

English

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von gast  
in Rechtsradikalismus  
Kommentare ( 0 )

## Judgment in Hungary: A filmmaker reflects



This is the twelfth article in our series *Trouble on the Far-Right*. For more information on the series, please click [here](#).

by *Eszter Hajdu*

In 2008 and 2009, a group of Hungarian right-wing extremists committed a series of attacks on random members of the Roma community. Six people were killed, including a five-year-old, and another five were injured. The trial of the four suspects lasted two-and-a-half years, and the verdict was passed in August 2013. Director Eszter Hajdú filmed the trial and condensed it to create an oppressive Kammerspielfilm starring the cold-blooded suspects, an irritable judge and the victims' families. Without any commentary, Hajdú recorded the drawn-out and sometimes chaotic trial from the cramped courtroom's public gallery. A small static camera shows the judge's point of view, while close-ups highlight the emotions of the people touched by the crime. Sometimes we see the protagonists outside the courtroom, for example during the reconstruction at the crime scene. At the start of the trial, the victims and next of kin assume there will be justice, and they have faith that the Hungarian authorities will protect them. But will the extremists be found guilty? The widespread anti-Roma sentiment in Hungarian society, and the bungling (intentional or otherwise) on the part of the police give them reason to fear they will not.

[Judgment in Hungary: An independent documentary from Hungary](#)



I started to do the documentary *Judgment in Hungary* because I didn't want to become a bystander. The Roma community of Hungary and all over Europe face serious discrimination, not only on a civil but also on a structural level. Racism is embedded in the political, institutional, and social system. Roma people don't have the same rights as other citizens. I also wanted to make a memory of the Roma victims who were killed in the racially motivated serial killing in Hungary, between 2008 and 2009.

### **Why four years of filming?**

The process of making this film was extremely long and hard. It took us almost 4 years. It was hard to endure, but we felt it is our moral duty and responsibility. My crew was the only crew documenting this historical trial, the media was not interested, they didn't follow the trial. Only the first and the last few days of the hearings were watched by the media, and during most of the days we were alone in the courtroom.

Why was this issue important for me? This is the question I am usually asked first. I grew up in a neighbourhood together with several Roma families, I used to go to a kindergarten with lots of Roma friends. After the regime change in 1989, these Roma families started to disappear from the neighbourhood. The authorities pushed them to move to other, segregated areas. It was a trauma for me, and also the constant racist remarks from teachers, professors during my school-years. I think the biggest problem is the education of the majority society. Students don't know anything about Roma, they just hate them. Values like Human rights, tolerance and diversity are not esteemed anymore in the Eastern European societies, and they tend to lose their power in Europe as well.

### **The film as an educational weapon against Roma hatred**

Education plays a crucial role in changing racist attitudes. That's why we organised hundreds of educational screenings at schools and universities. There are several schools, for e. g. law faculties and police universities, where *Judgment in Hungary* is part of the educational curriculum. It is also very important that students talk to Roma experts. That's why we always work together with them.



Media also plays a key role in changing racist sentiments. I am really proud of the fact that after the film premier in Hungary media started to be self-critical, and they realized that the serial-killing was not about the “Roma-problem” but about the Neo-Nazi problem. It is very typical to blame the victim community. I always argue that our film and the trial against Roma people is not about the so called “Roma problem”, (which I believe doesn’t exist. Roma people have problems, but they are not the problem!), but that the film and the trial is about the Neo-Nazi problem. And I believe the main and most striking problem is that Neo-Nazi thoughts and racism are so wide-spread and became a part of the mainstream thinking. Racism became a kind of normality. That is the background of hate crimes, because some people feel that killing Roma is seen as legitimate by the society, and they feel that they are heroes who act in the name of their fellow citizens!

## **The broader impact of the film**

I am really glad that our film, *Judgment in Hungary*, managed to reach lots of countries, lots of people, and even more happy that it managed to reach thousands of students. It was screened in 40 countries, broadcasted in the Netherlands, Germany, France, Poland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Canada, and we continuously have requests for more and more educational screenings. The film received 17 international awards. I am especially proud of the jury statement by Pawel Pawlikowski, Oscar award winning filmdirector (*Ida*, *Last resort*, *My summer of Love*) at the London Open City Film Festival, where *Judgment in Hungary* received the Best film award:

*Judgment in Hungary* is a pure observational documentary and yet it has all the qualities of great drama: compelling characters, twists, turns, and moments of horror and even comedy. By presenting the idiosyncrasies of the Hungarian legal system, it manages to capture the racism faced by the Roma community in Hungary. Like all great films, by focusing on something very narrow and specific it holds up a mirror to something universal.

If you are interested in the film, you may rent it [here](#), organize a [screening](#) or check the producer’s [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

And the most important, stand up against racism!



**Eszter Hajdu** is a Portuguese-Hungarian film director. Her film „The Fidesz Jew...” was one of the most provocative and most viewed documentary film in 2008-2009 in Hungary. Her films are mainly about social-political taboos

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