

**Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe:
U.S. Helsinki Commission**

“Attacks on Roma in Ukraine”

Committee Staff Present:

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and Cooperation in Europe**

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Europe**

Participants:

**Zemfira “Zola” Kondur, Romani human rights activist and Founder, Chiricli
International Roma Women’s Fund;**

**Halyna Yurchenko, Coordinator of the NGO “Roma Youth of Ukraine”;
Rachel Bauman, Policy Advisor, Commission for Security and Cooperation in
Europe;**

**Oksana Shulyar, Deputy Chief of Mission and Minister-Counsellor, Embassy
of Ukraine to the United States**

**The Briefing Was Held From 10:00 a.m. To 11:12 a.m. in Room SVC 214,
Senate Visitor Center, Washington, D.C., Erika B. Schlager, Counsel for
International Law, Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe,
presiding**

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SCHLAGER: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Erika Schlager, and I serve as Counsel for International Law for the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, informally known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission. On behalf of the Commission, I'd like to welcome everyone who is here today. At the other end of the table is Rachel Bauman, who is the lead policy advisor on Ukraine. The Helsinki Commission is an independent agency of the federal government, charged with monitoring implementation of the 1975 Helsinki Accords and advancing U.S. policies regarding the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

I'd like to begin this briefing by setting in the context of the Helsinki Commission's long work regarding the situation of Roma throughout the OSCE region, and even longer work on Ukraine. I'd like to draw your attention to two publications that were available on the table as you entered this room, and which are also available on our website. The first publication is a list that reflects the Commission's engagement and interest in Ukraine during the 115th Congress.

For those of you who are close observers of Ukraine, you will know that the Helsinki Commission has been an advocate for Ukraine since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, when Ukraine was still a captive nation. Since Ukraine's independence, the Commission has supported its efforts to advance human rights and democracy and to counter corruption. Most of all, members of the Helsinki Commission have been among Washington's most stalwart advocates for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The record of the Commission's activities in the 115th Congress certainly demonstrate that.

The second publication I'd like to draw your attention to an overview that we recently published regarding the OSCE's efforts to advance respect for the human rights of Roma. The Helsinki Commission supported the first international agreement to specifically recognize the human rights problems faced by Roma, adopted by the participating states in 1990. Additional commitments to improve the situation of Roma throughout the OSCE region were adopted at several subsequent ministerial meetings, including at the Kyiv Ministerial Council Meeting in 2013, which was the culmination of Ukraine's year-long stewardship of the OSCE.

For three decades, the Helsinki commissioners have led the effort in Washington to condemn racially motivated violence against Roma – including pogroms, murders, and other violent attacks – and have advocated for the recognition of the enslavement and genocide of Roma. This briefing represents the intersection of these two areas of active Helsinki Commission interest and engagement.

And before introducing our panelists, I do have a couple of administrative notes. First, this event is streaming live on the Helsinki Commission's Facebook page, as well as on our website. Second, if you're tweeting please use the Helsinki Commission handle, which is @HelsinkiComm, C-O-M-M. Third, please silence your cellphones or any other electronic devices you may have. And finally, for our panelists, please be sure to speak closely into the

microphone. You'll need to have the red button on. And that will facilitate the clarity of our broadcast. The event is on the record and we'll produce a U.S. government transcript.

With that, I would like to introduce our three panelists. Their longer bios are on the table as you came into the room. First, to my left, I'd like to introduce Zemfira Kondur, Zola, who helped found the Chiricli International Roma Women's Fund. We will then hear from Halyna Yurchenko, who is a coordinator of the NGO of Ukraine commonly known as TERNIPE. I thank Zola and Halyna for participating in this event and sharing their insights with us. I know you have come a long way, just arriving from Ukraine yesterday.

And finally, we will hear from Oksana Shulyar, the Deputy Chief of Mission and Minister-Counsellor at the embassy of Ukraine. Thank you. Ms. Shulyar is no stranger to the Helsinki Commission, having participated in several previous briefings. I would say she's a friend of the Helsinki Commission. I thank you for being here. I know that you have enormous demands on your time, and the government of Ukraine is pulled in a lot of different directions right now. I really appreciate the interest you're showing on this issue. Thank you.

So, with that, Zola.

KONDUR: Good morning, everyone. As a representative of the International Roma Women's Fund Chiricli, which translates from Romani language as a bird, symbol of peace and freedom, we are here to present the situation of Roma people in Ukraine. The need for a specific briefing on the problems experienced by Roma people in Ukraine stems from the lack of information concerning this national minority in Ukraine, as well as recent attacks against Roma in our country.

