

*Graziano Halilovic: An Open Letter*

I'm Graziano Halilovic, cousin of Romano Halilovic and Uncle of Francesca, Angelica and Elisabeth.

Someone, a monster, burned three little girls in sleep, with an incendiary bottle that burned the camper of Romano the other night at Centocelle in a public car park, where they were stationed without disturbing anyone.

We do not know who he was: could have been anyone: a Roma, a gagot, a news reporter, a racist for hatred, an Italian or a stranger .... In any case a monster who has committed a horrible, unforgivable and inhuman crime that has seen two horrified parents in front of the death spectacle of burned-on children.

The point is we do not know who was the monster, and we can not use the fragility and pain of the moment to find a culprit before the investigations take their course.

I trust that law enforcement officers carry out investigations without being influenced by racial prejudice and are able to name the culprit.

But until then I ask Roma and non-Roma activists, civil society, all human rights organizations and NGOs, Italian and European politicians to intervene in all the media so that - in respecting the pain of the family and in respecting the victims and of the Roma community - avoid to use defamatory terms, speaking of "clan" and "foul among the Roma", thus joining the Roma community again in terms that call for organized crime, until the investigations of those who have jurisdiction will bring to light the truth. We do not know at the moment whether it is a Roma, an Italian, a foreigner, a journalist, or what political ideology it is. Only when investigations are over will we know the ethnic origin and motivation of the culprit. Making allegations about it, trying to involve an entire community, is a useless and disrespectful game against the Roma, who strikes the victim's family twice before in the irreparable loss and then in continuing discrimination.

I want to thank Pope Francis, the President of the Republic Mattarella, the Roman Pontific and the Bishop Don Paolo LoJudice, the Community of Sant'Egidio, the citizens of Centocelle and all those Italian politicians and citizens who have expressed solidarity with the Roman family at this time of insurmountable pain.

This is the time of prayer and silence, not of instrumentalization for different ends of what has happened: we must stay close to Roman, to Mela and their surviving children, and respect their mourning.

Thank you