked, on the floor as police officers held her down with their feet. Ms E.L. was convicted of resistance to a public official under Article 337 of the Italian Criminal Code. She did not file a complaint against the law enforcement officials involved in this incident.<sup>26</sup>

- Verbal assault including insults, racist remarks and threats of violence (four cases);

In the last 5 years police came three times to the camp, entering my container, searching everywhere, and ill treating adults and children. Once they took me to the police station where I was told how smelly we Gypsies (Zingari)<sup>27</sup> are because we do not wash ourselves and that we are ignorant and should go back to our country as we are all useless. Then he [the police officer] kept insulting me and slapped me.<sup>28</sup>

- Sexual harassment at police stations including being forced to watch pornography (one case) and the threat of rape (two cases):

I was a minor, 15-years-old, and was accused of stealing. Without any proof against me the police said I was guilty and one of the police was going to abuse me sexually. Fortunately another one officer intervened and prevented this from happening. Other times they [police officers] threaten to cut my hair while beating me with their hands.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with a 27-year-old Romani woman. Rome, Italy: 12 March 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Strip searches performed by officials of the opposite sex are in contravention of Article 79 of the Legislative Decree no. 271 of 28 July 1989 - Rules for implementation, coordination and transitional provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code, which says that searches must be done by law enforcement officials of the same sex, except in cases of extreme urgency or impossibility. Article 249 of the Criminal Procedure Code states that 1. Before personal search the person concerned shall be given a copy of the warrant, with the notice of right to be assisted by someone he/she trusts, provided that it is readily available and suitable in accordance with Article 120. 2. The search is performed with respect and dignity, to the extent possible, the decency of the person. Available at [http://www.leggeonline.info/procedurapenale/titololll\\_3.php](http://www.leggeonline.info/procedurapenale/titololll_3.php).

<sup>24</sup> In Romani communities the cutting of hair is a signal of shame and impurity: "The police cut off all the hair of women accused of stealing." Interview with a 37-year-old Romani woman. Rome, Italy: 14 April 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with a 23-year-old Romani woman. Rome, Italy: 15 April 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Paola Bonatelli, "Percossa e denudata in pubblico," in *Avocati Senza Frontiere*, 13 May 2005, available at: <http://www.avocatisenzafriere.it/?p=1272>. Follow-up information based on ERRC telephone interviews with Ms E.L.'s lawyer, Aurora Dagostino, June 2011.

<sup>27</sup> *Zingari* is a derogative term commonly used to refer to Roma to Italy.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with a 35-year-old Romani woman. Rome, Italy: 3 April 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with a 27-year-old Romani woman. Rome, Italy: 10 March 2011.

15. By comparison, in a 2009 study only 5% of Italian and immigrant women reported experiences of violence at the hands of law enforcement officials.<sup>30</sup>
16. The violent incidents reported during research took place inside police stations, on the streets or inside shops. In two cases the violence occurred in the context of an eviction.<sup>31</sup> The main reasons Romani women who experienced violence were held in custody were lack of identity documents, involvement in begging or alleged involvement in petty crime.
17. Only two of the 16 (12.5%) Romani women that personally experienced violence, degrading treatment or sexual harassment reported the case. Neither obtained justice:
 

Law enforcement officials came to my container. They took me to the police station while my children remained alone at home. I was pregnant and they slapped me and did not want to free me. I reported this in front of the judge but the judge did not believe me. No one in my family could do anything because when the police are in uniform they are untouchable, they are always right.<sup>32</sup>
18. Of the remaining 14 women, three did not report the abuses they suffered due to fear, two thought no one would believe them, one was threatened with criminal charges, one did not have identity documents and eight did not specify the reason for not reporting.
19. According to local NGOs, Romani women are often charged with resisting a public official as a way of preventing them from pressing charges against the police for ill or degrading treatment. As a result many Romani women do not press charges and prefer to agree to a plea bargain in order to be released.<sup>33</sup>

### **Racist Violence by Private Individuals**

20. During research, five Romani women reported physical violence by Romani and non-Romani individuals. None reported their cases to authorities due to mistrust in the justice system:
 

I ran to the emergency care because my daughter-in-law was very sick. She was inside the emergency room with the doctors and I was outside waiting and crying. At a certain point a man who was waiting there got closer and, apparently annoyed by my crying slapped me while shouting at me. I called the police who were near the emergency care. Instead of taking the name of this man, the police took me back to the camp where I live to verify if I had a residence permit. When my children saw me, they started to cry since they thought something went wrong with their auntie.<sup>34</sup>
21. Three cases of physical violence took place in the streets and one on a bus. One case involved an 80-year-old Romani widow who, after her husband's death, resorted to begging in order to survive.
22. Violent, public attacks against Romani women remain relatively common occurrences, such as a widely reported case in Turin, in June 2010. Three Romani women rang the doorbell of the house of an Italian man who answered the door with a baseball bat.<sup>35</sup> He chased them and when he

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<sup>30</sup> Telefono Rosa Osservatorio, "Le voci segrete della violenza 2009", 12 July, 2010, available at: [http://www.telefonorosa.it/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=106%3Aconferenza-stampa-qvoci-segrete-della-violenza-2009q&catid=34%3Ahoma-page&lang=it](http://www.telefonorosa.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=106%3Aconferenza-stampa-qvoci-segrete-della-violenza-2009q&catid=34%3Ahoma-page&lang=it).