According to the official data collected in 2001, we have about 48,000 Roma people living in Ukraine. However, the unofficial sources theorize between 200,000 and 400,000 persons, approximately half of them are women and girls. Roma across Ukraine face multiple discrimination based on gender and ethnicity, which has pushed them on the margins of the society. Among many challenges that Roma face are lack of civil registration documents – passports and birth certificates – access to social and medical services, employment, and education.

Lack of identification documents prevents anyone from exercising most social and economic rights for employment, education, medical care, social assistance, pensions, and et cetera. The ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine gave rise to serious concerns about human rights violations and essentially worsens the socioeconomic situation in Ukraine. The monitoring conducted by Chiricli and Roma Coalition show that while Roma are generally in a vulnerable position, even in time of stability, in times of crisis they become exceedingly vulnerable.

According to the data collected by the Roma Coalition, since April 2018, there were eight attacks against Roma settlements in various parts of Ukraine – particularly in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Ternopil, Lviv, and Transcarpathia regions. In total, more than 150 people became victims of the attacks, including women and children. The most recent cases happened this year on the 15th of July, when a Roma kindergarten and church were burnt down in Mukachevo district, which is

on the west of Ukraine, in Transcarpathia. On the 2nd of July, a 30-year-old Romani woman was found with her throat slit. On the 23rd of June, a group of men entered a Roma settlement in the night, shouting that Roma should leave. The mob destroyed tents and stabbed a 24-year-old man to death. Four people were injured, including a 10-year-old boy and his mother who was protecting him from the attackers.

Chiricli, together with Roma Coalition, has been proactive in performing social and legal work, and has rapidly appealed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Cabinet of Ministers, Prosecutor Office, Parliament, and the president of Ukraine with a request to take immediate actions on protecting Roma rights and strengthening the state policy against xenophobia, racism, and intolerance. These attacks have been undertaken in a climate of increasing hostility towards Roma. Radicalization is unfortunately not confined to Ukraine only. It is a Europe-wide issue. The European Union member states are relatively new to the fight against radicalization. There are many shortcomings in terms of information policy, intelligence services, police collaboration, and cross-border cooperation.

Radicalization can take many forms. In order to effectively minimize the risk of radicalization of the society, we need to tackle the root of the causes of the problems. The response needs to come from different levels – grassroot, local, national, and international. That's why we are here, to discuss our cooperation in joint response to these problems. What can be done? What can we do all together to tackle radicalization more widely, to mobilize practitioners to create platforms for exchanges, to mobilize funds? The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities can conduct a country visit to Ukraine to explore growing radicalization and hate crimes. For example, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly can hold a special debate on rising extremism, hate crimes, and xenophobia in the OSCE region.

The U.S. delegation can prominently raise the issue of violence against Roma in Ukraine and throughout the OSCE region in its statements at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. The U.S. delegation can convene a side event on the violations against Roma in Ukraine at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. The ODIHR contact point on Roma safety issues can respond effectively to crisis in Ukraine by, inter alia, cooperation with relevant governments, implemental bodies, and international organizations to ensure protection of Roma communities at risk. The last recommendation is that U.S. assistance to Ukraine and Eurasia should include capacity development to counter growing extremism, particularly violence against Roma and other national minority communities.

Well, here I will stop to save the time for my colleagues and will be ready to answer questions later. Thank you.

SCHLAGER: Thank you very much. And I appreciate those very concrete recommendations, thank you.

Halyna.

YURCHENKO: Good afternoon. First, I want to say thanks to the Helsinki Commission for their work and for the opportunity to speak here today. Also, I wanted to say thanks to all of

you for your interest in the subject matter of this briefing. My name is Halyna Yurchenko. I'm a Ukrainian with Roma origin from Lviv. I'm the coordinator of Roma Youth of Ukraine-TERNIPE. Also, I'm a human rights activist in the Ukrainian Roma youth movement. In my speech I want to draw attention not only on the consequences, but on the root of the problem. Most of the attacks were conducted on vulnerable groups quite below the poverty line and on those who live a traveling lifestyle. This traveling lifestyle is not a tradition but forced labor migration because of their difficult socio-economic situation.

I will give some figures on research of the life quality of Roma people who live in one of the settlements. For example, 96 percent of the houses are constructed on household waste where there is no floor. Five percent don't heat their houses at all, even in the winters. Eighty percent don't eat enough every day, and this happens at least three times a week. During the rainy season, they live in compact settlements and the houses flood. Ninety-three percent don't have a permanent place of work. The most common occupations include collecting scrap metal, glass containers, and waste paper, and seasonal internal labor migration. Ninety percent do not write. One of the reasons for the decrease in school attendance in the winter is a lack of warm clothes.

