

# Policy Brief



## Kosovo: Repatriating Europe’s Most Vulnerable Population

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### Introduction

The Constitution of Kosovo provides a comprehensive framework for the protection of human rights for all of Kosovo’s citizens regardless of origin or ethnicity. Specifically, Chapter II provides for every individual’s Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, complete with powerful Articles that include the right to an education, the right to personal integrity, and the right to health and social protection. Chapter III protects the Rights of Communities and Their Members, where Article 57 explicitly states that such members “shall have the right to freely express, foster and develop their identity and community attributes.”<sup>1</sup>

But for members of the Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities, these rights exist on paper only. Indeed, in its 2010 Progress Report, the European Commission Liaison Office to Kosovo stressed that “the authorities need to increase their commitment to address urgent issues affecting the lives of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.”<sup>2</sup>

Further to that point, in a Resolution dated July 6, 2011, the Council of Europe underscores the urgency by which Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian returnees are in need of government assistance. “Persons belonging to minority communities who have been forcibly returned are in a particularly vulnerable situation given the difficult socio-economic conditions they live in, often without access to healthcare and social services, employment and education. More resolute measures are needed to address their security concerns and increased efforts must be made.”<sup>3</sup>

Acknowledging the extreme vulnerability surrounding the Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities, the government of Kosovo, in cooperation with civil society, drafted the *Action Plan of the Republic of Kosovo for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Integration of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities, 2009-2015*, a detailed

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution of Kosovo, Chapter III, Article 57.3, page 16, available at: <http://www.kushtetutakosoves.info/repository/docs/Constitution.of.the.Republic.of.Kosovo.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Kosovo 2010 Progress Report, November 9, 2010, page 21, available at: [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/documents/eu\\_kosovo/ks\\_rapport\\_2010\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/documents/eu_kosovo/ks_rapport_2010_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Council of Europe Resolution CM/Res/CMN(2011)14 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Kosovo, July 6, 2011, page 2

framework designed to alleviate the hardships on these communities with an eye towards integrating them into the public sphere.

An essential component to the implementation of the Action Plan is the needed (re)integration of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian families and individuals who have been returned to Kosovo either voluntarily or through force by a host country elsewhere in Europe. With an eye towards EU accession, the government of Kosovo continues to sign readmission agreements with other European nations designed to clear the way for visa liberalization, a key element that must be satisfied to achieve membership in the European Union. As this report will highlight, the combination of forced repatriation, weakness in the government's capacity to manage returns, and an Action Plan struggling to meet its mandate, are resulting in little progress for the affected communities who continue to suffer the very human rights violations the Constitution of Kosovo was created to protect.

## **Methodology**

This report draws on ten field interviews with Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian individuals and families conducted in Gjakovë, Pejë, Ferizaj, and Fushë Kosovë. To gain additional field context, meetings were also held with two municipal community officers, Armend Behluli in Gjakovë and Xhevahire Dervishi-Rexhepi in Ferizaj. Finally, to gain perspective from those at the central level of government, interviews were conducted with Birgit Budde, the director of Germany's URA 2 Kosovo Return Project, and with Islam Caka, the director of Department of Asylum, Citizens and Migration and a member of the Board of Repatriation in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

This policy brief is not meant to provide a comparative analysis between returning countries and therefore comprises interviews focused entirely on those individuals or families who have been forcibly returned to Kosovo from Germany, with the notable exception of an individual in Ferizaj who was returned from Switzerland. The majority of those interviewed have been returned in 2011, with two exceptions.

## **Findings**

This report extends the following findings:

- An early read on the implementation of The Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian Communities points to an action plan on paper only; the needed reintegration improvements in the field proved difficult to verify with specific focus on the lack of access to health care, school enrollment for returned children, employment opportunities, and sustainable accommodation.
- The process by which social assistance requests are made can be a lengthy one due to several factors: incompetence and/or indifference by the municipal community officer; a bureaucratic process requiring legal documents that may be difficult for some Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians to acquire; and what could be

infrequent review sessions conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs Board of Repatriation.

