



Opportunity for Ireland to Promote Human Rights Should Not be Missed - Crosscare

Crosscare, the social care agency of the Dublin Diocese (which has provided basic humanitarian assistance¹ to the Roma families at the M50) is asking the Minister for Europe Mr. Dick Roche to use his office to influence the Romanian authorities to improve on their poor record in relation to the human rights and living conditions for Roma in Romania.

Crosscare's Director Conor Hickey stated that *“while the situation on the M50 roundabout is fast becoming yesterday's news the reality is that the families who ended up living in sub human conditions in our city describe their situations back home as far worse. These assertions were quickly denied by the Romanian authorities but the facts, as described by human rights groups and the Council of Europe Commission on Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) substantiate the Roma families claims that they are indeed worse off at home”*.

The ECRI's third report on Romania in 2006 begins by stating that they have *“concern that the situation in of the Roma in Romania remains disturbing. Members of the Roma Community are still discriminated against in areas such as employment, education and access to public places, housing and health care services”*

Crosscare's Emigrant Advice has been working for many years in the area of emigration and immigration. Joe O'Brien of Emigrant Advice acknowledges the complexity of the issues involved and the options available to the Minister of Justice as he and his office oversee our immigration system. However, O'Brien goes on to say *“in relation to the families on the M50 roundabout, the inability of our state services to provide basic humane conditions and emergency services while the immigration process was in train was completely unacceptable. Basic dignity does not need to be sacrificed for the integrity of our immigration system”*

Hickey goes on to say that *“Crosscare's efforts to provide some basic levels of human dignity to the families on the M50 as they awaited the outcome of the immigration process came easy to an organisation that draw's its inspiration from the life, example and teachings of Jesus Christ.”*

Irish immigration regulations did not allow for these families to find better lives here in Ireland. Now that they have returned home Crosscare hopes that the Irish people can, through our Minister for Europe, make the most of our influence to bring about the improvements in Romania that will no longer see families living in squalor here because it is better than the country from which they came.

Hickey concluded *“Many derogatory things were said and written about these people. We did not get to know everything about them and therefore it is impossible to say what is true and what is not. However, we can describe with certainty the people who attended our services in Holles Row. They were to a person, polite, courteous, gracious and good humoured. They were at times frightened, cold, damp and hungry. They were warm and affectionate with one another and their children. They came and left our services quietly and modestly. We have no doubts that we gained more from our interaction with them than they did from us.”*

¹ Since Monday 16 July Crosscare, the social care arm of the Dublin Diocese has been offering transport from M50/Ballymun to the Crosscare food centre in Holles Row for meals, washing facilities and clothing.

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