It's easy to see that these temporary settlements are a result of bad social-economic situation. And we think that Roma groups showed improvement of their socio-economic status. We need a successful integration program, not in a cultural context but a socio-economic context, in order to reduce the distance between the Roma vulnerability group and society. It's hard, but it's real. And the solution to the issue of socialization and security can be the model towns. It's a legal territory for camping, where these people would feel safe. And at the same time, they would have to fulfill some commitments that would cause their socialization.

The second aspects that I want to talk about, and what is effectively developing by the Ukrainian Youth Roma Movement, is the information of alternative narrative of the Roma people. The negative narrative has its own order and long history, but also, it's supported now by hate speech on the internet, and a very small percent of positive content on the Roma topic in the media. People are afraid of everything unknown and imagine something bizarre. That's why there is a need for a quality information company in the media, in schools, and in universities, in order to create an alternative view of Roma people. And we also need to exchange positive experiences and participate in anti-hate speech programs for the public and online.

My main message is not only to find solutions to these challenges, but to find solutions that focus on the root of the problems of socio-economic distance and the negative narrative. Ukrainian Roma Youth Movement understands their role and their social mission in the destruction of stereotypes and creating a positive image of Roma people. Ukrainian Roma Youth Movement are fully aware of the problems that exist today in their communities. And we are ready to talk about approaches to their solution with older generation and to other members of the communities. We need opportunities. We need improvement of social-economic status. We need education. And we need understanding.

Thank you for your attention.

SCHLAGER: Thank you, Halyna. I'm always very encouraged when I learn that there are young people trying to fix the problems that we, older people, have created. (Laughs.) So that's encouraging. Thank you.

Oksana.

SHULYAR: Thank you very much, Erika. Dear ladies—I'm inspired, actually, by the fact that we're all ladies, that I'm addressing ladies on the panel. First, I would like to thank the Helsinki Commission for keeping a strong focus on Ukraine. As Erika mentioned before, there were a number of important briefings touching on very important issues, including the human rights situation in Crimea, the militarization of Crimea, the briefing on the OSCE SMM mission in Ukraine, as well as the anti-corruption efforts of Ukraine. Thank you very much for continuing this tremendous work.

Today we are gathered here to address the attacks on Roma in Ukraine. However, it is important to approach this issue from a broad context and from the standpoint of sentiments on the European continent, the rising radicalization, populism, which we see raised by various political actors in Europe. Vulnerabilities within the Ukrainian state which is, as you rightly mentioned, affected by an ongoing foreign aggression that causes a very grave security situation, a very grave humanitarian situation. Of course, it poses new challenges to law enforcement in Ukraine and exposes the most vulnerable groups to these risks.

The government of Ukraine recognizes that it must take, and it is taking, the efforts. As the ladies mentioned, they are doing great work on the grassroot level by mobilizing the society, mobilizing the youth, communicating, reaching out about Roma community, and facilitating the dialogue. Also, on the national level, the Ukrainian government directs its effort primarily on facilitating dialogue and responding to attacks which have taken place. Pursuing a democratic path, Ukraine is strongly committed to principles of tolerance and non-discrimination of all ethnic groups, including the Roma community.

These principles are enshrined in the constitution and reflected in the national legislation. The country is also taking its human rights obligations seriously under the national legislation and relevant international instruments, as well as in the context of the priority course of integration in the European Union. In approaching the issue of Roma community in 2013, Ukraine adopted a strategy for the protection and integration in the Ukrainian society of the Roma national minorities for the period until 2020.

On the front of prevention, dialogue, and communication, there are many efforts taken by the government. For instance, on November 25, 2015, an interagency working group for the implementation of the strategy was established by a decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The working group has five subdivisions which include social security and health care, education and culture, housing, legal, and financial issues, and information. In its meeting on May 11th, 2018, the working group decided to initiate a seminar involving the representatives of regional administrations of Ukraine and international experts to work out a mechanism to draft regional plans for the integration of the Roma national minority into the Ukrainian society because it is also important to look at the regional map of Ukraine and to look at where these

problems persist and continue. This approach looks at various regions and not just the general picture but looks at the problems in specific regions.

In July 2018, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine held a meeting with a working group which included representatives of the interior, justice, and culture ministries, national police office of the Council of Europe and Ukraine, state immigration service, national security service, and Kyiv city-state administration to draft an action plan to prevent and address possible crimes against representatives of Roma national minority. June 2018, a meeting of the Roma national minorities in Ukraine was held in the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine. I can mention that more efforts and platforms were created within the Ministry of Internal Affairs to engage in the national policy and Ministry of Social Policy.

