

Ethnic Violence in Romania

On February 5, 1990, the houses of Gypsies living in the village of Lunga, in Covasna county, were attacked by Hungarian villagers at approximately 7 p.m. Six houses and other buildings were burned down or ransacked. Four gypsies were killed when they were attacked with axes by the villagers.

The villagers do not deny that the attack occurred, although no individual interviewed by Helsinki Watch admitted to having personally participated. One Hungarian man reported:

"The attack was organized at the agricultural cooperative. A group of villagers met there after work and decided that the Gypsies had to be forced out of the area. About 100 villagers were involved. They just wanted to get the Gypsies out of the village. After the attack, people in the village collected money to pay the Gypsies for their property, but we don't want them back here. We won't let them return."

Helsinki Watch asked some of the Hungarian villagers why the attack had occurred. One 89-year-old woman stated:

"Before the revolution Hungarians were afraid to have a glass to drink because the Gypsies controlled many bars. Now they are not so powerful. They were thieves. They stole from the Hungarians. The militia didn't do a thing to catch the thieves. They preferred not to be involved. The Hungarians had had enough and decided to attack."

Source: "Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Persecution of the Gypsies of Romania," *Helsinki Watch Report*, September 1991, *Human Rights Watch*, <http://www.hrw.org/> (accessed June 25, 2008).