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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 February 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The Czech government must ensure a worthy and peaceful place of remembrance for Roma on the premises of the former concentration Lety u Písku

The Czech government should shut down a pig fattening farm on the premises of the former concentration Lety u Písku in South Bohemia. The relatives of the people who were interned and murdered there – including many Roma – need a worthy and peaceful place of remembrance. The Czech Republic could set an example for all of Europe by emphasizing that the Roma are to be treated as citizens with equal rights, and that they – just like other groups of victims – have every right to commemorate relatives who were murdered during the era of National Socialism.

From August 1940 to December 1943, more than 1,700 people were interned in Lety. 1,300 of them were Roma who were brought there from summer 1942 onwards. Many died in the camp, mainly children. Around 800 surviving Roma were deported, most of them to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where they were cruelly killed in the gas chambers of the Nazis. To date, nobody has been held accountable for the crimes against humanity committed in Lety.

In 1995, under then-President Václav Havel, a small memorial for the victims was set up near the slaughterhouse. However, the Roma who meet up in Lety u Písku every year on January 27 are exposed to the strong smell of the pig manure. This is a violation of the dignity of the visitors as well as of those who were interned or sent to their deaths at this place.

The journalist member Paul Polansky had come across information regarding the concentration camp in South Bohemian in a state archive and had informed the public in 1995. There had been unsuccessful protests by Czech Roma organizations as well as attempts to adopt EU resolutions demanding the slaughterhouse to be shut down in order to make room for a larger memorial center. The German federal government should co-finance the relocation of the pig fattening farm.

For many years, the Roma have been demanding the pig fattening farm built in the 1970s to be shut down in order to establish a proper memorial place, and the Czech government had repeatedly announced plans to buy the premises and close the fattening farm, most recently at the beginning of November 2016. So far, however, nothing has been achieved. The company is still private property.

Several protests by Czech Roma organizations, two resolutions of the European Parliament in 2005 and 2008 calling for the removal of the pig fattening farm and the establishment of a proper memorial place, went unheard.

The UN Human Rights Committee called on the Czech government in 2013 to shut down the pig fattening farm. In its statement it said the Czech government should to more to honor the culture and history of the Roma, including by symbolic gesture such as the closing of the farm.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to call on the government of the Czech Republic to:

- Stick to its words and shut down the pig fattening farm on the premises of the former concentration camp Lety u Písku in South Bohemia.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to call on the government of Germany and other EU members to:

- offer financial support the Czech Republic in shutting down the pig fattening farm on the premises of the former concentration camp Lety u Písku and relocating it to another place.
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