This is an interagency effort— because this is a complex issue. As Halyna mentioned, we shouldn't approach it only from the culture perspective, which actually the Ukrainian government does. Also, we had the pleasure of talking with Halyna and Zola at the embassy, and we agreed that there is a long way to go with implementing the strategy of integration. We specifically touched on the communication issue and really creating a positive narrative which could highlight the positive experience and sort of help integration with a better understanding within the society. We acknowledged that this effort has to go on and we will recommend that we continue this dialogue with the Ministry of Informational Policy and other important stakeholders.

Given the fact that there were several attacks on Roma settlements, I can say that, not as a diplomat but as a Ukrainian, that these cases shocked the Ukrainian society and they were broadly discussed. Also, as a Lviv native, the murder of a young man in Lviv was also taken with outrage. On the government side, there were several steps taken. We believe that these attacks were perpetrated with an intent to provoke internal destabilization of Ukrainian society by fueling of ethnic tension, as well as discrediting the Ukrainian image. Ukraine will spare no effort in seeking effective solutions for better protection of human rights and freedoms of all its minorities, including Roma.

We also stand ready to continue to work together with all international actors, including OSCE and Council of Europe, to promote a safe environment for the most vulnerable communities in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Coming back to the attacks in Lviv, all perpetrators have been charged and an organizer has been charged with murder. So, the Ukrainian government is approaching this issue very seriously and we are ready to engage all law enforcement and judicial capacities to make sure that the perpetrators are brought to justice, and that the cases will not be happening again – so the prevention effort.

As the ladies mentioned, on the international level we also called for continuous support to Ukraine to continue to assist our law enforcement and security sector because this will help to prevent such cases in future, and will make Ukraine stronger from within, able to respond to such challenges. We need the continuous support from our partners, including the United States, to come to Russian aggression and help its subversive actions in Ukraine and abroad, as well as continuing to support the Ukrainian reforms.

Thank you very much for your attention.

SCHLAGER: Thank you very much. I think we've got quite a lot to reflect on already. I will take one privilege as moderator to make one small digression, since we had touched on the situation in Ukraine. I have to say, I was really struck coming into work this morning by a report that Russia is jamming broadcasts into Crimea. It was so striking for me because one of the achievements of the late 1980s, in the Vienna follow-up meeting which resulted in the Vienna Concluding Document, was an agreement that there would be no radio jamming. And so even on this very basic achievement from the late 1980s, we see the Russian Federation failing to uphold its basic commitments.

Apologies for that digression. I would ask if there are questions from the audience. If you have a question, I ask that you be brief and to the point.

BAUMAN: If I may?

SCHLAGER: Yeah, please, Rachel. I should start with my colleague. (Laughter.)

BAUMAN: Thank you all for coming today. I know you mentioned that people were arrested for the recent Lviv, which is excellent and should be continued. I just wanted to ask our ladies on the end, have you been satisfied with police response to attacks on Roma settlements? The main thing that I wanted to ask is, what do you think could be done better? I'm concerned about impunity for crimes against the Roma community and I wanted your thoughts on how you think that could be done better – a better police response?

KONDUR: It's difficult to say what can be done better, but I think that now the law enforcement, security service, and Minister of Internal Affairs are all working really hard together to address these issues and attacks. We understand that it's a new phenomenon for Ukraine. Maybe they did not react that fast, as good, or as we would like it to be done, but I hope that now, with all the efforts that they're taking, the situation will be much better.

I know that the national police try to collect information about the Roma settlements in different regions of Ukraine to make sure that they have patrolling teams nearby. For example, they can react quickly when they see danger or if they get a signal. That is why it worked in Lviv, the patrol car was not very far from the place and they were able to detain the attackers.

So, I think what can be done now, as we said, to mobilize all the forces, the experience, and the support that can be provided, given to law enforcement, to police officers. We asked the national police to conduct trainings on how to work with Roma settlements and Roma communities. With the support of the Renaissance Foundation, we started trainings for the trainers of the police officers. They are already doing trainings for their local colleagues on how they can work and address this type of conflicts and issues.

But the experience that we have is based on our own experience as NGO, as Roma, and working with the police and working with Roma people. If you have anything that you can share with us, that would be great.

BAUMAN: Great.

Q: Thanks very much. I'm Paul Massaro. I'm a policy advisor at the Helsinki Commission on economics and anti-corruption.

I was wondering if either of you two ladies on the end could speak at all to the economic situation of Roma in Ukraine, and specifically the opportunities for employment, the integration of communities, and things like that. Thanks.

KONDUR: OK. Well, in Ukraine we don't have official data about the employment or unemployment of Roma people. But our organization, together with partners, collected such data. And we can say that only 38 percent of Roma are officially employed. The rest of the people, they have some seasonal work or they're trying to survive using different methods of earning money. The lack of identity documents like passports and birth certificates is still a problem for about 17 percent of Roma people in Ukraine, and that is one of the obstacles that they have for their official employment.