<sup>31</sup> Twenty-four of 88 respondents reported being evicted at some point in their lives.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with a 51-year-old Romani woman Rome, Italy: 28 February 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Email correspondence with Italian lawyer Gilberto Pagani: 6 May 2011. "I might appear to be cynical but such things happen every day, and the most serious cases are well known by everyone."

<sup>34</sup> Interview with a 38-year-old Romani woman. Rome, Italy: 2 March 2011.

<sup>35</sup> See: [http://www.corriere.it/cronache/10\\_giugno\\_14/rom-incinta-ultra\\_261fcb6a-7777-11df-9d1c-00144f02aabe.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/cronache/10_giugno_14/rom-incinta-ultra_261fcb6a-7777-11df-9d1c-00144f02aabe.shtml) and <http://www.giornalettismo.com/archives/67464/nomade-incinta-allottavo-mese/>.

reached them in the middle of the road the man hit and kicked one of the women who was pregnant. According to public officials in Turin, an investigation was opened; police found the baseball bat in the man's house. However, the credibility of the victim was in doubt because doctors reportedly discovered that the fetus was dead before the beating and not afterwards as the Romani woman had argued. The investigation has not been concluded.<sup>36</sup>

## Domestic Violence

23. Article 16 of the CEDAW requires States "to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations." CEDAW Recommendation No. 19 calls for States parties to "take appropriate and effective measures to overcome all forms of gender-based violence, whether by public or private act."<sup>37</sup> Article 5 of CEDAW places an obligation on States to modify stereotypes, practices and norms that contribute to the subordination of women and which limit their capacities as individuals.
24. The achievement of *de facto* equality for women in the social sphere requires elimination of gender stereotypes that justify and perpetuate gender-based violence, and of gender-based violence including domestic violence, forced and early marriage and virginity testing.<sup>38</sup>
25. Forty-six of 88 Romani women interviewed during research responded to questions regarding domestic violence. Of those, 20 (43%) reported that they currently or have in the past suffered from domestic violence: of those six (30%) never went to school. According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics, 14.3% of women overall reported experiences of domestic violence in Italy in 2007.<sup>39</sup>
26. Most respondents who reported domestic violence experienced different forms of violence during their life: 18 (90%) of respondents reported physical violence and 13 (65%) reported verbal abuse. For example:

My parents used to beat me and my sisters; I knew I was going to live a life as a slave but to get out of this I married. My parents had my sister married when she was 12 but she ran away. Poor her. She was beaten up by everyone; husband, mother-, father- and sister-in-law. She ran back to our family but she was told to go back to her husband and tolerate the abuse. Then she understood they did not care about her and she committed herself to a shelter for victims of domestic violence and now she knows what life is like, free from violence and knives. [...]. Instead, I am with my husband in a camper and we could be evicted at any moment. My husband beats me. He is always drunk and taught my 11-year-old son to beat me up. Now they both attack me with knives. They stabbed me! This is not life [...] I do not know what to do, whether to go to a shelter with my children or not?<sup>40</sup>

I grew up with my grandmother as my mother left my father because he was too violent with her. I was forced to marry when I was 12 and my virginity was checked. After 3 days I ran away. When I was 15 I married again and got pregnant. For 12 years I lived as a slave and forgot what life was. I could not talk with anyone and my husband never stayed close to me even, when my children were sick. My husband was always drunk, took drugs and used to beat me up, breaking my arms and legs several times; even when I was pregnant. Because of this, I lost a baby. I was always alone to face everything. I asked for help from social services and an office for immigrants and Roma.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> ERRC telephone interview with a public official in Turin: 14 April 2011.

<sup>37</sup> CEDAW, *General Recommendation No. 19* (1992), available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom19>.

<sup>38</sup> Partners for Law in Development, *CEDAW: Restoring Rights to Women* (New Delhi: 2004).

<sup>39</sup> See: [http://www.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non\\_calendario/20070221\\_00/testointegrale.pdf](http://www.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/non_calendario/20070221_00/testointegrale.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> Interview with a 38-year-old Romani woman. Turin, Italy: 18 March 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with a 34-year-old Romani woman. Turin, Italy: 10 March 2011



27. One woman reported marital rape: "One night my husband came back drunk and wanted to make love to me. I started to cry but he did not stop. Our 7-year-old child was sleeping in the same bed."<sup>42</sup>

28. Two women interviewed during research confessed to having lost babies as a consequence of domestic violence. Other respondents reported violence-induced pregnancy complications.

