

Position of Roma in Serbian Society

Serbian transcript:

Ja ћу направити само једну кратку паралелу, рецимо између БиХ [и Србије]. Рецимо, положај Рома у БиХ и положај Рома у Србији. Наравно, у Србији има много више Рома, говори се чак о цифри од неких милион Рома. Говори се од петсто [хиљада] до милион. Сад, је ли седамсто хиљада, осамсто хиљада, али то је та нека алтернација између петсто [хиљада] и милион. Са друге стране, званично се говори да има 104.000 Рома, али нећемо о званичној статистици. А у Босни и Херцеговини их има, не знам, мислим негде око 40.000, тако се говори о тој цифри.

Ех, у Србији постоје много савршенији, софистициранији механизми за, не знам, решавање неких њихових проблема, то је један јединствен програм који се спроводи и у Босни и у Србији, „Декада Рома“, али о томе ћемо можда неки други пут. И стварно су ефикасни системи, и решавају се неки њихови проблеми, али то је можда неких пар процената, док у Босни тај апарат не функционише, пре свега због јако компликоване администрације саме државе, и то је разлика.

Али, у Србији имате отворене нападе, расистичке нападе на Роме. Дакле, неко је, особа А је напала особу Б искључиво из разлога зато што је Ром. Тога у БиХ нема. То поуздано знам. Можда има неких, не знам, издвојених инцидената, али генерално тог у БиХ нема. За разлику од Србије где имаш отворени расизам према Ромима где се Роми... Знамо шта је било пре пар година када је организована Универзијада у Београду, када су Роме оградиле жицом, не би ли случајно неки странци видели да, овај, у најелитнијем делу Београда живе тамо неки Роми. Па су их селили, па их нису хтели на овом месту, па хајде да их вратимо тамо, па хоћемо, па нећемо, на крају хајде да их оградимо жицом и они неће излазити и то је најбоље решење, што је и сам... Па да, он је и сад градоначелник Београда, Драган Ђилас, рекао: „Па то је најбоље решење, шта? Оградиле смо их, шта?“ Ето. Нормала.

Ето, то су та два нека, овај, примера који најбоље можда приказују какав је положај мањина у Србији.

English translation:

I'd like to draw a quick parallel, for instance, between BiH¹ [and Serbia]. Let's look at the position of Roma in BiH and the position of Roma in Serbia. Obviously there are many more Roma in Serbia, and the estimated number is around one million Roma; between five hundred [thousand] and one million. Now, is it seven hundred thousand or eight we don't know, but that's the usual range of the estimate, between five hundred [thousand]

¹ Please note that BiH is the official abbreviation for Bosnia and Herzegovina, in both English and the BCS languages. It is also commonly used by BCS speakers in everyday speech.

and a million. On the other hand, the official number of Roma is 104,000 but let's not talk about official statistics. And Bosnia and Herzegovina is home to, I don't know, about 40,000 Roma; that's the widely accepted number.

So, Serbia has better and more sophisticated mechanisms for solving some of their problems. It's a unique program which is being implemented in Bosnia and Serbia called the Decade of Roma², but we should talk about it some other time. [In Serbia] the systems are really effective and they do solve some of their problems, but they affect only a small percentage [of the Roma population], while in Bosnia that system doesn't function, mostly because of the very complicated state administration, so that would be one difference.

However, there are public attacks, openly racist attacks on Roma in Serbia; situations where one person attacked another person explicitly because they were Roma. That doesn't happen in BiH. I know that for a fact. Maybe there are individual incidents, but this generally doesn't happen in BiH. Unlike Serbia, where you have open racism against Roma, where Roma... We all know what happened a few years ago when the Universiade³ was being held in Belgrade, when they placed the Roma behind a barb wired fence just to make sure foreigners wouldn't notice that there were these Roma living in the most elite part of Belgrade. First they relocated them, but the people at that other place didn't want them, so they decided to move them back, and then they couldn't decide what to do with them. In the end, they decided to put them behind the wire so that they couldn't leave and that this was the best solution, which was said by... He's still the Mayor of Belgrade, Dragan Đilas; he said, "Well, that was the best solution. We placed them behind a fence, so what?" There you go. Problem solved.

So, those few examples best illustrate what the situation of minorities is like in Serbia.

² The Decade of Roma, or the Decade of Roma Inclusion, is a ten-year project which started in 2005. It is taking place in twelve European countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Spain). The goal of the project is the improvement of the socio-economic status of Roma, as well as their inclusion in the society through education, employment, healthcare and improved housing, while attempting to resolve key issues faced by Roma, such as poverty, discrimination against Roma within the broader society, and gender inequality.

Source: Dekada za inkluziju Roma. (n.d.) In *Medija centar Beograd*. Retrieved November 9, 2012, from <http://www.mc.rs/code/navigate.aspx?Id=1095>

³ The Universiade, or the World University Games, is an international sports competition for university-based athletes who represent their countries of origin and not necessarily their colleges and universities. The Universiade is held biannually in different host cities around the world. Like the Olympic Games, there is a Summer Universiade and a Winter Universiade. The speaker here refers to the 25th Summer Universiade, which was held in Belgrade in 2009.

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