

Prof Istvan Pogany, University of Warwick

The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe: Some Human Rights Challenges.

18 October 2005 **3.30pm to 5.00pm**

Abstract

The Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority and are concentrated in the ex-Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe. Since the collapse of Communism, international organisations, NGOs and the wider human rights community have drawn attention to the increasing social, economic and political marginalisation of Roma in the CEE states. In the view of senior World Bank economists, tackling the crisis facing the Roma is not only a moral imperative but also a precondition for securing stable, prosperous economies in several CEE states.

For human rights specialists, the issues arising from the current predicament of the Roma are varied. In particular, there is a certain lack of congruity or 'match' between the rights available in liberal democracies, including codes of civil and political rights and minority rights as compared with the actual needs of most Roma in the CEE region. There is also a tension between notions of universal human rights and the actual practices and social structures of traditional Roma sub-groups, which are heavily patriarchal and community-oriented.

About the Author

Professor Istvan Pogany teaches courses in comparative human rights and international law at the University of Warwick. He has written extensively on human and minority rights in Central and Eastern Europe. His books include: *Righting Wrongs in Eastern Europe* (MUP, 1998) and *The Roma Café: Human Rights and the Plight of the Romani People* (Pluto: 2004).