

UN experts urge Ukraine to stop 'systematic persecution' of Roma minority

Ukraine must take immediate action to stop what amounts to a “systematic persecution” of the country’s Roma minority, who have been targeted in a series of violent attacks allegedly perpetrated by members of extreme right-wing groups, United Nations human rights experts have said.

“We [unequivocally condemn](#) these heinous acts of intimidation and violence against members of the Roma minority in Ukraine,” the three UN experts said in a news release from the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR).

“We are also seriously concerned at the growing hatred and racially-motivated violence against this community – and in particular against its most vulnerable members; women and children,” they added.

The independent experts are all Special Rapporteurs, appointed by the Human Rights Council in Geneva: Leilani Farha, on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living; Fernand de Varennes, on minority issues; and E. Tendayi Achiume, on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

The wave of attacks began in April 2018, and targeted women and children in different regions of the country, including the capital Kyiv, as well as in Kharkiv, Ternopil and Lviv.

Roma settlements were set on fire and residents intimidated, assaulted, and forced to leave their homes. The UN experts state that the perpetrators were members of extreme right-wing groups, such as the so-called “Sich-C14” and the “National Brigades”.

“These attacks demonstrate a disturbing pattern of systematic persecution of Roma in Ukraine, compounded by rising hate speech and stigmatization, which appears to be nurtured by the current political and economic situation in the country,” the UN experts warned. They deplored the apparent absence of effective measures by the Ukrainian authorities to protect members of the Roma minority.

Special Rapporteurs examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.