

JOINT STATEMENT

CONDEMNING OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE AGAINST ROMANI WOMEN

JANUARY 2024

Over the past two weeks, the international community has been deeply affected by a tragic incident of obstetric violence against a Romani woman in Serbia, resulting in the heartbreaking loss of her newborn baby girl. We, as protesters of the international community, Romnja, feminists, activists, and allies, unite to condemn this shocking and traumatic act, demanding justice for the affected Romani family.

Marica Mihajlović, a Romani woman from Serbia, endured a harrowing experience in a Serbian hospital. The circumstances surrounding her childbirth can only be described as a severe case of obstetric violence. Her testimony reveals a series of aggressive, violent and racial insults and acts, including physical abuse by the attending doctor.

Marica's account, shared on social media and across national media outlets, describes hours of induced labor without access to care. Despite desperate pleas for a C-section, the doctor not only ignored her calls for help but also resorted to physical violence, including hitting her, squeezing her jaw, and making threats. Shockingly, the doctor performed on Marica the Kristeller maneuver without her consent, a practice condemned by the World Health Organization (WHO) if applied non-consensually or with excessive force.

This traumatic experience left Marica Mihajlović seriously injured, and tragically, her newborn, Elena Novakov, suffered complications that led to her untimely death shortly after birth. Disturbingly, a testimonial from another Romani woman from Serbia suggests that this incident is not an isolated case involving the same doctor, nor is it the first time such abuse has allegedly resulted in the death of a newborn.

Furthermore, we reference here another recent case from July 2023 in Romania, where another Roma woman was refused the right to proper healthcare, resulting in her giving birth on the pavement in front of the hospital.

These situations underscore the urgent need for widespread reform, aimed at addressing systemic issues within healthcare systems that perpetuate discrimination and unequal access to healthcare for Roma communities.

We, the undersigned, express our deep concern and call for immediate action from the Serbian government. We demand a just and thorough investigation into this case, holding the responsible obstetrician accountable for their actions. Additionally, we urge the government to provide full support to the grieving family and to investigate the potential presence of racial motives in the incident in question. When examining the incident, officials or investigators should strongly consider the possibility that the actions were influenced by racial bias against the Roma ethnicity.

Furthermore, we call on the Serbian government to support organizations and individuals fighting against obstetric violence, gender-based violence, women's rights, and racism in the country. We demand concrete measures to prevent similar cases from occurring in the future.

Acknowledging that this is not a unique case nor an isolated incident, we emphasize the urgent need to address structural racism and obstetric violence against Romani women. This situation reflects a broader pattern of discrimination informed by interlocking systems of oppression, and systemic failures within maternity and reproductive care. This abuse must not go unnoticed or unaddressed, and we demand a swift response from the authorities to rectify this deeply distressing situation.