Another issue is education because we still have a problem with that. We have in some of the regions segregated Roma classes or territorially segregated Roma schools, and there is some higher level of dropouts from secondary schools, et cetera. We still have to work on that, especially with the girls because of the early marriages and et cetera. Unfortunately, there are different obstacles for Roma people with access to employment and discrimination.

For example, one month ago, 20 Romani women came to one of the local Roma NGOs asking for help with finding jobs. Since they didn't have a quality education and they didn't have experience, et cetera, we cannot provide them that type of assistance. But we can, for example, assist them with seasonal work or jobs that do not require high experience or education. This is very problematic at the moment.

There is a working group at the level of the Ministry of Social Policy. There was only one meeting recently which was a month ago, but we already agreed with the deputy minister that we will have a separate meeting to discuss employment programs for Roma and how that can be done. And here also, Halyna and her organization has a great idea with very interesting opportunities and programs, especially for young people, women, and more.

Yes, it's a problem. The settlements that we are talking about that were attacked in different regions of Ukraine, they are moving in Ukraine, internally. I don't know what to call them, maybe internal migrants because they're looking for jobs and for a better life. So, we really have to work on that, together with our state institutions on addressing this problem.

SHULYAR: I would also like to add that unfortunately these challenges and these problems are also experienced by many other groups in the society and this is generally an effect from the general economic situations and the difficulties that were imposed by the security situation in Ukraine.

It's really a part of a broad picture of how to help Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens to have a better access to capital, to realize entrepreneurial potential, and access all of the tools to assist through microfinance programs through education to help small and medium enterprises on the regional level. This is something that we believe could really help address this problem and improve the situation, including Roma, Roma women, other nationals, and Ukrainian-ethnic. We believe that this is a really a broad picture.

And as, you Paul, dealing with the economic and anti-corruption issues, I believe you know this subject very well. Also, there were recommendations issued by the Helsinki Commission in your previous reports, and I believe we are moving along them. I believe that can help us to continue getting support and including to the economic situation. Thank you.

Q: I am Olga Zhmurko from International Renaissance Foundation, Kyiv, Ukraine.

I would like to thank to the panelists and to the chance to articulate this important for our societies issues, and would like to say that I know a lot about the permanent role of Roma civil and pro-Roma civil society into the terms of integration and socialization of Roma. However, I would like to ask our panelists about the role of the state, how do they evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of Roma policies. Oksana mentioned already the steps which were already done by the state and by the Cabinet Minister. But I would like to hear and to ask you, how do you see it now? And which steps should be done, maybe immediately, to improve and to have more progress in that way? Thank you.

KONDUR: OK. I think the immediate action that can be done is the revision of the regional action plans and national action plan as well as the implementation of the Roma national strategy. Unfortunately, the Roma national strategy and the national action plan are not implemented effectively. We know that during the development of these documents, we didn't have real consultations with the ministry that was responsible on the coordination and development of the document. But at the moment, their coordination and cooperation are really good. I really hope that until 2020 the first step that we can do is to revise the national action plan because it doesn't include internally displaced people issues, women's issues, and many other issues. It doesn't have very concrete measures and indicators, and this is what we must work on.

Welso would like to already start thinking about a new program after 2020. It can be a program or a national action plan, but with the financial support from the national budget because now the strategy is not supported financially, and it is expected that the local authorities will contribute money from the local budget. Taking into account that most of the money is going to support the internally displaced people or to the conflicts on the east of Ukraine, and et cetera, this policy is not so important for the local authorities. We really have to work on that to think about what we can do after 2020.

SHULYAR: Yes, thank you. That's a very good question and I think Halyna and Zola can really speak for the grassroot and Roma national organizations much better when reflecting on what they think should be done. On the side of the embassy and the government, I could say that we have touched on these issues in our earlier conversation and we certainly think that it

would be important to move along the outreach campaign and bridging the misunderstandings or the lack of communication. This is where the state could step in, offering various windows where these messages could be delivered and really amplify this message from the – from the state side. We believe this could really address the issue of certain exogenous factors inciting hatred, trying to bring this instability. This could be a good tool to address this, and to bridge the gaps within society

Also, as I mentioned in my earlier comment, we believe that various programs to support, to facilitate the access to various financial tools or entrepreneurship or employment on the regional scale, this is something that should be also done. I believe this task can be much easier now because in recent years Ukraine has achieved progress on the decentralization track. And that really unties hands to local administration, local governments, local budget. And I think it would be good to really leverage those opportunities, because it's now becoming much easier on the regional level to access the programs and communicate to the local governments about the priorities and what must be done. These are the major track, but to also continue implementing this strategy in all of its dimensions, and engage in all of the agencies involved, and all of the stakeholder states and nongovernment organizations.

