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Another illustration of the requirement of equality before the law is provided by the judgment adopted by the UK House of Lords in a case concerning the screening of Roma at Prague Airport by British immigration officers. These officers were temporarily posted to Prague Airport to 'pre-clear' all passengers before they boarded flights for the United Kingdom, in accordance with an agreement concluded in February 2001 between the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom. While most of the argument in this case was about the applicability to such a situation – where potential asylum-seekers have not left their national territory – of the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, the excerpts presented here concern the allegation that the Roma seeking to leave Prague were victims of discrimination.

House of Lords (United Kingdom), R. v. Immigration Officer at Prague Airport and another (Respondents), ex parte European Roma Rights Centre and others (Appellants) [2004] UKHL 55

Leading judgment, Lord Bingham of Cornhill

1. At issue in this appeal is the lawfulness of procedures adopted by the British authorities and applied to the six individual appellants at Prague Airport in July 2001. All these appellants are Czech nationals of Romani ethnic origin ('Roma'). All required leave to enter the United Kingdom. All were refused it by British immigration officers temporarily stationed at Prague Airport. Three of these appellants stated that they intended to claim asylum on arrival in the UK. Two gave other reasons for wishing to visit the UK but were in fact intending to claim asylum on

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