PRESS STATEMENT

Racial profiling in the UK: Police break the law and create tension and fear in communities

Brussels, 8 August 2013 - On 1 August, UK border agency officials carried out numerous identity checks of people of colour in metro and train station areas across the country. Witnesses testified that only non-whites were stopped, and that the police were heavy-handed and intimidating. ENAR denounces what amounts to blatant racial profiling – a disastrous practice that previous governments have tried to eliminate – and demands that the British government and Home Secretary Theresa May stop racist spot checks immediately.

ENAR also calls on the UK government to end its aggressive campaign against so-called illegal immigrants, as it creates fears about immigration instead of revealing its benefits for the UK society and economy. An OECD report from June this year showed that migrants in the UK pay more in tax than they consume in public services.

ENAR Chair Sarah Isal said that “racial profiling damages and alienates innocent individuals, causes distrust of police that are supposed to protect them, and results in tension between communities. Resilient and cohesive societies are fostered by equal opportunity and human rights for everyone – not by stigmatizing and harassing people based on their ethnicity and skin colour, or by linking these to migration”.

The police checks followed a series of other operations by the British Home Office to crack down on irregular immigration, including a poster campaign telling immigrants to “go home or face arrest”.

In early July, Theresa May said that stop and search practices need to be restricted, since only 9% of searches lead to an arrest, and since they have a negative impact on community relations. Yet no restrictions appear to have been placed on police checks concerning the right to reside and work in the country.

Research shows that Blacks and ethnic minorities are seven times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people. Racial profiling is illegal according to the UK Equality Act of 2010.

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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.