Signatures

1. Aldessa Georgiana Lincan, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
2. Alba Hernández Sánchez, Roma Feminist, Spain
3. Svetlana Kostić, Roma Feminist Activist, Berlin
4. RomaniPhen, Feminist Romani NGO Berlin
5. Ioanida Costache, Roma Feminist Activist, Stanford, California, USA
6. Marina Csikos, Roma Feminist, Hungary
7. Isidora Randjelović, Romani Feminist Activist, Germany
8. Amdrita Jakupi, save space e.V. Cologne
9. Dr. Joanna Talewicz, Foundation Towards Dialogue, Poland
10. Hajdi Barz, Romani Feminist Activist, Germany
11. Maria Dumitru, Roma Feminist, Romania
12. Tayo Awosusi-Onutor – Author, singer, entrepreneur, Germany
13. Sebijan Fejzula, Roma anti-racist activist and scholar
14. Sabina Salimovska, Children's Rights activist, Germany
15. Ana Victoria Amador Vargas, Roma feminist activist, Spain
16. Romina Ecaterina Grigore, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
17. Simona Torotcoi, Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, Romania
18. Terezia Rostas, Care for Young People's Future – Roma Cultural Consultant Romnja Transform – United Kingdom
19. Maria Atanasova – Romani Feminist Activist, a trained Midwife, Bulgaria
20. AMUGE, Association of Roma Basque Women.
21. Romi Berriak, Intercultural Association of young Roma women, fighting for social justice and equality.
22. Roma Center e.V./ Roma Antidiscrimination Network
23. Antonella Lerca Duda, Roma Trans Activist, Romania
24. Pepi Fernandez Camacho, Roma Feminist Activist, Spain
25. Dr. Petra Bakos, CEU Vienna/Budapest
26. Alexandra Corcoveanu, Roma Queer Feminist Activist, Romania
27. Gwendolyn Albert, human rights activist, Czech Republic
28. Selma Muhič, Charles University, Czech Republic
29. Sandra Carmona Durán. Roma feminist activist
30. Nikola Ludlová, cultural worker, historian, Romani studies scholar, Czech Republic
31. Veronika Čechová, cultural worker, art curator, Czech Republic
32. Association of Roma Novi Becej, Vojvodina Serbia
33. Roma Women's Centre. "Rromnjako ilo" Zrenjanin, Serbia
34. Association of Roma "Danica" Pancevo, Serbia
35. Association Roma Women of Palilula Borča, Belgrade, Serbia
36. Markéta Bártová, National Film Archive, Czech Republic
37. Zuzana Šrámková, cultural worker, Czech republic
38. Lamija Čehajić, cultural worker, Czech Republic/Bosnia and Herzegovina
39. Nerea Casanova León, Spain
40. Miljana Čabrilovski, Human Rights Activist, Serbia
41. Senada Sali, Legal Director, European Roma Rights Centre
42. Irina Novac, feminist activist, Romania
43. Karina Kottova, cultural worker and feminist, Czech Republic
44. European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (ERGO Network)
45. Fundacja Jaw Dikh, Poland
46. Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz, Centre of Migration Research, Warsaw University
47. Jelena Silajdžić, Slovo 21, z.s., Czech Republic
48. Christine Sudbrock, Senior Programme Manager ERGO Network, Belgium
49. Regional Roma Educational Youth Association-RROMA, North Macedonia
50. Hamida Giyasbayli, Journalist, Azerbaijan
51. Lynsey Kavanagh, Co-Director, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, Ireland
52. Hülya Çokşen, Activist, Türkiye
53. Hemra Nida, Journalist working on Roma rights, Turkey
54. Roma Active Albania
55. Sıfır Ayrımcılık Derneği-Zero Discrimination Association, Turkey
56. Ahmed AHKIM, Roma and Travellers Mediation Center, Belgium
57. Amaro Drom e.V. – Germany
58. Anabel Carballo-Mesa, ERGO board member, Spain
59. Statache Alexandra, queer activist cultural worker, Romania
60. Sarah Werner Boda, Assistant Professor, University of Warwick, UK / Radical
61. Elena-Bianca Galusca, FAGiC (Roma federation) Spain
62. Dr. Zuzana Havirova, Roma advocacy and research centre, Slovakia