- While a representative may be stationed at Pristina airport to offer directional assistance to returning Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians, the Ministry of Internal Affairs offers a dearth of guidance to returnees once they arrive in Kosovo and does not have procedures or personnel in place to follow up on returnees to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan.
- To the claims that the Ministry of Internal Affairs is applying the allocated 3.4 million euro to repatriation and reintegration efforts, a climate of corruption magnifies the importance of greater transparency vis-à-vis expenditures on Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian returnees, transparency that is presently absent as illustrated by a 2011 Transparency International report that states: “Many of the country’s institutions delay the release of documents that are mandated by law to be public, including audit reports, annual reports and budgets. In many cases, citizens are not even aware of their access to information rights.”<sup>4</sup>

## Recommendations

This report extends the following recommendations:

- Upon landing in Kosovo, returnees should be handed a one-sheet in their native language; it should provide a complete list of civil registration and legal documents required by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to process a request for social assistance. To the extent that reintegration assistance brochures are presently available upon arriving in Pristina, the Ministry of Internal Affairs should revisit their method for distributing this information. This would mitigate, if not eliminate, any surprises in relation to the Ministry’s requirements, thereby expediting the request and getting it into the proper hands sooner.
- Social assistance requests should be reviewed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on a rolling basis rather than on a periodic basis. A sense of urgency must be applied to the social assistance review process to provide vulnerable individuals and families with the assistance they need without delay.
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs should re-examine their current procedures and allocate the necessary funds in order to implement a comprehensive, turn-key repatriation process, beginning from the moment the family lands at the airport. Each family or individual should be received by a knowledgeable representative who can provide instructions on how to file a request for social assistance benefits, provide the family with travel to their final destination, and make

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<sup>4</sup> Transparency International: *EU Anti-Corruption Requirements: Measuring Progress in Albania, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia and Turkey*, June, 2011, page 4, available at: [http://www.transparency.org/regional\\_pages/europe\\_central\\_asia/projects\\_and\\_activities/cimap](http://www.transparency.org/regional_pages/europe_central_asia/projects_and_activities/cimap)

themselves available for additional consultation in the future should the family have questions once they are settled.

- In conjunction with the preceding recommendation, the turn-key repatriation process must include a mechanism whereby the government of Kosovo should verify that returnees have a suitable residence to be returned to that does not compromise the returnees right to personal dignity and integrity. Shared accommodations provided by relatives should not be considered as a sustainable measure, nor should current residents or citizens of Kosovo have to compromise their living conditions to sustain a returnee. If suitable property cannot be verified, the individual or family should not be returned until such accommodation can be provided by the government of Kosovo.
- In conjunction with their responsibility to “ensure returnee’s sustainable reintegration, including in the key areas of health, education, employment, social care and housing,”<sup>5</sup> the Ministry of Internal Affairs should allocate funding to the municipal level where the municipal returns officer (MRO) could serve as a case manager to each returned individual or family. The MRO should conduct quarterly field visits to monitor the returnee’s progress in finding employment, their children’s enrollment and participation in school, access to health care, suitable accommodation, and other activities that fall within the mandate of all municipalities vis-à-vis the Action Plan.
- Families with children who were born in the country of origin or who have resided there since early childhood where full integration with the majority population has been achieved should not be returned.
- The Ministry of Education should create Albanian/Serbian language courses across the country specifically for those Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian children born and formerly integrated elsewhere in Europe. Enrollment in language classes should be at the earliest possible moment after repatriation to expedite the process by which children can be integrated with the majority population in regular classes.
- In the interest of greater transparency and democratic participation, the 3.4 million euro allocated for repatriation and reintegration should be posted on the MIA website with monthly updates to allow civil society to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan. Expenditures for Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities should be kept separate from those funds spent on other groups returned to Kosovo for the benefit of both civil society and those most affected by the implementation of the Action Plan: Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities.

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<sup>5</sup> OSCE Booklet for Municipal Officials on Reception and Reintegration of Repatriated Persons, December 2010, page 25

## **The Situation**

R. B. had been living in Germany since 1991. His children were in school and he was a model citizen, never causing trouble for the German government or with the law. But he was there on *Duldung* status, temporary “Tolerated” permission to live in that country subject to renewal every three months. On April 12, 2011, he was forcibly returned to Kosovo.