SCHLAGER: Let me take a question in the back.

Q: Hello. Eric Sperling, Congressman Ro Khanna's office. Thank you so much, everyone, for being here, and for your interesting comments, and helpful comments.

As some of you I'm sure know, the leader of C14 has been a big focus. C14 in general has been a major group involved in some of these attacks and I recently watched a video where this guy said on camera, that Jews control too much politics and business in Ukraine. I'm kind of confused by why the government has not spoken to that more, but I'm also concerned that C14 is reportedly receiving funding for "patriotic education" in Ukraine. In light of these attacks, is that funding going to be revoked? Will the government put some funding towards educational efforts to raise awareness about Roma among the general public? I've seen some polls that indicate that that kind of hatred towards Roma people or opposition to or discomfort with Roma people is pretty widespread. I'd be curious to know if the government will revoke that funding and instead fund efforts to the contrary. Thank you.

SHULYAR: I guess I will take this one. First, thank you for your question. What polls are you referring to?

Q: I could provide that.

SHULYAR: That is a good point, because we looked for most recent polls to get a better picture of any trends. Unfortunately, we didn't see any recent polls that could indicate a trend. So, I would really like to learn about the polls that you are referring to.

As to the state funding, I don't believe that the state is funding the groups that you mentioned.

Q: It has been reported basically everywhere. I haven't seen anything to refute that, but

SHULYAR: I don't believe that there is a state –

Q: I'm happy to provide that as well.

SHULYAR: Please provide me, because we haven't seen any proof to official state budget funding. How these groups are funded is a different issue and it's very important to investigate that. However, I'm more than 100 percent sure that the government of Ukraine and the state budget is not funding –

Q: I mean, it may be a regional or a local government –

SHULYAR: I don't think so. I would really like to see the reports you are referring to about the groups. It's a very sporadic nature. As I said, that the general security situation caused by the Russian aggression has created a lot of opportunities for many notorious funds and ideas to target the more vulnerable groups and the most vulnerable issues. We have seen, in connection with some of the groups, we've been looking into them, specifically to those which we involved in the Lviv attacks. And we didn't find their connection with patriotic Ukrainian organizations or link to Ukrainian patriotic slogans.

On the contrary, we found some very interesting trends connected with the Russian right organizations, based and registered in Russia. It's a very sporadic and difficult picture. We've – and it's really something new that Ukraine has faced. We haven't seen the spike of that in the past, but we cannot say that the state is involved in any way. We have to look into the links and that's why I mentioned earlier that we would need international support on the level of international agencies and organizations to track these financial links and information. A lot of them are in the cyberspace.

This is not only Ukraine's problem; this is an international problem. I would very much like the support, and I call on the support from the U.S. Congress and the office of your congressman to really approach this issue. Thank you.

SCHLAGER: Thank you. Zola, did you want to add something?

KONDUR: Yeah. I wanted to add about the education. We had a meeting with the representative of Minister of Internal Affairs to discuss the curriculum that they have for the future police officers, because we would like to include a special course, a subject for future police officers on national minorities issues, not only about Roma but about diversity and et cetera, to make them more sensitive about that. We also have different proposals for the Ministry of Education to start similar programs for children starting from primary schools because this is what we lack right now. By providing children with information about diversity, we can teach our children to be more sensitive about different people and cultures of national minorities, and not only those living around us.

Regarding the support of the C14 by the government, I had a meeting with the representative of the Ministry of Youth and Sport to ask this question, because Roma organizations were very shocked by this news and wanted to make sure to check this information. As I understood, C14 was getting funds before that in the past and not only this year. We must send an official request to the Minister of Youth and Sport to get an official response and see whether it was supported or not. In general, the comment that we had on the media of one of the representatives of this ministry was that generally the ministry reviews the project, but they don't review the NGOs activities. So, even if it was supported, the ministry was supporting the project, not the activities of the organization.

While we cannot make comments about that because C14 or the activities of the members of this organization are under investigation. We also agreed with the representative of the Ministry of Youth and Sport in case they supported the project, and in case the court will have a decision regarding their organization or the members of these organization, they will request the funds back and, well, they do some restriction or something on that. We have to wait for official response from the minister.

SCHLAGER: I think we have time for just one or two more questions, and then I will ask our panelists if they have any last thoughts, and then I will offer a few concluding thoughts of my own and we'll wrap up. Question back here.

Q: Good morning. I'm Alex Johnson, the senior policy advisor for Europe and Eurasia at the Open Society Policy Center.

