



UNION ROMANI

Miembro de la UNION ROMANI INTERNACIONAL. Organización reconocida por las Naciones Unidas
Protocolo firmado en Nueva York el 28 de febrero de 1979.

TODAY IS AN IMPORTANT DAY FOR ALL EUROPEAN GYPSIES

The European Court of Human Rights sentences that the marriage celebrated by the Gypsy ceremony is completely valid

Two years ago the Romani Union joined the initiative undertaken by the Secretariado Gitano Foundation in defence of the legitimate interests of “ La Nena ” and we divided the tasks. Both organisations would enter as appearance before the European Court of Human Rights to widely cover the different flanks on which the defence of María Dolores had to be presented. The Foundation, through its lawyers, Mrs. M^a Magdalena Queipo de Llano López-Cózar and Mr. Sebastián Sánchez Lorente, presented the legal reasons that guaranteed the petition of María Luisa Muñoz Díaz to be paid the widow’s pension that the Spanish National Health Service denied her. Undoubtedly, success has accompanied this defence and this Gypsy woman will be paid, now all at once, the pension that the Spanish Government denied her for so long.

The Romani Union, represented by its president and lawyer, Mr. Juan de Dios Ramírez-Heredia, focused its defence fundamentally on proving that the union made by María Luisa with her late husband through the Gypsy ceremony, when both were young, was a real marriage. There lied the matter’s controversial nerve centre. The Government and the Spanish judges did not admit the validity of the Gypsy wedding and therefore, as there was no marriage, she did not have the right to be paid the so-called widow’s pension. The Spanish Gypsies were very sad to know about the unfavourable sentence of the Spanish Constitutional Court when it did not know, or it refused to accept the reasoning that was presented with absolute accuracy. Mr. Jorge Rodríguez-Zapata Pérez, -may God give him and all his family health and liberty- was the only exception and, from that moment on, he has a privileged place of respect and affect in the heart of all Spanish Gypsies since he was the only one who said that we were right; thing that was later confirmed by the European Court of Human Rights.

We believe that today is an important day, not only for the Spanish Gypsies but also for all European Gypsies. This way we expressed it before the European Court of Strasbourg . On that memorable day we knew that what was at stake was not only that “ La Nena ” was paid her widow’s pension, but also that those judges stated that she had the

right to that pension since she and her husband, married by the Gypsy ceremony, were a true married couple. Strasbourg Court has listened to our Gypsy voice and has pronounced its sentence. A sentence which gives back the dignity denied to a whole people and which will make possible, since this is a law of precedent, that any Gypsy couple, married by our ancient ceremony, in any part of our Old World , is recognised before the public authorities as a true marriage.

May God save the members of the European Court of Human Rights and the judge Rodríguez-Zapata who, from now on, have an everlasting place in our hearts.

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