“The police arrived at seven in the morning without advanced warning. I was given no time to collect my belongings; I didn’t even take my jacket. I was forcibly returned to Kosovo, given eighty euro on the plane, thirty for me, fifty for my daughter,” Mr. R. B. told me as we sat on his front porch in Gjakovë, surrounded by his family.

To come in close contact with the Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities in Kosovo, to witness their living conditions and to hear their stories of desperation, is to remind us of what we are capable of doing to each other. Indeed, the human race continues to find ways to subjugate populations simply for being who they are.

After meeting with several members of the Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities RADC has learned first-hand the difficulties they face. But it’s not just the adults who are suffering under the government of Kosovo’s Readmission Agreements, bilateral arrangements that regulate the repatriation process for those who have failed to achieve citizenship elsewhere in Europe. Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian children, born and socially integrated in Germany, fluent in the German language, have been forcibly returned only to encounter a fierce language barrier, social exclusion, and an end to their schooling.

“My daughter was in primary school, my son in the ninth grade. They both speak German. My son can understand some Albanian, but he can’t speak it,” said Mr. R. B. when RADC asked about his children who have not been able to attend school in Kosovo.

Mr. R. B. and his family live with his brother and his family, only one example of the crowded living conditions forcibly returned Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians must cope with in Kosovo. Many returnees sold their property to finance their emigration to places like Germany. To be forcibly returned to Kosovo means having to stay with a relative, an unsustainable proposition for many.

“We are six people living in a small house without a toilet. We have to heat bottles of water to wash ourselves,” said S. B., a Roma gentleman struggling in Gjakovë.

Were you all forcibly returned? I asked.

“No,” replies Mr. S. B., “my wife returned voluntarily because of a statement made by the former Roma member of Parliament. He said voluntary returns would receive benefits. It’s been more than two years and she has received nothing.”

In Pejë, P. R., who like Mr. R. B. was returned on April 12, 2011, suffers from paranoid psychosis, a condition diagnosed by a German doctor who prescribed medication. “The German police arrived at four in the morning on April 12 of this year. I received no warning letter. After arriving in Kosovo, I went to a doctor who wouldn’t treat me because he said my surname sounds Serbian. I can’t get the medication I need to manage this illness,” said Mr. P. R.

## **Readmission Agreements**

The government of Kosovo has been signing Readmission Agreements with other European states since the former autonomous province of Serbia declared its independence in February 2008. After its most recently signed agreement with Montenegro in June 2011, the government now has twelve agreements in place. And while these agreements reflect the Republic of Kosovo’s desire to meet visa liberalization criteria, it is clear that the country lacks what is required to (re)integrate Europe’s most vulnerable population: financial resources, institutional capacity, and political will.<sup>6</sup>

In a joint interview with Etem Arifi, the Ashkali representative in Parliament, and Qazim Rahmani, political advisor in the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Mr. Rahmani was adamant about what the agreements with Europe really mean for Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities in Kosovo: “We are a minority here. We are oppressed and left aside. The government of Kosovo does not give priority to Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians. The government sees it as more important to make the Kosovo state equal to Europe, regardless of the consequences it has on the Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities.”

Indeed, the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights spoke directly to these concerns in a 2009 report: “Kosovo is under political pressure to accept these agreements, without having in place the budget or the capacity to receive these families in dignity and security.”<sup>7</sup>

Further confirmation that Kosovo should refrain from entering into readmission agreements at this juncture can be found in a 2009 OSCE press release: “The lack of assistance faced by repatriated persons in the areas of housing, schooling, healthcare, and employment opportunities represent a serious reintegration problem for individuals and families, in particular for the non-Albanian communities. We urge central and local authorities to reach out to these vulnerable groups by allocating necessary funding, increasing coordination and information-sharing.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Gezim Visoka and Adem Beha, *Repatriation without Responsibility: The nature and implications of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian forced repatriation to Kosovo*

<sup>7</sup> Council of Europe, *Report of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights’ Special Mission to Kosovo*, CommDH(2009)23, 23 – 27 March 2009, page 5.

