

Neo Nazis target Roma gypsies

The Roma minority, known as Gypsies, unfortunately, are used to discrimination and violent attacks. But recent violence in Eastern Europe has reached a new level of ferocity.

Several Roma, including children, have been killed in attacks this year involving firearms, gasoline bombs and hand grenades. Roma activists blame right-wing groups, which appear to have grown in strength as the economic crisis has deepened across much of Eastern Europe.

The latest victim was single mother Maria Balogh, 45, and her 13-year-old daughter Ketrin. In early August, the Baloghs were asleep in their house in Kisleta, a quiet farming village in north-eastern Hungary near the Ukrainian border. An unknown number of armed men broke into their house and fired on the women. Maria was killed, and her daughter remains hospitalized with critical injuries.

Family member Virag Lakatos, 20, who lives near the victims, says Maria worked hard at local agriculture jobs and kept to herself.

"Her husband died a while ago, and she worked very hard to raise her daughter alone," Lakatos says. "She lived for her daughter. Sometimes I walk past her house now, and I keep thinking, why isn't she calling out my name and inviting me in, as usual?"

In February, attackers struck a different rural village in Hungary. They set fire to the Roma family's house during a night-time attack using a Molotov cocktail, or homemade gasoline bomb. When the father and his 5-year-old son tried to run away, they were shot dead.

Since 2008, Hungary has seen at least nine arson attacks, eight shootings and two assaults involving hand grenades on Roma communities. Violence against Roma also has flared in the Czech Republic, Romania and elsewhere in recent months.

Roma activist Juci Csik walks up to Balogh's freshly dug grave in a small cemetery that hugs a field of tall corn. The grave is covered with pine wreaths and flowers browned by the summer sun. Csik sees the rising violence and intimidation against Roma as a Europe-wide problem.

"In Italy, they also regularly shoot at Gypsies in their caravan settlements outside the cities," Csik says. "In Ireland, there are tensions with the authorities. In the Czech Republic this year, we've seen attacks by gangs using Molotov cocktails and guns, like here in Hungary."

Hungarian police have arrested four men and charged them with murder, attempted murder and arson for alleged involvement in the attacks. Hungarian newspapers report that the suspects were extremists well-known to some police and intelligence officials.

There are questions as to why authorities didn't monitor the group more closely. One of the suspects reportedly was involved in an arson attack on a synagogue in 1995,



Mariska, mother of Maria Balogh, reacts during her daughter's funeral Aug. 7 in Kisleta, Hungary. Maria Balogh, a Roma (or Gypsy) woman, was shot dead and her 13-year-old daughter seriously injured on Aug. 3, when their house was attacked in the latest of a series of attacks on Gypsies.

and another is a neo-Nazi skinhead.

Police are looking for other suspects, but the arrests have done little to calm fears in Kisleta. Roma men are still conducting all-night car and foot patrols of their neighborhoods.

"I'm just defending my family and the other Roma in this village," Istvan Horvath, 28, says. He's staying vigilant, unconvinced that the racist crime wave is over.

"We patrol until dawn," Horvath adds. "But if we see anything suspicious, we stay out longer."

Across Eastern Europe, the Roma population is increasing - and so is resentment as the economic downturn has worsened. The crisis has only sharpened old social tensions.

The government in Hungary predicts that the economy will contract by 6.7 percent this year. Unemployment is rising.

Just 10 blocks away from where Balogh was murdered, wheat and corn farmer Imre Madach says the slumping economy has worsened anti-Roma feelings.

Hungarian government figures show that less than one-quarter of Roma work legally in the country.

Madach says he doesn't condone violence and hate but accuses Roma of being lazy welfare cheats.

"Gypsies don't work but have eight or nine children, and then get all this money from the state to live on," Madach says.

"And this state sucks the blood out of the Hungarian working people in high taxes to pay them. It's just not fair! So, of course this sharpens the social tensions."

Roma activists say the Hungarian extreme right-wing Jobbik or "better" party has recklessly stoked the anti-Roma climate. Jobbik is growing in popularity based in large part on an anti-Roma platform. Jobbik leaders regularly lash out at what they call "out of control Gypsy crime" and call for a cut to welfare benefits to the long-term unemployed.

"The motivation can only be racist, as all of the victims are Roma," says Jenő Kaltenbach with the European Roma Rights Center in Budapest. He says Jobbik's fierce anti-Roma rhetoric has contributed to the climate of hate and fear.

"Jobbik uses this [racist] language openly," Kaltenbach says. "It can justify such actions saying 'we are only protecting ourselves against Roma crime.'"

Asked about the anti-Roma attacks, Jobbik spokesman Zsolt Varkonyi points to an attack nearly three years ago in which a mob of Roma attacked and killed a Hungarian man after a traffic altercation. Varkonyi denies that Jobbik's paramilitary wing, the volunteer Hungarian Guard, has anything to do with the recent wave of anti-Roma violence.

Instead, he blames shadowy foreign

secret agents trying to discredit Hungary.

"These killings were done so professionally, that it could not be the guy next-door," Varkonyi says. "The members of the Hungarian Guard are the guys from next-door. The professionalism is a sign that it is a secret service. We suspect people in the Slovak Secret Service."

