

AI – Amnesty International

Amnesty International Report 2022/23; The State of the World's Human Rights; Croatia 2022

Pushbacks and collective expulsions continued. Defamation lawsuits threatened the work of journalists and the media. Access to abortion remained severely restricted. Same-sex couples were granted the right to adopt children. Roma faced widespread discrimination. Domestic violence increased.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

The number of people trying to enter through neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) increased in comparison with 2021, and aid organizations documented continued pushbacks and collective expulsions by the Croatian authorities. Civil society groups called for a proper investigation into systemic violations on the country's borders.

In February, the European Ombudsman found that the European Commission failed to ensure that fundamental human rights were respected in EU-funded border operations by Croatian authorities.¹

Police officers caught on camera beating asylum seekers in 2021 were found to be in minor breach of duty and returned to work in January.

In July, the EU-funded Croatian Independent Border Monitoring Mechanism found no major irregularities in border operations, but said that border police unlawfully returned potential asylum seekers to BiH when they found them in the border areas suspected of being mined. Civil society and rights organizations repeated concerns that the mechanism lacked independence, a strong mandate and adequate access to the border area.

In April, the European Court of Human Rights, rejecting Croatia's appeal, made final the 2021 ruling that Croatia violated the European Convention on Human Rights when it forcibly returned an Afghan family to Serbia, resulting in six-year-old Madina Hussiny's death. The authorities proposed an action plan to execute the judgment, but civil society organizations questioned the quality of the proposed measures.

In December, the Council of the EU decided to admit Croatia into the Schengen area. Human rights organizations criticized EU institutions for having "turned a blind eye" to overwhelming evidence of human rights violations by the authorities.²

The authorities granted temporary protection status to over 22,000 Ukrainians fleeing the war and provided those in need with accommodation and integration assistance. In contrast, recognition rates of asylum seekers from non-European countries remained low, with only 16 people granted international protection by October.

In May, the authorities arrested Aysoltan Niyazova, an activist and member of the band Pussy Riot, when she was in Croatia on an anti-war tour and threatened to extradite her to Turkmenistan. She was released following condemnation by human rights groups.³

Freedom of expression and association

Journalists and media reporting on organized crime and corruption continued to face threats, harassment and physical attacks. Politicians and businesses frequently sued journalists for defamation, which remained a criminal offence. The Croatian Journalists' Association documented over 1,000 active Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation (SLAPPs) demanding over €10 million in damages, calling them a "judicial terror". In March, the Coalition against SLAPPs in Europe named Croatia as one of the countries in the EU where lawsuits to silence journalists and activists are used the most.

Sexual and reproductive rights

Access to sexual and reproductive services continued to be limited due to the widespread refusal of individual doctors and some clinics to perform abortions on grounds of conscience. In May, the case of a woman denied an abortion by four different clinics even though her fetus was diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumour, sparked protests and divided public opinion. The procedure was finally carried out after the intervention of the Ministry of Health. The Ombudsperson for human rights said that doctors' individual right to conscience-based refusal could not be an obstacle to access to adequate healthcare.

Economic, social and cultural rights

In September, the government passed measures to alleviate the effects of the rapid rise in prices and the cost of living. The measures included caps on the cost of electricity, gas and essential food items, as well as a temporary increase in social assistance for economically vulnerable people.

Discrimination

LGBTI people

In a final ruling in May, the High Administrative Court confirmed that same-sex couples should be able to apply for child adoption under the same conditions as heterosexual couples.

Roma

Despite some progress, Roma continued to face widespread discrimination in all walks of life. Roma children were considerably more likely not to complete primary or secondary education, and girls were particularly affected by early marriage practices and were frequently victims of trafficking. According to the authorities, 50% of Roma girls gave birth to their first child while under age. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child urged the authorities to ensure better integration of Roma

children into mainstream education and remove barriers that hinder their access to education, healthcare and social services.

Violence against women and girls

The authorities reported a sharp increase in domestic and gender-based violence in comparison with 2021. Civil society organizations warned that the penalties for perpetrators remained inadequate.

The government announced a package of measures, including stronger penalties for perpetrators and enhanced protection for the victims of domestic violence, such as a standard protocol for risk assessments in all cases and alternatives to the existing temporary measures, which were seen as ineffective. The Ombudsperson for gender equality noted that law enforcement continued to fail victims and called for comprehensive reform, including effective prevention, resocialization and education programmes.

-
1. ["EU: Ombudsman finds Commission failed to ensure rights at Croatian border"](#), 24 February
 2. ["EU admits Croatia to Schengen without regard to abuses at the border"](#), 8 December
 3. ["Croatia: Dissident and Pussy Riot member must not be extradited to Turkmenistan"](#), 1 June

© Amnesty International

ecoi.net summary:

Report on the human rights situation covering 2022

Country:

Croatia

Source:

[AI – Amnesty International](#)

Original link:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/croatia/report-croatia/>

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

27 March 2023

Available on ecoi.net since:

28 March 2023

Austrian Red Cross	Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041	Contact
Austrian Centre for Country of	Wien	Imprint & Disclaimer
Origin and Asylum Research and	T +43 1 589 00 583	F.A.Q.
Documentation (ACCORD)	F +43 1 589 00 589	Data Protection Notice
	info@ecoi.net	

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

