

# **Antigypsism Against Dom Groups in the Earthquake Region**

## **Field Research Report**

This report presents the information and data obtained from the interviews with the earthquake survivor Dom living in the region during the field visits of the "Antigypsism Report towards Dom Groups in the Earthquake Region" supported by the Minority Rights Group International (MRG). The first part of the report explains the purpose and scope of the project, the second part presents a general framework about the living conditions and situations of Dom groups living in the region, and the last part analyses the information and data obtained during the field visit.

### **1. Purpose and Scope of the Project**

#### **Research Conductor: Pınar İpek**

**Aim of the Research:** Dom, who are among the groups discriminated against in Turkey through the stigma of 'gypsy', are among the vulnerable groups most affected by the Kahramanmaraş earthquake that occurred on 6 February 2023. Within the scope of this project, it is aimed to investigate the forms of discrimination against Dom in the provinces of Hatay, Malatya and Adıyaman, which were affected by the earthquake and where Dom live densely, to collect measurable and reliable data through field visits and to use these data as a source for future rights-based monitoring activities.

**Provinces of Research Project:** Hatay, Malatya, Adıyaman

**Research Preparation and Data Collection Methods:** Within the scope of the research, firstly a current situation assessment was made regarding the subject of the research. Interviews were made with the non-governmental organisations operating in the provinces where the research will be conducted, and the problems and conditions experienced by the Dom after the earthquake were evaluated. In particular, Erkan Karabulut and Mehmet Kuyumcu, members of Civil Dreams Association operating in Hatay, shared the information they obtained in their studies both in Hatay and in other regions affected by the earthquake where Dom people live. In the light of these interviews, a semi-structured questionnaire form was prepared to be used during the field visits to be carried out in Hatay, Malatya and



Adıyaman under the supervision of Emrah Denizhan, an employee of Roma Rights Association and a researcher conducting academic studies in the field of human rights. Field visits were made between 6-16 June 2023 to the neighbourhoods where Dom live densely in the determined provinces. A semi-structured questionnaire form, which includes questions to be addressed to the people affected by the earthquake during these field visits, includes questions on how the person identifies himself/herself, his/her educational status, marital status, number of people living in his/her household, monthly income of the household before and after the earthquake, place of residence before and after the earthquake, if earthquake aid was received, how long these aids were received and their nature, and the forms of discrimination experienced before and after the earthquake. Depending on the quality of the answers given to the questions in the questionnaire form during the interviews, in order to better understand the respondent and to obtain in-depth information, questions that were not included in the form were asked so as not to contradict the purpose of the research. In determining the interviewees, a balance was observed in terms of gender, age and place of residence. Accordingly, the interviewees consisted of 55 women and 45 men between the ages of 25-65, 45 of whom lived in Hatay, 30 in Malatya and 25 in Adıyaman.

## **2. General Evaluation on Dom Groups Living in the Earthquake Region**

Dom, who are among the 4 groups (Dom, Lom, Rom, Abdal) that are subjected to social exclusion and discrimination through the stigma of 'gypsy' in the eyes of the non-Roma people of the regions they live in even though they have preferred different migration routes, mainly live in Hatay, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya, Adıyaman and Diyarbakır regions in Turkey. Although there is no official and reliable census on the population of Dom, it is estimated that approximately 70.000 Dom live in Hatay, 10.000 in Malatya and 15.000 in Adıyaman.

Social exclusion is accepted as the process in which certain people are pushed to the margins of society and cannot participate due to their poverty or lack of basic competences as well as lifelong education opportunities or discrimination. This situation excludes them from employment, income generation and educational opportunities as well as participation in social and community networks and activities. It is known that most of the Dom living in



Turkey are in serious poverty. Failure to attend school, failure in school and dropping out of school at an early age, poor health conditions and consequently below average life expectancy, high unemployment, lack of vocational training opportunities, unsafe living environments and discrimination all complete the vicious circle of social exclusion.

Most of them do not have a continuous and regular income and are not covered by social security. Many of them work as seasonal agricultural workers, usually migrating seasonally between April and December in line with the rhythm of agricultural work. Since they cannot access the labour market effectively, they survive with limited daily income from jobs such as portering, painting, peddling, scrap and garbage collection. Apart from these, it is also observed that they work in professions such as traditional folk medicine, dentistry and hand tool production, tinsmithing, basketry and floristry, which have almost disappeared with the transition to settled life.

The Dom, who are already disadvantaged in all areas of life and face deep-rooted prejudices and social exclusion, have difficulties in coping with the difficulties brought by the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes due to the exclusion and discrimination they face. As a result of the long-standing prejudices and social exclusion in the society, Roma communities are unable to access aid mechanisms effectively. Mass aid distribution is not appropriate for disadvantaged groups on the margins of society. Dom groups already in the affected areas are unable to meet their basic needs. While they share the needs of all other low-income groups such as foodstuffs, tents or containers, winter clothes, water, sanitation and hygiene services, clothing (especially underwear and socks), they also cannot meet the needs of their own groups, especially women and children.

### **3. The Impact of the Earthquake on Dom Groups and Discrimination**

In this section, in the light of the interviews conducted with Dom groups living in Hatay, Malatya and Adıyaman on 6-16 June, a separate evaluation is presented for each city in the light of the data obtained on the dimensions and effects of discrimination experienced by these groups in the post-earthquake period.

#### **Hatay**



All of the interview group consisting of 20 men and 25 women living in Antakya and Kırıkhan identify themselves as Dom. Half of these people are between the ages of 18-35 and the other half are over 35. The number of people who lived in their own houses before the earthquake is 29 and the number of people living in rented houses is 16. The number of people in the households where the interviewees live is at most 4 and at most 11. After the earthquake, household incomes have decreased by more than half compared to before the earthquake, and almost all of them cannot work in the jobs they did before the earthquake.