A Hungarian police official says there is no evidence that Slovakian secret agents are behind the anti-Roma violence.

The extreme right-wing party accuses Jews of buying up land across rural Hungary and believes so-called Gypsy crime is the top problem in the country.

Recent polls show between 15 and 18 percent of Hungarians support the party. If those numbers hold through elections next spring, Jobbik is poised to become the third most powerful political party in Hungary.

AP AND AGENCIES



A suspect (left) in a series of deadly attacks against Roma people is hooded and handcuffed as he is led by police officers into a court building for his arraignment hearing Aug. 23 in Budapest, Hungary. A judge ruled to keep him in custody two days after Hungarian police detained four men accused of having committed six murders in nine attacks against Roma people in various settlements of Hungary since July 21, 2008.

Hindus protest against atrocities on Roma Gypsies

Hindus have asked European Commission (EC) to demand adequate compensation from France and Italy for Roma (Gypsy) communities whose settlements were demolished and/or they were deported.

Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, in a statement in Nevada (USA) today, said that France and Italy seemed to be defying pressure and continuing with their maltreatment of Roma. It was time for EC to show some guts and censure France and Italy. Targeting of helpless Roma community was clearly xenophobia, discrimination and stereotyping.

Europe's most persecuted and discriminated community, Roma were reportedly facing apartheid conditions in Europe. Roma reportedly regularly encountered social exclusion, racism, substandard education, hostility, joblessness, rampant illness, inadequate housing, lower life expectancy, unrest, living on desperate margins, stereotypes, mistrust, rights violations, discrimination, marginalization, appalling living conditions, prejudice, human rights abuse, etc., Rajan Zed, who is President of Universal Society of Hinduism, added.

China, Russia agree on nuclear power cooperation

Beijing: China and Russia have agreed to expand nuclear power cooperation in seven areas, including building floating nuclear power plants, exploring uranium mines, eliminating old plants and developing markets abroad, the China Atomic Energy Authority said.

in the area, Interfax news agency has reported, citing Sergei Kiriyenko, head of Russia's state nuclear energy corporation, Rosatom.

They also reached agreement on Russia's involvement in the construction of two fast-neutron reactors in China, while a contract to add two nuclear power generating units at the Tianwan nuclear power plant could also be signed before the end of this year or in the first quarter of 2011, Kiriyenko was quoted as saying.

Tianwan, the first Chinese nuclear power plant using Russian technology, started commercial operation of its first generating unit in 2006 and the second in 2007.

China is making a big push for nuclear power and other alternative energy sources to reduce its over-reliance on dirty coal. It is building more nuclear power plants than any country in the world and has become a test ground for different nuclear technologies from France, Canada, Russia and the United States.

REUTERS



They will also cooperate on molten-core catcher technologies, which improve nuclear safety, the authority said in a statement on its website (www.caea.gov.cn), after a meeting of Russian and Chinese government officials and industry executives.

It did not elaborate. China is interested in Russia's expertise on floating nuclear power plants, and both sides will set up groups to assess prospects

Inauguration of MPG-06 batch at MIT-SOG, Pune

MITSOG can produce Prime minister of this country: Hon'ble Mr Tatkare



Hon'ble Finance Minister of Maharashtra addressing the new batch of MIT-SOG.

MPG - 06 batch of MIT -School of Government started on 5th September 2010 coinciding with Teachers' Day. The Chief Guest for the ceremony was Mr Sunil Tatkare, Hon'ble Finance Minister, Maharashtra. To mark the occasion of Teacher's day and recognize the contribution of teachers, six teachers from MAEER's Group were felicitated by the Chief Guest Mr Tatkare. The stage was graced by noted personalities including senior journalist Mr Madhukar Bhawe, Mr Abhijeet Pawar, head Sakal Group, Mr Prakash Joshi- Founder Member MAEER's Group, Mr Sharadchandra Darade Patil, Dr Mangesh Karad, Managing director, MAEER's group, Prof Vishvanath Karad Founder President MAEER's MIT Group and Mr



Participants of the MPG-06 batch of MIT-SOG.

Rahul V Karad, founder and Dean MIT School of Government.

Mr Rahul karad welcomed all participants and their family members along with distinguish guests and explained the need and the work of MIT School of government and appreciated the efforts taken by Sakal group in political and social life of the country. He also shared his experience with audience in the field of administration and politics. Mr Vishvanath Karad Founder, President of MAEER's group blessed participants and wished this course a great success. As a part of convention, Siddhesh Naik MPG-04 batch and Melchior D'souza, alumni of MPG-05, expressed their views about the course and extended warm wishes to the new batch.

Mr Madhukarji Bhawe, veteran jour-

nalist, commended the work done by Mr Tatkare from Konkan region and also described the contribution of Konkan region that has produced finance ministers at national and state level.

In his inaugural speech, Hon'bl Mr Tatkare mentioned the need of good politician for implementing developmental work in various parts of the country. He stressed upon the need of school of government for nurturing budding politicians. He expressed his wish that a day will come the Prime minister of this country will be an alumni of MIT School of Government.

The function was anchored by Mrs Vanishree Ramnathan and the vote of thanks was proposed by Gp Capt D P Apte, Director MIT School of Government.