HUNGARY PLANS CITIZEN SURVEY AGAINST COURT COMPENSATIONS FOR ROMA

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Hungarys right-wing government plans next month to survey its citizens to determine whether the courts should stop financially compensating Roma for discrimination and prisoners for mistreatment.

Critics say the government survey will pave the way for Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to further curtail the independence of the courts and fuel prejudice against the Roma minority.

The survey will canvass households nationwide on issues about restoring order and moral order, in particular legal rulings on prison overcrowding and school segregation cases, government minister Gergely Gulyas said Thursday (13 February).

The government has a clear answer and opinion about these issues, but needs social support for it, Gulyas told reporters in Budapest.

Last month Orbán said ordinary Hungarians were angered by court awards to prisoners over living and sanitary conditions in jail, and accused lawyers of doing business with convicts.

He also said it was deeply unfair that Roma families would get money without working for it.

Hungary puts its Roma to work

The European Commission said yesterday (20 September) it is unaware that local authorities in Hungary are putting Roma to work under programs reminiscent, according to the opposition, to labour camps under Nazi or Soviet domination.

Instead, he added, Roma should be given training programmes as compensation in school segregation cases.

Rights groups, Roma representatives and lawyers said Orbáns remarks stoke further prejudice against Romani people, Hungarys largest minority group, and show disregard for rule-of-law norms and judicial independence.

Segregation on ethnic grounds is illegal in Hungary but the practice is widespread, particularly in areas with large Roma populations.

The survey is the latest of a series of taxpayer-funded national consultations comprising

questionnaires sent to households and accompanying mass media public information campaigns.

Details of the new surveys questions would be released next week and the questionnaires sent out next month, Gulyas said.

The first national consultation, in 2015, included a questionnaire asking households about immigration and terrorism.

That survey was sharply criticised, notably by the UN refugee agency UNHCR which expressed shock at its questions and said it could boost xenophobia in the EU country.

Another campaign titled Lets Stop Brussels asked citizens for advice on how to deal with European Union policies that the government said threatened Hungarians independence.

Kaynak/Source: