

Göttingen/ Dortmund, 6th July 2026

## **Press Release**

### **Roma Center warns against a new security logic in the treatment of people living in precarious conditions**

With the establishment of a “Competence Centre for Combating Organised Benefit Fraud” on 1 July 2026 and new co-operation structures such as GeKo in North Rhine-Westphalia, social issues are increasingly being addressed through a security-policy lens. Instead of strengthening the protection of particularly vulnerable people, the state is expanding its powers of control and intervention. The raid carried out a few days ago in the Duisburg high-rise complex known as the “White Giant” is another troubling step in this direction.

For years, we have observed a fundamental shift in perspective. People who flee the consequences of racism, exclusion and persecution within Europe, or who live in precarious conditions in Germany, are increasingly no longer perceived as rights-holders, but as a security problem. This development is visible not only in individual municipal measures, but increasingly at state and federal level.

The state has a responsibility to prosecute organised crime. However, it becomes problematic when entire population groups are placed under general suspicion under the heading of “benefit fraud”.

For more than ten years, we have observed an increasingly repressive approach to supposed social benefit fraud, particularly in North Rhine-Westphalia. Our experience in counselling and support work shows that many measures are not directed at organised crime, but at people who themselves live in precarious circumstances and are often affected by labour exploitation, overpriced and substandard housing, and structural discrimination.

The recent raids in the Duisburg high-rise complex known as the “White Giant” are emblematic of this development. However, this is nothing new, particularly in Duisburg. In the Duisburg district of Hochfeld alone, around 800 people have been made homeless through such evictions over the past five years.

While politicians and authorities speak of combating organised crime, many of those affected experience severe interventions in their everyday lives. Based on our counselling work and reports from affected individuals, we know that families can face existential consequences following such inspections. These consequences do not arise by chance; they are the direct

result of administrative action. Even the temporary absence of residents – for example because they are at work or attending school – can result in them being deregistered by the authorities, their social benefits being stopped, or their entitlement to child benefit being called into question. Families are made homeless, lose their means of subsistence, and children are deregistered from school. The state thereby becomes an actor in the deprivation of rights.

**It is particularly problematic that state measures often target residents rather than the structures that make their exploitation possible in the first place.** Landlords generate substantial profits from inhumane living conditions. Employers exploit the precarious situation of many people, fail to pay agreed wages, or employ people in informal working arrangements. Rather than consistently addressing these forms of organised exploitation, state action often targets those who are affected by it.

**Roma Center is particularly critical of the expansion of preventive data analysis and the close co-operation between social authorities and law-enforcement, especially in light of the National Socialist persecution of Roma and Sinti.** This persecution was enabled to a significant extent through racist registration and categorisation practices and implemented through the co-operation of welfare authorities, police and other state institutions. Personal data were not collected neutrally, but used for identification, exclusion, deprivation of rights, deportation and ultimately genocide.

The present situation must not be equated with the period of National Socialist persecution. It nevertheless obliges public authorities to ensure that any form of data collection, data matching and co-operation between social welfare authorities and law-enforcement bodies is subject to particularly rigorous safeguards for fundamental rights, protection against discrimination and protection from racial profiling. For many Roma, state data collection is not an abstract administrative matter, but is connected to a history of state persecution.

Since the 1990s, political and media discourse has constructed a narrative of supposed “poverty migration”. This narrative obscures the actual reasons why many Roma leave their countries of origin. Many people do not leave primarily because of economic poverty, but because of persistent racism, systematic marginalisation, violence and a lack of state protection. Reducing these experiences of flight and migration to economic motives depoliticises their causes and contributes to the reproduction of racist stereotypes.

**Terms such as “poverty migration”, “migration into social welfare systems” or “EU citizens” merely conceal the racist content of the debate.** Academic research shows that such terms are often used as linguistic codes. Even where Roma are not explicitly named, the population group being addressed often remains the same. In this way, racist attributions are reproduced without being openly expressed.

Experiences from North Rhine-Westphalia also show that a repressive approach does not solve social problems. **Despite years of task forces, inspections and evictions, neither exploitation nor poverty has disappeared. Instead, those affected lose their homes, their jobs and**

**often their access to education and social support. Meanwhile, those who profit from these conditions frequently remain untouched.**

These developments should not be viewed in isolation. Rather, various political measures are converging into a security-policy approach that increasingly responds to social issues through public-order and security instruments, while leaving the structural causes of people's circumstances untouched. Germany is thereby following a development that we have observed for some time in various Eastern European countries, and which is one of the reasons why Roma flee those countries in the first place.

Roma Center therefore calls for a fundamental change in state action. Social policy must not be organised according to security-policy priorities. Rather than expanding structures of control and surveillance, fundamental and social rights must be strengthened, exploitation must be effectively addressed, and unlawful practices by state authorities must be consistently reviewed.

The central problem is not the misuse of social benefits, but the organised exploitation and deprivation of rights of particularly vulnerable people. Those who focus exclusively on benefit recipients lose sight of those who generate substantial profits from their hardship.

Especially in times of increasing social polarisation, social marginalisation, migration and the consequences of racism must not be framed as security problems. A democratic state governed by the rule of law must combat organised crime without restricting or violating the fundamental and social rights of particularly vulnerable population groups.

The Roma Center is a nationwide migrant self-organisation, based in Göttingen, with a branch in Dortmund. In recent years, Roma Center e.V. has increasingly worked on security-policy issues and co-founded the Global Roma Alliance for Strategic Security in 2025. The Alliance's aim is to establish the security of Roma as an independent political issue at European level. The [delegation](#) to Brussels in December 2025 marked the first meeting on Roma security held at the European Parliament.