PRESS STATEMENT

ENAR welcomes convictions for the murders of six Roma in Hungary and urges the government to step up efforts to tackle racist crime

Brussels, 8 August 2013 - A Hungarian court on 6 August sentenced three men to life sentences for the racist murders of six Roma in 2008 and 2009. A fourth offender received a jail sentence of 13 years. Victims included a father and his 5 year-old child, who were brutally killed as they tried to flee their home. ENAR welcomes the verdict and regards it as highly significant, including the court’s recognition of the racial motivation behind the crimes. The outcome of the trial sends a strong message to other perpetrators of racist violence that their acts will not go unpunished.

Roma are frequently targets of racist violence in Hungary and elsewhere in Europe. ENAR Chair Sarah Isal said: “More effective state responses to hate crime against the Roma are absolutely necessary to achieve Roma inclusion in Europe. In Hungary, the court’s decision is a big step forward as it unequivocally communicates to the public that no impunity exists for perpetrators of racist violence”.

ENAR also urges the Hungarian government to start collecting reliable and systematic statistics on hate crime against the Roma, and to develop specific guidelines for the investigation and prosecution of such crime. The police in Hungary have frequently failed to investigate and punish offenders of racially motivated crime in the past. According to a report by the European Roma Rights Centre in 2011, the police and prosecutors are reluctant to consider racial bias as an aggravating factor in crime. When the recently concluded trial against the four offenders started in March 2011, the state prosecutor did not mention racial motivation.

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Notes to the editor:
1. The European Network Against Racism (ENAR aisbl) stands up against racism and discrimination and advocates for equality and solidarity for all in Europe. We connect local and national anti-racist NGOs throughout Europe and act as an interface between our member organisations and the European institutions. We voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debates.