29. Eighteen of 20 (90%) women that reported violence by their husbands also suffered violence at the hands of other family members:

I was beaten, insulted and threatened by my husband. My father-in-law beat me up when I was pregnant and I stayed in hospital for a while as there was the risk of losing my baby but everything got better, except for these relations inside the family. Nobody helped me or tried to prevent this. I did not want to go to visit my husband's family after what happened but my husband forced me to go also using violence.<sup>43</sup>

30. Many Romani women that reported experiences of domestic violence justified the violent acts of their husbands. Domestic violence was often perceived to be less important than problems faced by the family as a whole such as substandard housing, forced evictions or employment discrimination.

31. Many Romani women who suffer domestic violence do not seek help from competent institutions fearing State intervention against them due to their unregistered marriage, age, legal status, living conditions and ethnic discrimination. Other reported barriers included:

- Fear of losing parental rights;
- Lack of information on shelters/services for domestic violence (reported by half of the respondents);
- Lack of economic independence;
- Traditional role of women requiring them to tolerate male aggression within the family; and
- Emotional attachment to their abusive partner.

I did not report because I was minor and did not know where to go. I thought that the law would prefer to leave my child with a crazy man than with the mother.<sup>44</sup>

I asked help from my sister and mother rather than from services helping women because I did not know there were such services. I do not have Italian friends that can give this type of information.<sup>45</sup>

32. Only three women were aware of the existence of shelters or services for domestic violence victims from television but did not know how to access shelters in their own city.

33. Romani women explained that taking legal action against domestic violence is risky for them. Factors such as unregistered marriage, inadequate housing and joblessness can lead social services to an investigation which can result in the removal of their children. Ten respondents reported cases of child removal for these reasons. The decision to temporarily remove children can become irreversible,<sup>46</sup> due to cultural prejudices of the social services and structural problems such as segregated housing and economic exclusion, in which many Romani women live.

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with a 26-year-old Romani woman. Italy: 4 April 2011

<sup>43</sup> Interview with a 37-year-old Romani woman. Reggio Calabria, Italy: 3 April 2011

<sup>44</sup> Interview with a 36-year-old Italian Romani. Reggio Calabria, Italy: 8 April 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with a 20-year-old migrant Romani woman. Reggio Calabria, Italy: 22 March 2011

<sup>46</sup> Carlotta Saletti Salza, *Dalla Tutela al Genocidio? Le adozioni dei minori rom e sinti in Italia (1985/2005)* (Rome: CISU, Roma), 2010.

I suffered physical and moral abuse but I am in an illegal marriage so I did not seek help among social services or police for fear that they can take away my children.<sup>47</sup>

34. Five of 20 domestic violence victims reported having sought help from within the family but as two of the women further explained, the family often knows the situation but for various reasons cannot or will not help: "I called my mother but she said that my husband is and will be always my husband."<sup>48</sup>
35. Only four of 20 (20%) victims of domestic violence interviewed reported their abuse to authorities.
36. Police and judiciary involved in these cases reportedly did not effectively intervene. In these cases the authorities abandoned the victims to the perpetrators, and/or failed to prosecute the perpetrators. Respondents who did leave abusive relationships and report the abuse were subsequently stalked by ex-partners due to a lack of State protection. Some ex-partners threatened to take the children away, or continued to abuse and threaten the woman concerned:

I was 16 when I started to live with my husband. I was 8-months pregnant and he beat me up. He was drunk and did not take me to the hospital fearing the police. I was crying till morning. When he got up, I begged him saying I would not say anything to the doctors but I lost my baby. He abused me for two years: he beat me with his hands and with a wooden stick. I felt alone as my family was not there. After we split I had our first child. He found me with his new girlfriend and came to beat me up. I reported him in 2008, in 2009 and in 2010. To this day he tortures me. I was buying a packet of cigarettes when I ran into him and he spat in my face. I went to the police but they did not do anything, once again, they only tell him to leave me in peace, without taking any measures.<sup>49</sup>

I thought I did not want to marry a Romani man to have a better life but with an Italian man it has been three times worse. I was slim in the past but the terror I feel for my husband made me fat. He is a drug addict and was in prison but when he was released, he started to threaten to take away our son. He came once to my house with a knife. I reported it to the court for minors but I am still scared to leave my child with him.<sup>50</sup>

37. General Recommendation No. 21 of the Committee on Article 16 of CEDAW, Equality in marriage and family relations, states, "The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify age for marriage. General Recommendation No. 19 notes: "when minors, particularly girls, marry and have children, their education is impeded. As a result their economic autonomy is restricted." Article 84 of the Italian Civil Code stipulates that marriage under the age of 18 is forbidden; only exceptionally is it allowed from the age of 16.
38. Forty-seven of 74 (64%) Romani respondents that provided information about age of marriage entered marriages before the age of 18; 22 (30%) were below the age of 16 (the youngest were 12 at the time). Some of the marriages were performed according to Romani tradition, not Italian law. Of the respondents married below the age of 18, five women stated that they were forced to marry against their will.
39. All five forced early marriages have resulted in instances of domestic violence, with the exception of one.