I wanted to come back to more of the law enforcement capacity and international resources available to support law enforcement capacity. Since 2012, the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has offered the training against hate crime for law enforcement, or the TAHCLE program. My understanding is that Ukraine has utilized these resources in the past and had trainers from ODIHR come to Ukraine. Have those resources been pursued since some of the hate crimes have occurred this year? Thank you.

SCHLAGER: That's a very specific question. So maybe we'll take one more question, and then give our panelists a chance to respond.

Q: Thank you. My name is Robert Hand. I'm a staffer at the Helsinki Commission, a colleague of Erika and Rachel's.

I wanted to follow up on some of the comments made about education and Roma. You talked about educating students about diversity and things like that. But particularly in terms of Roma and education, I think you had mentioned the lack of warm clothes or suitable clothes for going to school. I think you had referred to segregated education. I'd like to get a little bit of elaboration. Is there resistance from local communities to having Roma children included in the classrooms? Or does the school system simply determine, oh, because they're Roma they need special education, as happens in some countries, and are not put into regular classrooms with other students?

Is there some self-segregation that Roma themselves don't push their children to go to school, or prefer to have Roma only go to school with fellow Roma for linguistic reasons? Then my final question is, if there's a Roma parent who wants their child to have a good education and investment in the future, and they meet some of this resistance, do they have the support of government officials, either at the local or national level, to enforce equal opportunity laws saying these people have the right to education as Ukrainian citizens just like anybody else? What happens in those circumstances? Or does that not really happen that much at all? Thank you.

SCHLAGER: OK. What I will do is start with Halyna and Zola and ask you if you want to try to respond to one or both questions, and make any concluding remarks or observations, . Then turn to my right and ask Oksana if she would like to do the same and then I'll wrap it up. Thank you.

YURCHENKO: I'm sorry for my bad English. First, it's a difficult question about education. I don't think the government does anything bad to Roma children, but there are socio-economic situations, poor sanitation in these settlements, poor conditions in housing for doing homework or something like that. There is little motivation because these children and their parents look around and see that while we should study, we will not have work because of one, two, three, four, five. This is a complex problem and that's why these children can't go to another school because it's difficult for parents to buy everything for these children to be equal to the other students. I think the most important is socio-economic factors. Next is discrimination such as being bullied by other children at school.

KONDUR: Regarding education, it's a mix of everything of what you mentioned. Sometimes Roma parents do not want to send their children to integrated schools because they prefer to have them in a school is near their Roma settlement. Only Roma children are there where they can speak their own language and feel better being isolated from others. In other cases, Roma family or Roma parents would like to have their children enrolled in a better school with a higher quality of education. If in that school there are no Roma children, it will be difficult because usually the non-Roma parents do not want to have Roma children in the classes and they start complaining to the principal of the school for having Roma children in the classes next to their children. It's a serious problem that should soon be solved.

Another issue that we see is in our education reform. It's related to a new principal of the registration of children to primary schools. The obstacle is that parents have to provide a lot of documents to prove that they live in the district, and that child can attend this school belonging to the district. For example, children of parents that do not have any documents can be taken to the schools, but only if they have a spot open. If it's a good school, you can imagine that they never have any places and then this child will be, I don't know, in somewhere – in some schools.

It's a problem. Especially in big settlements, s Roma children will be only at one school, and then again will have this territorial segregation of Roma children. The Minister of Education should work on that and see how they can solve this problem. Regarding training for police officers conducted by the ODIHR, I think that the problem of those trainings is that there is no follow up after the training. When you come to train people and leave them with nothing after,

we are not sure how they will use this knowledge, skills, et cetera. Then they may use it in their work, and maybe they can forget about everything they were trained. That's why we say that we would like to incorporate these subjects or special course for the police officers, it should be obligatory for their education.

My concluding remark is that when we speak about Roma people in Ukraine or any European country, we always have to remember that we are an integral part of the society in of the countries where we live. We are not immigrants. We are not enemies. We are just citizens of the countries where we live, and we really love Ukraine, when we speak about Ukraine. We want this country to be in prosperity and peace, and we are ready for cooperation with the state institutions and international organizations. We thank you all for being here and listening us and we hope that all together we really can do lots of changes. Thank you.

SHULYAR: I believe these were very comprehensive, in-depth, and straight to the point comments on both issues. I can only add on the education that we are now undergoing a major reform of the education sector. A new, groundbreaking law on education has been adopted. The Ministry of Education and many other stakeholders are now working on the new and proper implementation of this reform. In this stage, it is really important to hear all the voices and recommendations in order to include them in the implementation of this process.

