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**PRESS RELEASE
of Human Rights House of Sarajevo and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in BiH**

Roma remain the most vulnerable group in BiH

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination discussed on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina at its August session, on the point of applying the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In already published Concluding Observations, the Committee has evaluated the positive integration of Ombudsman institutions and the adoption of the prohibition of discrimination.

The main objection to the Committee refers to the need of urgent removal of discriminatory provisions of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to enable every citizen, regardless of nationality or residence, an opportunity to elect and to be elected. Further on, it was concluded that there are obstacles in regards to the return of the refugees and displaced persons and it was recommended to BiH authorities to provide equal conditions of employment, education, access to health and social care to the returnees in BiH.

The Committee concluded that there is continued presence of discrimination against Roma and it expressed its particular concern over the fact that there is still a large number of Roma children that is not reported or recorded in newborn registration service. The Committee therefore recommended to BH authorities to enable Roma to obtain identity documents which is the basis for achieving their political, civil and other human rights. The decision to implement action plans within the framework of the Decade of Roma, is supported and those action plans should provide greater employment of Roma, better housing conditions, adequate education, and social and health protection of Roma population. The special need was stressed for stronger engagement of BiH authorities in the fight against prejudices towards Roma, that largely generate the appearance of discrimination against Roma.

The Committee underlined the necessity to apply the provisions of criminal laws that prohibit the use of hate speech and crimes driven by hatred, and urges BiH authorities to mobilize in order to promote tolerance and coexistence between members of different ethnic and religious groups.

The Committee was attended by activists Dervo Sejdic, in behalf of the NGOs gathered around the House of Human Rights of Sarajevo and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in BiH.

Srđan Dizdarević,
President of the Board of the Human Rights House of Sarajevo

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