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with a 37-year-old Romani woman. Reggio Calabria, Italy: 13 April 2011

<sup>48</sup> Interview with a 25-year-old Romani woman. Reggio Calabria, Italy: 24 March 2011

<sup>49</sup> Interview with a 20-year-old migrant Romani woman. Reggio Calabria, Italy: 22 March 2011

<sup>50</sup> Interview with a 26-year-old Romani women. Turin, Italy: 5 April 2011

The day of my marriage I was given to my husband. My mother and father left me there and the last seven years I have been ill treated. [...] I reported him but his family was against me because of it. I don't have a house or a job and social services took my children instead of putting us in a center to be protected. He used to beat me and not allow me to go out except to beg to support my children.<sup>51</sup>

40. Authorities in Italy and elsewhere regard early marriage among Roma as culturally determined and do not act to end to this harmful practice. Romani activists dispute the widespread belief that early marriage is a cultural practice of Roma,<sup>52</sup> instead pointing to socio-economic and education as influencing factors.<sup>53</sup> Romani women interviewed during research expressed a desire for this practice to end.

I got married at 16 years of age; I do not want my children to do the same. For example, at 13 you have to breastfeed a child when you yourself are a child and need to be thought of and followed by your mother. Traditions are fine except for this marriage issue. I would like to get out from the camp, to be in a house, close to another mentality.<sup>54</sup>

41. In addition to forced marriage, Romani women interviewed during research reported having been subjected to virginity testing which violates their human rights and bodily integrity.<sup>55</sup> Of 48 women that responded to questions on this topic, 65% were tested for virginity at marriage.

I married at 13 years of age and I had to go through the virginity test. I was so ashamed because many people were outside waiting to see if I was pure.<sup>56</sup>

42. Romani women who “fail” virginity tests face diverse consequences. Respondents often noted that punishments were more severe in the past but that nowadays women may be scolded, sent back to their family or otherwise shamed, verbally abused, or suffer from infidelity of the husband, disrespect from the groom’s family, or ostracism from the community.

### **Discrimination in Access to Employment**

43. Employment is a key area for Romani women’s emancipation and well-being. Article 11 of CEDAW requires States to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment. Article 4 of the Italian Constitution protects the right to work for all citizens and requires the Republic to create the conditions to enable citizens to exercise this right.<sup>57</sup>

44. Of the Romani women interviewed for this submission, 79 responded to questions about their employment status:

- 42 (53%) were housewives not working outside the home;
- 15 (19%) were in formal employment, including 2 in temporary paid work;

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with a 37-year-old immigrant Romani woman. Rome, Italy: 9 April 2011.

<sup>52</sup> For more information, see Nicoleta Bitu and Crina Morțeanu, *Are the Rights of the Child Negotiable? The Case of Early Marriages within Roma Communities in Romania* (2010). Report realised with UNICEF Romania support within the Project ‘Early Marriages within Roma Communities: Rule of Law, Cultural Autonomy and Individual Rights (of Children and Women)’, available at [www.unicef.org/romania/Early\\_marriages\\_Romani\\_CRISS.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/romania/Early_marriages_Romani_CRISS.pdf).

<sup>53</sup> Fondazione Leio and Lisli Basso Issoco, *Identità di genere e prospettive di vita delle donne appartenenti alle comunità rom*, p. 72.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with a 30-year-old Romani woman. Turin, Italy: 22 April 2011.

<sup>55</sup> Traditional, arranged marriages of Romani girls often involve virginity testing, an invasive and in most if not all cases degrading practice. There are various modalities of virginity testing but they generally include the practice of observing or even breaking the girl’s hymen in some way or another in order to prove the girls virginity. The harmful effects that virginity testing has on the health of the young brides has been denounced by a number of Romani women’s NGOs and activists. European Roma Rights Centre, *Forced Arranged Marriage of Minors Among Traditional Romani Communities in Europe* (November 2006), available at: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/02/BA/m000002BA.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with a 22-year-old Romani woman. Turin, Italy: 7 April 2011.

<sup>57</sup> See: [http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione\\_inglese.pdf](http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf).

- 12 (15%) worked informally;
- 9 (11%) were involved in begging;<sup>58</sup> and
- 1 (1%) worked as a volunteer.

45. According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, only 7.6% of native-born women in Italy were unemployed in 2007.<sup>59</sup>

46. During research, 31 Romani women provided information about the reasons for their inability to access work. According to their responses:

- 15 (48%) reported ethnic discrimination;
- 6 (19%) discussed the impact of the economic crisis;
- 3 (10%) reported that they were out of work because of child bearing;
- 2 (6%) reported discrimination based on disability;
- 2 (6%) reported that their husbands did not allow them to work outside the home;
- 2 (6%) did not know; and
- 1 (3%) reported a lack of education and experience.