- 63.Tuba Akin, Roma Rights Activist, PhD Student at UIUC, Illinois , USA
- 64.Liliya Makaveeva, Integro Association, Bulgaria
- 65.Romano Centro, Austria
- 66.Dominika Badzova, a journalist
- 67.Slobodan Stanković, Serbia
- 68.Sri Kumar Vishwanathan, Life Together, Ostrava, Czechia
- 69.Stelina Dungaj, Roma Feminist Activist, Albania
- 70.Michelle Mila Van Burik, India ki Rasta, Netherlands
- 71.Margareta Merenciana, Salonica, Netherlands
- 72.Tsonko Tsonev, attorney, Bulgaria
- 73.Nica Georgiana Anca, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 74.E-Romnja Association for Promoting Roma Women Rights
- 75.Dinu Elisa, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 76.Calin Lacramioara, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 77.Gusa Estera, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 78.Dinu Lucia, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 79.Voinea Laura Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 80.Dinu Anisoara, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 81.Vasile Marica, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 82.Nicolae Luiza, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 83.Gheorghe Mirela, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 84.Caldararu Natalia, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 85.Barna Ioana Valentina, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 86.Ela Craciun, Feminist Activist, Romania
- 87.Feminism Romania, feminist NGO, Romania
- 88.Roxana Oprea, Roma Feminist Activist, Romania
- 89.Kamila Fiałkowska, Centre of Migration Research, Poland
- 90.Milen Milanov, school teacher, Bulgaria
- 91.Siobhan Spencer Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group UK.
- 92.Daniela Mihaylova, Equal Opportunities Initiative Association, Bulgaria
- 93.Tudorina Mihai, feminist and social justice activist, Romania
- 94.Sevdulje Ramadani, Serbia
- 95.Ciara Bradley, Associate Professor, Dept. of Applied Social Studies, Maynooth University
- 96.Adriana Radu, SEXUL vs BARZA, Romania
- 97.Ioana Țurcan, independent artist, Romania
- 98.Florentina-Alexandra Manea, Roma Feminist activist, Romania
- 99.Alexandra Ana, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow, Atelier Genre(s) et Sexualité(s), Université Libre de Bruxelles
- 100.Proca Camelia, Association for Liberty and Equality of Gender-A.L.E.G., Sibiu, Romania
- 101.Curechian Teodora, Association for Liberty and Equality of Gender-A.L.E.G., Sibiu, Romania
- 102.Hogea Gabriela, Association for Liberty and Equality of Gender-A.L.E.G., Sibiu, Romania
- 103.Gall Eniko, Association for Liberty and Equality of Gender-A.L.E.G., Sibiu, Romania
- 104.Vlad Viski, MozaiQ LGBT Association, Romania
- 105.Ana Mohr, MozaiQ LGBT Association, Romania
- 106.Andrei Purice, MozaiQ LGBT Association, Romania
- 107.Maximilian Androne, MozaiQ LGBT Association, Romania
- 108.Mădălina Bădărău, MozaiQ LGBT Association, Romania
- 109.Simona Ionescu, SPICC Association, Romania
- 110.Sergiu Marinescu, MozaiQ LGBT Association, Romania
- 111.Maria José Jiménez, Roma feminist anti racist activist, Gitanas Feministas, Spain
- 112.Sefora Jiménez Jimenez, Gitanas Feministas, Spain
- 113.Sara López Olvera, Roma feminist activist, Spain
- 114.Ana Cortés Campos, Gitanas Feministas, Spain
- 115.Mădălina Branduse, Actriță/Activistă feministă, Romania
- 116.Raj Alexandru Udrea, Queer Activist Live Artist, Romania
- 117.Andrei Serban - Roma, Activist, Acting Works Association, Romania
- 118.Tereza Jindrová, cultural worker, art curator, Czech Republic
- 119.Luiza Medeleanu, Roma researcher, Romania
- 120.Bogdan Burdușel, Roma activist, Romania
- 121.Paca Moya García, Feminist and mother's rights activist, Spain
- 122.Elena Mihalache, Roma women, Romania/Poland
- 123.Dr. Delia Grigore, președinta Asociației Centrul Rromilor "Amare Rromentza"
- 124.Patricia Hamilton, Lecturer, University of York, UK / Radical Mothering Research Collective
- 125.Romani Godi- Roma Memory Studies Association, Turkey
- 126.Fatoş Kaytan, Romani Godi, Turkey
- 127.Liliana Ene, Roma researcher and activist for the rights of women and mothers, Romania
- 128.Sarah Kaddoura, Haki Nasawi/Feminist Talk, Lebanon-Palestine
- 129.Maria Zaslavsky, MA Central European University
- 130.Alina Medoia, feminist, Romania
- 131.Alexandra BANU, (Katarina del Rey) civil rights activist, Romania
- 132.Maya Gutmann-McKenzie, full-spectrum doula, Rhode Island, USA