After the earthquake, almost all of them could not access the aids from public institutions and organisations within the first week, and the aids were received 10 days or more after the earthquake. In the first week of the earthquake, all of the interviewees provided their shelter with barracks and tents they built with the materials they acquired with their own means, and they stated that there were no other groups other than Dom in the region they were in. Currently, almost half of the interviewees are staying in the container city and the other half are staying in the tents provided by AFAD and other institutions and organisations.

Almost all of the interviewees stated that they had problems in accessing the earthquake aids, that they did not have enough information about the aids, that in health centres, soup kitchens and aid distribution centres it was understood that they were Dom by the way they were dressed and therefore they were subjected to ill-treatment, hate speech and discrimination. No interviewee received legal support against the loss of rights they experienced.

## **Malatya**

Among the 20 men and 10 women interviewed in Yeşiltepe, Yeşilkaynak and Çöşnük neighbourhoods of Malatya, the number of those who identified themselves as Dom was 24. Although the other 6 people first identified themselves as Kurdish, when asked "Are you not Dom?" they replied "We do not deny our origin, but we cannot say it everywhere because we have to". When asked "Why do you have to?", they said, "Then they look (treat) us differently, they approach us differently. They already know what we are, but we still do not tell them that we are Dom". 24 of the interviewees live in households with a population of more than 4 people and 12 of them live in households with a population of more than 7 people. The other 6 people live in households with a population of 4 people. Similar to the



situation in Hatay, almost all of the interviewees stayed in shacks and tents they built with their own means for 10 days after the earthquake. Only 3 people were able to take shelter in the houses of their acquaintances and relatives that were not destroyed. Currently, half of the interviewees live in tent cities, 12 of them live in shacks and tents they built with their own means and have been living in since the first day of the earthquake, and 3 of them stay in the houses of acquaintances and relatives. Household incomes have decreased by more than half in Malatya compared to before the earthquake.

The number of people who benefited from the aids provided after the earthquake is lower compared to Hatay. Only 14 of the interviewees were able to access the aid within 10 days following the earthquake, while the other 16 interviewees stated that they could not access the aid in any way and that they did not have sufficient information about the aid.

The interviewees who are resident shopkeepers and vendors in Malatya stated that they are not shopped because they are Dom, public and municipal services are not provided in the neighbourhood and area where they live, garbage is not collected, and they do not have access to health services. In this sense, Malatya is one of the regions where environmental and spatial segregation is experienced most clearly and deeply. In terms of participation in labour life, it was found that the interviewees who stated that they were not physically and mentally fit to work after the earthquake were forced to work under the threat of dismissal, and those who refused were dismissed. Again, similar to the situation in Hatay, the interviewees stated that there were either no non-Dom people and groups in the areas where they settled after the earthquake, or they stayed in the same settlement with Syrian refugees.

24 of the interviewees stated that they were discriminated against in response to their requests for help and services on different issues. 6 interviewees stated that they were not discriminated against, but they were subjected to ill-treatment. There is no interviewee who received legal support against the loss of rights after the earthquake.

## **Adiyaman**

Unlike Malatya and Hatay, the majority of the Dom living in Adiyaman lead a semi-nomadic life as seasonal workers in the neighbouring regions. It is stated that there are approximately 10.000 Dom population in Adiyaman, most of whom live in Cami quarter, Karşiyaka quarter and Kahta district. The fact that the majority of the Dom had gone to work



outside the borders of the province at the time of the field visit has an effect on the low number of people interviewed. Depending on the geography where the crops are harvested and planted between April-December, the Dom living in Adıyaman go to work in Iğdır, Van, Ağrı, Erzincan and Ordu and spend the winter season in Adıyaman.

13 women and 7 men who participated in the interview define themselves as Dom. All of the interviewees who suffered the most damage in the earthquake and complained that the aid was too late and insufficient, stayed in shacks and tents they built with their own means in the first ten days of the earthquake. Although 4 months have passed since the earthquake, no significant change has been observed in this situation and only 12 of the interviewees have started to stay in tents provided by the organisations. All of the interviewees live in households with more than 4 people and 11 of these households have more than 7 people.

The change in household incomes before and after the earthquake could not be evaluated reliably since Dom people work as seasonal labourers outside the province. The fact that there is no significant difference in the employment level compared to the pre-earthquake period suggests that there is no significant decrease in the income level.

The number of interviewees who benefited from the post-earthquake aid within the first 10 days is quite low compared to the other two provinces. Only 3 of the interviewees were able to access basic necessities within the first ten days. In addition, all of the interviewees stated that they were not sufficiently informed about the assistance provided.

The form of discrimination encountered in Adıyaman is remarkable. Since the majority of the Dom living in Adıyaman go to the neighbouring provinces as seasonal workers, the motor vehicles they use have the number plates of other provinces. This situation turned into an obstacle especially for them to benefit from the earthquake aid and the Dom from Adıyaman who requested aid were discriminated against with labels such as "looters, thieves and opportunists" from other provinces. Apart from this, in the processes of receiving aid and public services observed in the other two provinces, they were subjected to ill-treatment and hate speech by people from other segments of the society. Similar attitudes and behaviours were frequently expressed during the interviews by people working in public institutions and organisations and volunteers working in the disaster area. All interviewees stated that they did not receive legal support and assistance regarding their loss of rights after the earthquake.



\*For photographs taken during the field research;

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/15NhRS9Uxej1UNNx4f07VdgkEH7MAiLkx>