One day I went to apply for a job as a shop assistant. One of the bosses wanted to hire me but he changed his mind after having talked with a colleague. This person said to him “Are you stupid! Have you noticed that she is a Romani girl?” They then told me they found another girl. I felt so discriminated against.<sup>60</sup>

My husband said to me “if you go to work I will leave you!” My parents tried to explain to him the importance of work but he does not allow me.<sup>61</sup>

47. Of 15 respondents in employment, most are unskilled workers involved in cleaning or childcare. Six of the Romani women in work reported experiences of abuse, discrimination, ill-treatment or harassment while at work, including:

- Not being allowed to take a break;
- More difficult working conditions than other workers;
- Physical assault (slapping and body searches); and
- Pressure to terminate pregnancy to keep a job.

48. Romani women suffer from violence from both male and female colleagues, clerks and bosses. In two cases recorded during research, false accusations and distrust based on racism lead to episodes of violence. Respondents working in both public and private sectors as cleaners faced discrimination by co-workers and as by clerks in the offices that they cleaned.

I was born in Italy but my parents migrated to Italy in the 1980s for a job and a better life. Since 2001 I have been working as a cleaner in different places such as a university, and an elderly home. I always declared my ethnicity and I have never been discriminated but at local governmental office I was humiliated, verbally abused and much more. After I had finished my work [one day] a group of clerks accused me of having stolen a 5 EUR bill that they signed with a pen. They forced me to take off my shoes, to pull down my panties and

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<sup>58</sup> One respondent's story illustrates the desperation of persons involved in begging: “I just want to work! I go to beg but it is not easy to do. Who likes to beg? I do not like it and when I can, I will stop. When there was work I took it but now I do not have work anymore. I feel very bad; people shout at me “Go to Work!” When I arrived in Italy I said “My god, I will go back home”, but I am still here. I was begging and crying; I still often cry about it.” Interview with a 30-year-old Romani woman. Turin, Italy: 3 April 2011.

<sup>59</sup> Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Country statistical profile: Italy 2010*, available at: [www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/country-statistical-profile-italy\\_20752288-table-ita](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/country-statistical-profile-italy_20752288-table-ita)

<sup>60</sup> Interview with a 32-year-old Romani woman. Reggio Calabria, Italy: 23 April 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with a 27-year-old Romani woman. Reggio Calabria, Italy: 11 April 2011.

to take off my bra. Although they did not find the money they kept torturing me saying I am a Romani thief.<sup>62</sup>

After completing secondary school I embarked on a catering training but I later worked as a cleaner in a shop. I was accused of stealing money. This was meant to push me to leave the job, but I did not. The male boss treated me well but his wife used to beat me up and would not allow me food or break during a 10-hour work day. I lost several kilos in a few days. My family saw my injuries and they would not let me go anymore.<sup>63</sup>

49. Idea Rom has recorded several cases of Romani women suspected or accused of theft that was never proven.<sup>64</sup>
50. Respondents working in the informal sector do not have access to employment benefits, pension systems, job security or other benefits. Most also do additional informal side work, such as collecting iron and scrap metal with their husbands or selling clothes in markets.

### Discrimination in Access to Education

51. At Article 10 of CEDAW, States commit to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education [...]” The right to education is enshrined in Article 34 of the Italian Constitution, which states that school is open to everyone and education is compulsory and free of tuition.<sup>65</sup>
52. Research conducted by Save the Children in Italy indicated that 14% of Romani women are illiterate.<sup>66</sup> Of 88 respondents during research for this submission, 74 provided information about educational attainment levels:
- 22 (30%) never attended school;
  - 12 (16%) did not complete primary I education (school years 1-5);
  - 11 (15%) completed primary I education;
  - 9 (12%) started but did not complete primary II education (school years 6-8);
  - 11 (15%) completed primary II education;
  - 6 (8%) started but did not complete secondary education (school years 9-13);
  - 1 (1%) completed secondary education; and
  - 2 (3%) enrolled in university but did not finish.
53. By comparison, 87% of Italian girls in 2008 completed secondary school.<sup>67</sup>
54. According to local NGOs, Romani girls tend to drop out during primary school more often than Romani boys. However, among Romani pupils that advance to secondary school, Romani girls more often continue on to high school or vocational school.<sup>68</sup>
55. During research for this submission, Romani women reported a variety of problems in the area of education such as high drop out rates (due in part to forced and early marriage), differential treatment at school and poor quality education. It appeared that State authorities do not intervene effectively to counter school absenteeism among Romani girls, particularly in the case of drop out due to early marriage.

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with a 29-year-old Romani woman. Italy: 4 April 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with a 26-year-old Romani woman. Turin, Italy: 6 March 2011

<sup>64</sup> In some cases colleagues were identified as the real culprits.