On the police training, I believe it's very important to continue training and programs, the international aid programs to police and patrolling training. We have seen that, as my colleagues mentioned, that the patrolling, which was introduced and which was placed near Roma settlements, had played a key role as those terrible attacks were unfolding. So, it's really something that makes a change, and that works. It's very important to keep that in the focus when international aid is planned and dispersed.

I think Ukraine has shown with its example that the reform of the national police has been very successful, not only on the Ukrainian scale but on the international scale. I gladly heard that from the official youth representatives that it was a big success. It's really important, as Zola mentioned, to have all kinds of follow up and, you know, to have this process ongoing and not halting and to sort of, you know, reach the inertia and then the resonance of this success.

Thank you very much and on my side, I would like to thank you for having the embassy. Ambassador Chaly would have been here but he is with a delegation at a Ministerial on Religious Freedoms right now. (Laughs.) It's always an honor for the embassy to be participating in these events and briefings. Thank you very much.

SCHLAGER: Thank you. I'd like to take just a couple minutes here at the end to see if I can summarize or distill a little bit of what we've heard today, because I think it's really important. I do want to start out by underscoring that the Helsinki Commission remains unwaveringly committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. And we want Ukraine to be a successful, robust democracy. So, when we raise any issues of concern regarding Ukraine, whether it's corruption or media issues or the situation of Roma, it is because we also want Ukraine to be successful and stand with you in those efforts.

So, why did we organize a briefing on this particular issue, and why now? One of the things that makes the current situation stand out is that there have been mob attacks against families, homes, and entire communities, and these are message attacks intended to stoke fear and sow interethnic tension. There have been some other attacks on symbols, such as Holocaust memorials, Polish cemeteries, and Hungarian cultural institutions, but attacks on people so far have been relatively rare. I think by engaging sooner rather than later, it makes it more likely that the government can take the actions necessary to put an end to this kind of violence.

We are very mindful that maligned forces will try to exploit and amplify these kinds of problems and that's as true in the United States as it is in Ukraine. So, we do have that as an understanding as we approach this work. I do want to mention, I appreciate very much the participation of the embassy here today, but also that the government of Ukraine spoke to these issues in the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on July 6th. And it was a good statement. It recognized the urgency of eliminating ethnic-based violence and overcoming discrimination against Roma. I support the government in that effort and thank the Ukrainian mission in Vienna for making that statement.

I thank all of our panelists for being here today. Again, Halyna Yurchenko and Zola Kondur, who have come all the way from Ukraine, Oksana Shulyar, and also Rachel, thank you for coming and sitting with us and introducing yourself as our new expert on Ukraine.

Among the other things I think I heard here today are the following: First, there should be better monitoring and assessment of hate crimes in Ukraine. I think that helps evaluate the kind of problem that may be there, but also if there are patterns, if there's an escalation, if that kind of monitoring is improved I think it helps in that effort. There should be careful identification of hate as a motivation so that the government can properly identify and counter increases in these crimes when they occur. The government should ensure more effective carry-through on efforts to prosecute and convict perpetrators of violent hate-motivated acts. And I appreciate the information you brought here today about the indictments in the Lviv case. I think that's very important, not only that it happens, but that people learn about it so that they feel more secure in the government's efforts to protect them.

Individuals or groups implicated in this kind of violence should not receive state funds. Again, I appreciate the message you brought to the table, that that should not happen. I think the report that I saw on that came from the Freedom House brief in May. And my understanding is that the groups in question didn't receive funds directly, but sort of their youth wing or affiliated partners are the recipients of this funding. But I do think it's concerning and I welcome the opportunity and the openness to follow up on that, and address that as well. Of course, Roma should be involved in the policymaking process – I think that's something that's we've heard in the OSCE for a long time – and building on the good cooperation that Zola has described. Especially if the 2013 strategy is going to be amended and updated for the post-2020 environment. I think that create a great opportunity to strengthen that strategy, and that integration, and inclusion efforts.

I also heard recommendations for the United States, encouraging us to raise these issues at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw. I look forward to discussing this

with your colleagues when we get to Warsaw. Also, the importance of the work on identity documents and as I've said elsewhere, that's an issue that's near and dear to my heart. I know the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has done very good work on that before and so that may be something that they can also continue to pursue with the government of Ukraine. Also looking on the better implementation of some of this work. I think that was one of the messages we heard regarding the police training activities, that there has been police training and that's a good step but ensuring implementation of the training and the actual work of the police is something that we should be looking for.

Again, thanks very much for the panelists who have been here today. I think this was extremely fruitful. Thanks to everyone who came or is watching through Facebook or some other means. Thank you to Stacy Hope, the Commission's communications director, and to the fellow and interns. They are the backbone of any successful Helsinki Commission work. I appreciate everything that they did to make this happen as well today.

With that, I will close the session. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:12 a.m., the briefing ended.]