<sup>8</sup> OSCE Press Release: *Implementation of the Strategy for Reintegration of Repatriated Persons in Kosovo’s Municipalities*, Prishtina, November 2009, available at: [www.osce.org/kosovo/51564](http://www.osce.org/kosovo/51564)

Shpresa Agushi, a Roma woman who runs her own NGO advocating for Roma rights, concurs: “Kosovo does not have the funds to support returns. Housing and unemployment are major issues and we are not seeing any big changes,” she said.

But Islam Caka, director of the Department of Asylum, Citizens and Migration and a member of the Board of Repatriation within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, disputes the claim that Kosovo does not have the capacity to handle returns.

“We recognize that we are responsible for the citizens of Kosovo; we treat each citizen equally. The mechanism is in place to reintegrate these people quickly because we do not want a passive population. Presently, the weakest link in the process is at the municipal level. We need to intervene there and make some improvements,” Mr. Caka said.

Mr. Caka’s statement is a troubling one, not just for the claim that each citizen in Kosovo is treated equally, an assertion contradicted by field evidence, but for the “reintegrate” misnomer. Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities were not integrated minorities prior to the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. To imply otherwise is to suggest that Kosovo was once an entity complete with social cohesion, and therefore short-changes the immense challenges the government and the various majority and minority communities face in their hope to heal the fissures in Kosovan society.

### **Returns from Germany & the Social Assistance Request**

There are some returning from Germany who are eligible to receive limited financial assistance, but it is not coming from the government of Kosovo. The URA 2 Project, housed inside Germany’s *Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* Pristina office, offers those returning from select regions of Germany pre-determined financial assistance once they arrive in Pristina.

“Everyone is eligible for social counseling no matter where they are returning from in Germany. Those who return voluntarily receive a little more assistance than those who are deported. Otherwise, there is a budget per person for those who are returned from four specific regions in Germany. Why only those regions is a political decision which I am not able to speak to,” said Birgit Budde, residential adviser in the Pristina-based URA office.

Assuming the returnees originate from the Federal States of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Niedersachsen, Nordrhein-Westfalen and Sachsen-Anhal, URA provides each person with the following, with the caveat that those who return voluntarily are eligible to receive additional benefits:

- 50 euro one-time payment
- Up to 100 euro monthly for six months of rent
- Up to 300 euro for furniture
- Up to 75 euro for medical or prescription drugs needs
- Up to 50 euro for language courses

- 120 euro for job-related training

While these benefits are funded by the German government, once they are exhausted, the returnee is no longer eligible to receive assistance from URA. At that point, they are either on their own, or they have to work through the bureaucratic process of filing for social assistance benefits through their local municipal office, - a process that is slow at best and a dead end at worst depending on how well the municipal officer is at doing their job, and/or, how much the officer is committed to supporting the Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians living in their own municipality.

Xhevahire Dervishi-Rexhepi is the municipal community officer in Ferizaj. When a returned person from the Roma, Ashkalia or Egyptian communities approach her office for help, she is responsible for collecting the required documents from the individual so she can send a social assistance request to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

“I cannot send a request to the Ministry without all the required documents. I am committed to supporting the people who seek help, but without civil registration and legal documents such as birth certificates or documentation of land ownership, I can only hold the request until the individual provides full documentation,” Ms. Dervishi-Rexhepi said after we met with several Roma individuals whose requests for help have gone unanswered in Ferizaj.

When told that several of the returnees have been waiting months for a response to their request for social assistance benefits, Mr. Caka of the MIA denied it takes a lengthy period of time to reach a decision. “If the request is complete, the review of the file does not take much time. Repatriation board meetings can be held at any time and immediate actions can be taken,” Mr. Caka said.

In contrast to Ferizaj, Armend Behluli, the municipal community officer in Gjakovë is seen as the model for gathering returnee’s documents and sending in requests to the MIA. So much so that the EU Commission visited with Mr. Behluli to see with their own eyes the successes he has had in solidifying the benefits the Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities in his region deserve, specifically, seeing houses built for those who returned homeless and seeing to it that they receive food assistance. In 2011 alone, he has sent thirteen requests for housing and has had ten approved. One was rejected because it was shown that the requester was able to live with his brother.