<sup>65</sup> Available at: [http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione\\_inglese.pdf](http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Save the Children Italia, *Studio sulla salute materno infantile nelle comunita' Rom. Il caso di Roma* (2008), available at: [http://www.savethechildren.it/IT/Tool/Pubblicazioni/Related?id\\_object=47&id\\_category=35](http://www.savethechildren.it/IT/Tool/Pubblicazioni/Related?id_object=47&id_category=35).

<sup>67</sup> Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation, *Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators*, available at: [http://www.oecd.org/document/52/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_39263238\\_45897844\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1.00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/52/0,3746,en_2649_39263238_45897844_1_1_1_1.00.html)

<sup>68</sup> Email correspondence with Roma Onlus: May 2011.

56. Of the 49 respondents that provided reasons for school drop out:
- 11, (22%) reported family or domestic responsibilities (three for care for parents, two parental deaths and six for care for siblings);
  - 10, (20%) reported poverty (due to lack of necessary school equipment, inadequate housing conditions and the need to work to contribute financially to the family's survival);
  - 8 (16%) reported dropout due to early marriage;
  - 6 (12%) reported displacement and moving due to migration and/or forced evictions;
  - 5 (10%) did not want to attend school;
  - 3 (6%) were prohibited from attending school (two by family members and one by a partner);
  - 3 (6%) reported harassment by teachers and classmates; and
  - 3 (6%) reportedly left school due to pregnancy.

57. In 2008, Save the Children reported that poverty played a significant role in limiting the educational opportunities of Romani girls in particular: "among the Roma, when financial means are limited, it is the education of the girls that is sacrificed."<sup>69</sup> During this research, respondents noted:

I did not go to school as my parents were very poor, but my older brothers had the chance to go. I need a job in order to buy what my children need for school.<sup>70</sup>

I wanted to enroll in law school but I did not have enough money. University is too expensive because of fees, books, etc. Studying law was my dream. When I have a child I will make this dream come true.<sup>71</sup>

58. Early marriages are a strong determinant of school drop-out rates for girls. One respondent that left school early for this reason stated: "I attended school until the second year at a secondary school for social workers. Then I got pregnant. I was ashamed to go to school with my belly and be seen by my Italian friends. I felt different."<sup>72</sup>

59. Inadequate housing conditions and forced evictions<sup>73</sup> also negatively influence school enrolment of Romani girls. One female Romani researcher in this study reported of her personal experiences:

I grew up in a camp in Rome and I still live there. I completed high school with many difficulties as we live with discrimination every day. I was the first Romani girl among those who live in camps to get a degree. Where I live I was never able to concentrate, due to an incredibly noisy environment and the absence of private space. I felt different from both my classmates and my relatives.<sup>74</sup>

60. Discriminatory treatment of Romani children by school personnel and classmates is reported in Italy, and negatively affects the self esteem and development of Romani girls: "[...] during a break, in front of my entire class the director of the school called me by my surname saying that I should not stay among Italians but with those of my ethnicity. We did not report the director but she made me so ashamed that I did not go back there although I liked that school very much."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Save the Children Italia, *Opportunities and Challenges for Social Intervention Aimed at Migrant Minors* (2008), available at: [http://s3.amazonaws.com/rcpp/assets/attachments/623\\_647\\_EN\\_original.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/rcpp/assets/attachments/623_647_EN_original.pdf).

<sup>70</sup> Interview with a 30-year-old Romani woman. Turin, Italy: 9 March 2011

<sup>71</sup> Interview with a 34-year-old Romani woman. Reggio Calabria, Italy: 6 May 2011

<sup>72</sup> Interview with a 30-year-old Romani woman. Rome, Italy: 3 March 2011

<sup>73</sup> On 27 April 2011, the Municipality of Milan boasted having conducted over 500 evictions of Roma and Sinti since 2007. In February 2001, Milan's Deputy Mayor declared that there had been an eviction every 48 hours in 2011. "Sgombero rom via Antegnani Milano, 14 roulotte allontanate", *Cronaca Milano*, February 2011, available at: <http://www.cronacamilano.it/cronaca/10772-sgombero-rom-antegnati-milano-14-roulotte-allontanate.html>. In Milan, teachers have protested the repeated eviction of Roma as a barrier to school attendance of Romani children.

