



Statement condemning the deportation of Leonarda Dibrani and her family to Kosovo

Brussels, 21 October 2013

The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) strongly condemns the manner in which the recent deportation of Leonarda Dibrani and her family from France was carried out. The Dibrani family applied for asylum on the grounds of discrimination in Kosovo, however, their claim for asylum was ultimately denied. Mr Dibrani was deported on 8 October with the rest of the family expelled the following day. Border police arriving at the family home to detain the Dibrani family found that Leonarda was on a school trip. After contacting the school, border police had the school bus stopped, and in full view of the other students on the bus Leonarda was escorted away by police to be deported that night with the rest of her family. In a phone interview with France Inter radio given from Mitrovica, Kosovo, Leonarda expressed her sadness in leaving her friends and school, and also stated that *'I felt ashamed too because the police were there and my friends were asking what I had done, if I had stolen something'*.

Following an outcry over the treatment of Leonarda, French President Hollande stated that Leonarda could return to France to complete her schooling, however it was made clear that this offer did not extend to Leonarda's five siblings or her parents (Leonarda declined the offer). An investigation into the family's deportation found that, while carried out legally, the deportations could have been executed 'with better judgment'. French Interior Minister Manuel Valls has defended the deportations as both necessary and lawful. A recent opinion poll revealed that 74% of French respondents support the position taken by Minister Valls on the Dibrani family's deportation, a result that is reflective of the wide anti-immigrant and anti-Roma sentiment present in majority French society.

Regardless of the legitimacy of the family's asylum application (it recently emerged that Mr Dibrani may have lied on the application), the manner in which Leonarda was detained for deportation is a clear violation of her right to human dignity as guaranteed under Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. ERIO strongly urges the Hollande government to cease the securitisation of the issue of Roma migration. Likewise, ERIO urges the French government to ensure that all actions taken towards Roma migrants and asylum seekers are not only lawful but are carried out with the utmost consideration of and respect for their dignity and all other fundamental rights.

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European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is an international advocacy organisation which promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues. It aims to combat racist discrimination against Roma and to contribute to an improved public awareness of the problems faced by Roma communities.
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