“If the Ministry sees that a family member can help the returnee, the Ministry will not help that individual,” Mr. Behluli said.

While Mr. Caka of the Ministry talks of 3.4 million euro budgeted in 2011 for the repatriation and reintegration of all those returned, not just Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians but Albanians as well, Mr. Behluli stresses to not be fooled.

“500,000 euro was allocated last year for repatriation and reintegration and not one euro was spent on Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians. Corruption interferes with the process of



allocating funds for Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians. It is up to civil society to root out corruption in the government. But the government is also hesitant to give Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians money for fear they will try to escape. It's assumed that 5,000 euro is enough for someone to leave Kosovo again," Mr. Behluli explained, an unrealistic fear as RADC has discovered that the funds provided as social assistance would not be enough to fund an escape.

When RADC asked why other municipal community officers fail to fulfill their duties in relation to helping Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians secure social assistance, Mr. Behluli was blunt: "There have been one-day training sessions for officers to learn how to fill out a request. But these sessions have not achieved the desired objective. Other officers simply do not know the proper way to fill out a request. In some cases, the request has been handwritten, and in others, it has not been stamped, which makes it unofficial. The bureaucratic cycle perpetuates when an officer sends in a request incorrectly, because the Ministry sends it back asking for it to be redone. As a result, some Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians have been waiting five or six months for a response to their request."

And how much of it can be attributed to prejudice and discrimination?

"Naturally," Mr. Behluli answered flatly.

And in the case where a returnee does not have all the required documents to complete a request, for example, a birth certificate for their child born in Germany, how does that get handled?

"It becomes a very big black hole. The family returns with very little. In the case of a birth certificate for offspring born in Germany, the Ministry says they will deal with it. In reality, the Ministry is trying to escape from their responsibility," Mr. Behluli explained further.

But Birgit Budde of the URA office in Pristina disputes the notion that returnees are not given enough time to collect their belongings and make the necessary arrangements.

"They are made aware well in advance that they need to leave Germany. They have several chances to leave on their own," she said. "It is only at the actual time of deportation when they are not given time. They risk staying after being told to leave months before. The decision for them to leave is in writing and approved by a court. If you were to be at the airport when they land, you would see them carrying bags. It's simply not accurate that they have no time to collect their belongings," Ms. Budde explained further when RADC asked about what appeared to be a ruthless method for forcefully removing Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians from Germany.

An Ashkalia civil society activist, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, believes the blame for those who have been forcibly returned from Germany cannot be entirely placed on the German government.

“To a large degree, I blame the families. If they were living in Germany for so many years, they should have found work. The government of Germany should not be expected to provide them with social assistance unconditionally,” he said. On the other hand, some of RADC’s sources point out that they were working and paying taxes normally for years, but during the economic downturn they were unable to find work and were deported soon after losing their employment.

But in terms of securing social assistance from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there is yet another obstacle returnees have to overcome for their request to be met. As Mr. Caka quickly described it, each request must not only contain the completed set of civil and legal documents, but it must also meet a set of criteria for the returnee to be eligible to receive social assistance. Regretfully, the opportunity to learn more about what this criterion entails did not present itself. But clearly, if a returnee is not eligible for social assistance, how does the government of Kosovo expect the returnee to sustain him or herself and become an integrated part of an active versus “passive population?”

### **The Action Plan**

Indeed, with the advent of the *Action Plan of the Republic of Kosovo for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Integration of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities, 2009-2015*, signed on March 2, 2010 by Prime Minister Thaqi, those in civil society who work to advance the interests of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities are eager to see the words on paper become reality across Kosovo. But if the field interviews described herein are any indication, the process is rife with bureaucracy; there is little inter-ministerial communication; and there is little to no sustainable support, monetary or otherwise, from the government of Kosovo once URA assistance has been used in full.

When RADC asked about the repatriation process as a whole, Mr. Caka stressed that while the government does face some challenges, he believes the Action Plan is being implemented successfully.