<sup>74</sup> Field researcher notes: February 2011.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with an 18-year-old Romani woman. Rome, Italy: 3 March 2011

61. Refusal by schools to enroll Romani children is also reported in Italy but many Romani parents do not report such incidents:

I should have reported this. [...] I was enrolling my children in school and they were refused. [...] They said that Romani children do not know how to behave. For this my children were not accepted. This happened in two schools. I spoke with someone from one of the schools and she stated that my children were not suitable for that kind of school.<sup>76</sup>

62. All children of compulsory school age registered with the city council are placed on a list which is given to schools. School authorities are obliged to report children that do not attend school to the Municipality, which then should intervene to eliminate the reasons resulting in absenteeism. However, local NGOs and school authorities report that in the case of Romani children, the process often does not advance beyond the first report to the Municipality, indicating that Italian authorities are often indifferent to school absenteeism of Romani children. Social workers reportedly perceive school drop-out of Romani children, particularly as a result of early marriage, as a “cultural” issue, and thus do not follow normal administrative procedures to ensure school attendance of school aged Romani children.<sup>77</sup>

### **Discrimination in Access to Health Care**

63. At Article 12 of CEDAW, States commit to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care [...]” General Recommendation No. 19 states that violence against women puts their health and lives at risks<sup>78</sup> and notes: “when minors, particularly girls, marry and have children, their health can be adversely affected.” The right to health is guaranteed by Article 32 of the Italian Constitution which obliges the Italian State to protect health as a fundamental right of the individual and collective interest, and guarantees free medical care to the indigent.<sup>79</sup>
64. Twenty-nine of 53 Romani women that responded to questions about their health status during research perceived their own health situation negatively.<sup>80</sup>
65. In Italy Romani women are subjected to discriminatory treatment when accessing or attempting to access health-care, and they are more often in situations in which they would suffer such treatment than Romani men because they are most often the primary caregivers in Romani families.
66. Furthermore, many Romani women are prevented from accessing health-care in the first place. In 2008, Save the Children Italy reported that 70% of Romani women did not have access to health care as guaranteed by the National Health Service due to their legal status, lack of information about their rights and misinformation about how to access to health-care services.<sup>81</sup>
67. During research for this study, nine respondents reported that they were not able to access healthcare services at all. Of 37 respondents who clarified which health care services they use: 15 (41%) used only emergency facilities, seven (19%) relied primarily on emergency care and

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with a 37-year-old migrant Romani woman. Rome, Italy: 28 February 2011

<sup>77</sup> Email correspondence with Paola Marotti, Roma Onlus: 5 May 2009. Interview with Anna Maria Biondani, Maiore Opera Nomadi. Sicily, Italy: 22 December 2011

<sup>78</sup> CEDAW, *General Recommendation No. 19* (1992), available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom19>

<sup>79</sup> Available at: [http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione\\_inglese.pdf](http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> Of the rest: 19 women thought of their health as good, three were indifferent and two said their health status varied from day to day.

<sup>81</sup> Save the Children, *La salute delle madri Rom*, available at: [http://www.savethechildren.it/IT/Tool/Pubblicazioni/Related?id\\_object=47&id\\_category=35](http://www.savethechildren.it/IT/Tool/Pubblicazioni/Related?id_object=47&id_category=35).

occasionally visited a family doctor, four (11%) visited a family doctor and 11 (30%) made use of all available health care services.

68. Incidents of perceived discriminatory and degrading treatment were reported by Romani women interviewed during research with respect to healthcare. Twenty-two of 45 (49%) women that responded to such questions reported differential treatment, particularly in access to emergency healthcare, between Romani and non-Romani patients.

69. Romani women reported various types of discriminatory treatment by medical personnel, including longer waits than Italian patients, the use of gloves, the opening of windows at their entrance, inadequate explanations about their conditions and medication and blaming mothers for their children's illnesses (for example, when they are bitten by mice in substandard housing).

When I am in the hospital, if there are Italians, doctors tell me wait! So I have to wait just because I am Romani. Once I took my child to the hospital, as I do not have a family doctor. My child cut himself and had lost a lot of blood, but another child with his mother was allowed to enter even though we arrived earlier and my son was covered in blood. Now what is more serious: a terrible cut or a cold?<sup>82</sup>

70. At times other patients are responsible for the discriminatory treatment of Romani patients and medical staff tolerates or encourages such behaviour. For example, it has been reported that at a maternity ward in a hospital in Pisa some non-Romani women have refused to share rooms a Romani woman in labor and nurses facilitated separate spaces.<sup>83</sup>

71. During research, Romani women reported that the cost of medicine is prohibitive for those who are not entitled to free medical care. Therefore doctors may prescribe medicine but the patients can not afford to buy it and treat their illness: "When I take medicine I feel good but when I do not take them I feel like I am dying. The doctor prescribes me medication but I do not have the money to buy it. I am 72-years-old and am sick, what shall I do?"<sup>84</sup>

72. Nineteen of 31 (61%) of Romani women that responded to questions about complications during pregnancy reported miscarriages, with three respondents reporting having suffered more than one miscarriage.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

73. Currently, there are no concrete legal or policy measures to eliminate intersecting forms of discrimination against Italian and migrant Romani women in Italy. Information provided by the Italian government on the situation of Romani women is scarce due to the lack of data disaggregated by gender and ethnicity. As a result, State authorities are limited in their ability to identify, measure and provide solutions to the current problems, some of which are based on erroneous stereotypes and widespread discrimination. As a result, the submitting organisations recommend that Italian authorities undertake the following measures to bring Italy into full compliance with the provisions of CEDAW with respect to Romani women.

