Members of the far-right Ukrainian paramilitary group C14 recently attacked a Roma camp in Kiev, forcing families and children to flee. The incident was just one of many assaults in Ukraine committed by right-wing groups against ethnic minorities and those opposed to the oligarchic government of Petro Poroshenko.

A report released days after the attack by Amnesty International pointed to the involvement of local government officials: “On the night of April 20-21, representatives of the radical organization C14 committed a pogrom of the Roma camp on the Lysi mountain in the Holosiivskyi district of Kiev. The pogrom was preceded by several visits to the camp of representatives of the C14 and workers from the Holosiivskyi district administration, who demanded that the Roma leave the site. According to eyewitnesses, during the pogrom against the Roma, gas cartridges, cutting items and, possibly, firearms were used. According to reports, children were among the injured.”

In a video posted to YouTube, Roma families are seen fleeing with children and personal items in their arms, as they are chased and attacked by the fascists with rocks and tear gas. C14 later posted photos of members burning the families’ tents. The group boasted about the attack on Facebook.

C14 is an offshoot paramilitary group of the right-wing nationalist Svoboda Party. The “14” in its name refers to the 14-word white supremacist slogan, “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”

Despite the fact that C14 carried out the attack in broad daylight near several busy metro stops and bragged about it on social media, a police investigation was not opened until five days later. While speaking to the Ukrainian press, Andriy Kryshchenko, the head of Kiev’s police force, refused to acknowledge that any assault took place, stating that only garbage was burned at the camp by firefighters. Claiming he had received no complaints from the Roma themselves, the police chief said there was nothing to investigate.

Kryshchenko’s statements were contradicted by Amnesty International’s report, which included statements from members of the Roma community. Several said they later called the police and returned to the camp, but were told all of their personal items were burned or gone and that they should leave Kiev as fast as possible.

The Kiev Police finally decided to open an inquiry after the YouTube video of the attack went viral on social media.

The federal government likewise responded to the outcry over the attack only after Amnesty International and other NGOs began to denounce the attempted cover-up of the incident by police forces.

Interior Minister Arsen Avakov cynically released a statement condemning the attack: “Attacking women and children, threatening them, gassing them with tear gas, spoiling their property, and generally treating them like animals due to ethnicity is medieval savagery. It does not fit a modern country that seeks to live up to European standards.”

Notwithstanding Avakov’s assurances that the guilty parties will be brought to justice, the Poroshenko regime tacitly supports far-right fascistic groups such as C14. It is unlikely that the group will ever be seriously charged with terrorizing the Roma camp. Earlier in January, thousands of far-right groups gathered to march in Kiev and were given free reign of the city for the day by Kiev authorities.

Avakov himself has ties to the far-right paramilitary Azov Battalion, which now operates with full government support after being integrated into the newly created National Guard. Avakov’s deputy minister Vadim Troyan is a former member of the
neo-Nazi Patriot of Ukraine organization. Several other officials within the Interior Ministry also have ties to Ukraine’s myriad far-right groups and parties and have a history of making anti-Semitic statements.

In order to prop up his corrupt and widely despised regime, the Poroshenko government allows these fascist groups to operate with impunity, free to terrorize any opposition to Kiev.

In concluding its report, Amnesty International noted: “It is important to understand that the target for such attacks can and will be anyone: Roma, women, anti-corruption activists, Jews, LGBTs, journalists, artists, students, writers. No one can now be sure that he will not become the next victim of a gang of radicals who have felt their impunity. They are covered with patriotism and concern for society, but in fact they are terrorizing civilians. In this case, law enforcement bodies, in most cases, remain inactive.”

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