As Mr. Caka sees it, the government of Kosovo is the first and only government in Europe to put a plan in place to address the inclusion of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities. It is significant given that the issues that Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian face in Europe are not new. Take for instance the *Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015*, a well-intentioned but under-funded initiative with close to a dozen countries participating. While not a signatory to the Decade, the government of Kosovo, armed with the determination to create a state where visions of prosperity and democracy are not just buzzwords but principles to live by, can seize this opportunity to become the model for how best to integrate its most vulnerable populations.

Indeed, the Action Plan’s goals and objectives are lofty and could be transformative if implemented and carried out carefully. Civil society commends the government of Kosovo for envisioning and drafting the Plan in the hopes of creating a fairer, all-inclusive society. With that said, despite Mr. Caka’s assertion that a mechanism is in

place, RADC interviews suggest that improvements can be made to the repatriation process, improvements that could be addressed immediately with only a small measure of political will and monetary expenditure.

As Ms. Agushi sees it, “We are citizens of Kosovo. We should be seen first as Kosovars, not as Roma, Ashkali or Egyptian.”

### **Conclusion: Two Sides to the Same Story**

Trying to determine which side is more accurate in their version of the same story is not an easy task without experiencing the process first hand. Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian stories of forced return at odd hours with very little time to pack; lack of advanced warning from the German authorities; unhelpful municipal officers who “did not do anything with my paperwork”; and lengthy waiting times for a response from the Ministry, tell of a broken, insensitive system rife with majority population prejudices and rampant discriminatory practices. But interviews with government officials, most notably with the representative from URA and the municipal community officer in Ferizaj, describe a process that resembles governmental bureaucracy as opposed to outright disregard for the welfare of a minority population.

That is not to discount the need for additional questions to be asked and have answered. Further areas of research should include: in URA’s case, why only those four Federal States in Germany? What do returnees from the other twelve Federal States do for assistance? How do other countries handle the deportation of their Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian populations? What type of assistance do other countries give to returnees once they arrive in Kosovo? What steps can the government of Kosovo take to make the process of repatriation and reintegration more transparent, where it discloses the amount of money not just allocated, but spent on the necessary activities required to (re)integrate returnees? How can civil society come together to pressure the government of Kosovo to drive out corruption and deliver more transparency to the budgeting and expenditure process?

Having these and other questions answered will reveal further where the gaps reside in the implementation of the Action Plan as seen on paper versus what can be verified in the field. Civil society, perhaps the most important actor in bringing the Action Plan to reality, will have the tools required to more effectively address the needs of the Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities while continuing to advocate for progress to be made in the Action Plan’s implementation.

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## © Roma, Ashkalia Documentation Center, August 2011

### **About the Roma and Ashkalia Documentation Centre**

The Roma and Ashkalia Documentation Centre (RADC) was established in 2004 as a nongovernmental initiative to improve the civic condition of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities in Kosovo through policy development and advocacy, community support and mobilization, and partnership with civil society groups.

Since its establishment, RADC has been an organization committed to promoting the fundamental rights and interests of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities while working to protect their desperate socio-political needs throughout Kosovo. To fulfill this holistic mission, RADC has established sustainable partnership and cooperation with influential international organizations and has served as a reliable local partner in addressing the needs and interests of Kosovo's most vulnerable communities.

Of particular importance, RADC has worked with the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) to address discrimination issues among Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities by empowering civil society organizations and raising awareness among rule of law institutions and lawyers in Kosovo; partnered with Minority Rights Group International, to function as a watchdog entity to ensure that minority communities in Kosovo are not excluded from the EU accession process and the benefits that come from it; worked with France-based NGO CCFD to support the forced repatriated families from Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities; and together with CRP/K, has assisted over 10,000 Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptians in obtaining civil documents.

RADC also played an important role in the Northern Mitrovica camps by advocating for the relocation to Roma Mahalla in close cooperation with camp inhabitants. From 2008 through 2010, in partnership with Mercy Corps and through support by USAID, RADC relocated 50 families from the Northern Mitrovica camps Cesmin Llug and Osterode to Mitrovica south in Roma Mahalla.

Since February 2011, RADC has been running a classroom-furnished, modern computer-equipped Learning Center in Roma Mahalla serving more than 150 Roma children in partnership with the Kosovo Education Center (KEC) through support by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS) and the European Commission. Additional educational activities have been supported by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).