### General

- As urged by the European Union, adopt a national Roma integration strategy, with particular emphasis of the situation of Romani women;
- Regularly collect and publicly disseminate data disaggregated by gender and ethnicity in all fields relevant to the human rights and social inclusion of Romani women to facilitate effective policy

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with a 24-year-old Romani woman. Reggio Calabria, Italy: 28 March 2011

<sup>83</sup> ENAR, *Shadow Report 2008, Racism in Italy* (2008), available at: <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/national/Italy%20-%20SR%202008%20-%20IT.pdf>.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with a 72-year-old Romani woman. Rome, Italy: 4 April 2011



responses to their situation, including, the number of Romani women in Italy (by status type), the number of Romani girls completing school at each level, the number of working-age Romani women in and out of employment, information on the health status of Romani women and access to health care services at all levels, the incidence of various forms of violence against Romani women (by police, non-State actors and domestic violence), State response to incidents of violence against Romani women;

- Assist Romani women and girls in Italy without citizenship or proper documentation to access citizenship and all necessary personal documentation;
- Effectively and proactively implement anti-discrimination law in Italy;
- Regularly conduct anti-discrimination and gender equality training for public sector employees, and include anti-discrimination training in relevant university curricula to end stereotypes and discrimination against Roma;
- Conduct educational campaigns targeting Romani women and girls about the negative effects of forced and early marriages;
- Improve housing conditions and end forced evictions as factors which negatively influence all aspects of the lives of Romani women;

### **Violence against Romani Women**

- Publicly condemn all forms of racist and domestic violence against Romani women by public and private actors and guarantee their physical security and free access to legal aid;
- Establish an independent police complaints body to investigate all allegations of human rights violations by law enforcement personnel;
- Investigate and prosecute effectively all perpetrators of violence against Romani women;
- Sanction law enforcement officials that violate rules of procedure and the rights and dignity of Romani women during search, arrest and interrogation of suspects;
- Conduct targeted campaigns encouraging Romani women to report experiences of violence by State and non-State actors, including domestic violence, to relevant authorities and to use available victim protection services;

### **Employment**

- Make free of charge vocational programmes for Romani women widely available to improve their work opportunities;
- Undertake positive measures (including hiring incentives such as tax exemptions, subsidised employment contracts, etc.) to promote equal access of Romani women to employment in the public sector;
- Take steps to ensure that discrimination against Romani women in the field of employment is adequately addressed;

### **Education**

- Commit to raise the school completion rate for Romani girls to the target identified in the Europe 2020 Strategy (90%) and define a plan and appropriate funding to attain that goal. Such a plan might include:
  - Making widely available scholarships (including for school fees, transportation, clothing and required school materials) for impoverished Romani families at all school levels to reduce the impact of poverty on the school dropout of Romani girls;
  - Monitoring school enrolment, absenteeism and dropout of Romani girls;
  - Facilitating cooperation among school authorities, teachers and Romani and non-Romani parents to reduce school discrimination and harassment, and to promote better school experiences and outcomes among Romani girls;

### **Health Care**

- Provide World Health Organization list of essential medicines free of charge to Romani women living in poverty;
- Conduct outreach campaigns encouraging Romani women to access regular primary health services;
- Ensure that issues such as unclear legal status and lack of information about how to access to health-care services are addressed.

## Annex 1- Methodology

In light of the overwhelming lack of information about the situation of Romani women in Italy, as reflected in the Government's report to the Committee on its compliance with the CEDAW, the ERRC Idea Rom and Opera Nomadi Reggio Calabria conducted targeted research among Romani women to gather relevant information on the human rights situation of this group.

This submission is based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 88 women who identified themselves as Romani between the ages of 18 and 72. The research methodology was developed and overseen by the European Roma Rights Centre. Three Romani women conducted the field research in Italy between February and May 2011 in Turin (Region of Piemonte), Rome (Region of Lazio) and Reggio Calabria. The method used to select the interviewees was snowball sampling. The interviews were focused on issues of police and domestic violence as well as discrimination in the areas of employment, healthcare and education.

To portray the heterogeneity of Romani women in Italy the researchers were instructed to interview Romani women of different statuses, ages and housing types, the extent possible. The sample included five stateless women, two women under humanitarian protection, 30 Italian citizens, 29 foreign nationals (EU citizens and third country nationals) and 22 women whose status was not specified. Among the 77 respondents that specified housing type, 26 resided in formal camps, nine resided in informal camps, 11 resided in squats, 10 lived in private housing and 18 were living in social housing.

**Table 1: Respondents by Country of Origin**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Turin</b>	<b>Rome</b>	<b>Reggio Calabria</b>
<b>Italian</b>	26	0	1*	25**
<b>Romanian</b>	13	8	2	3
<b>Former Yugoslavia</b>	49	20	27	2
<b>Total</b>	88	28	30	30

\*Italian Sinti

\*\*Roma Calabresi