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Amnesty International Report 2017/18 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Slovenia

Amendments to the Aliens Act undermined the rights of asylum-seekers. There was no progress in addressing the long-standing human rights violations against those known as the “erased”. Roma continued facing widespread discrimination and social exclusion, particularly regarding the right to housing.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

In January, the National Assembly adopted amendments to the Aliens Act allowing special measures to be triggered after threats to public order and national security occur. Under these measures, Slovenia would be able to deny entry to people arriving at its borders and automatically expel migrants and refugees who enter irregularly without assessing their asylum claims. Such measures had not been invoked by the end of the year.

In July, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that two Afghan families and a Syrian national who had sought asylum could be deported back from Austria and Slovenia respectively to Croatia, the first EU country they had entered. The ruling upheld the requirement of the so-called 2013 Dublin regulation which imposes that refugees seek asylum in the first country they reach, even in exceptional circumstances. Slovenia's Ministry of Interior stated its intention to deport the Syrian asylum-seeker referred to in the ruling; he had not been deported by the end of the year. Refugees struggled to support themselves as a consequence of the 2016 amendments to the International Protection Act. The amendments ended the short-term financial assistance designed to help refugees bridge the gap before they received social support, leaving many of them without funds in the first month after they were granted international protection.

Slovenia had committed to accept 567 asylum-seekers by September 2017 from Greece and Italy under the EU relocation scheme; by the end of the year it had resettled only 232 people.

Discrimination

In September, the National Assembly amended the Ombudsman Act to provide it with a broad mandate to combat discrimination, and to establish a National Centre for Human Rights with capacity for research and education under the Ombudsman's Office. Alongside the Advocate for Equality, an independent anti-discrimination body established in 2016, these steps were welcomed by civil society. However, human rights organizations warned that the anti-discrimination framework as a whole still lacked monitoring, policy-making and executive powers as well as adequate resources to be fully effective.

The 'erased'

Long-standing human rights violations continued to persist against the “erased”, an estimated 25,000 former permanent residents of Slovenia mostly originating from other former Yugoslav republics. They were removed from the official registry following the country's independence. The authorities failed to offer new options to the remaining “erased” in terms of restoring their legal status and related rights since the expiry of the Legal Status Act in 2013. In September and November, the European Court of Human Rights ruled as inadmissible complaints by some of those whose applications for restoring legal status had been rejected under the Legal Status Act provisions.

Roma

Roma continued to face widespread discrimination and social exclusion. Many were living in segregated settlements in inadequate housing, lacking security of tenure and access to water, electricity, sanitation and public transport. The government had yet to adopt a comprehensive National Roma Strategy as recommended by the parliamentary commission for human rights in 2015. In February, approximately three quarters of the Roma political representation, led by the Forum of Roma council members, adopted a platform of political demands, including immediate access to basic services and infrastructure, and the strengthening of their political participation. Other Roma organizations followed suit. In October, they held the first Roma-organized public demonstrations echoing similar demands.

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