

Amnesty International Report 2015/16 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Slovakia

Discrimination against Roma remained widespread. The European Commission initiated infringement proceedings against Slovakia for the discrimination against Romani pupils in education. Anti-immigration rallies were held across the country, and Slovakia voted against mandatory relocation quotas of refugees from other EU member states.

Discrimination – Roma

Police and security forces

Slovak NGOs reported new cases of excessive use of force by police against Roma, and raised concerns over the lack of effective investigation in past cases. In September, the UN Committee against Torture criticized the absence of an independent mechanism to investigate such reports as the existing body – the Department of Control and Inspection Service (SKIS) – remained subordinate to the Ministry of Interior.

The investigation by the SKIS into the alleged excessive use of force by police during an operation in the Roma settlement of Vrbnica on 2 April was still pending.¹ Nineteen Romani residents reported injuries and damages to their houses, and 17 criminal complaints were filed against police. No police misconduct was acknowledged by the authorities. The Public Defender of Rights criticized the police operation and called on the Public Prosecutor and the Ministry of Interior to ensure that the allegations were adequately investigated, including by unearthing any potential racial motivation.

The UN Committee against Torture noted that no charges were brought against the police officers who participated in an operation in the Roma settlement of Moldava nad Bodvou on 19 June 2013 that resulted in injuries to over 30 individuals, including children.

The Committee also expressed concerns over the decision of the District Court to acquit 10 policemen accused of ill-treatment of six Roma boys at a police station in 2009 in Košice. The Public Prosecutor appealed against the acquittal; the case remained pending at the end of the year.²

Right to education

Romani children continued to be over-represented in “special” schools and classes for children with mild mental disabilities, and placed in ethnically segregated mainstream schools and classes. The segregation of Romani children was reinforced by the continued investment in so-called “container schools” in Romani settlements, instead of ensuring the integration of Romani students in ethnically mixed mainstream schools.³ In its Annual Report, the Public Defender of Rights criticized the diagnostic procedures for placements in “special” schools and classes, calling them discriminatory.

In April, the European Commission initiated infringement proceedings against Slovakia for breaching the prohibition of discrimination set out in the EU Racial Equality Directive in relation to the access to education of Roma.⁴ The authorities justified the disproportionate number of Roma in

“special” schools and classes by alleging there is a higher prevalence of genetically determined disorders among Slovak Roma due to inbreeding.⁵ The government presented new measures to the European Commission in August, aimed at reducing discriminatory bias in diagnostic procedures.

In June, Parliament adopted an amendment to the Schools Act that contains provisions on the education of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. While the amendment prioritizes integration in mainstream schools and provides financial incentives for schools educating pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, it does not contain any provisions for eliminating ethnic discrimination against Roma.

Enforced sterilization of Romani women

The UN Committee against Torture called for an independent and effective investigation into all cases of forced sterilization of Romani women and girls performed in the early 2000s, and for the introduction of an adequate compensation scheme for those harmed.

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

In February, Slovakia held a referendum on a proposal to define marriage exclusively as a union between a man and a woman, to ban adoption by same-sex couples and to require parental consent for the participation of children in classes on sexual education and euthanasia.⁶ The referendum was void as it did not meet the 50% turnout requirement. Slovakia does not legally recognize same-sex partnerships and the Constitution already defines marriage exclusively as a union between a man and a woman.

Counter-terror

In June, riot police units raided the apartment of a Tunisian national and former detainee at Guantánamo Bay who resettled to Slovakia in November 2014. The SKIS reportedly feared for his life as he had not been seen or heard of for two days. Following the intervention with rubber bullets, he required medical attention for injuries which left him unable to work for seven days. The SKIS dismissed his complaint on the grounds that the raid was lawful and the coercive measures proportionate, and alleged that he had reacted aggressively.

In December, Parliament rushed through the adoption of new anti-terrorism measures, including the extension of the maximum period of pre-charge detention to 96 hours for individuals suspected of terrorism-related offences.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

Anti-immigration rallies were held across Slovakia. In June, at least 140 people were arrested after police clashed with demonstrators reportedly throwing stones and smoke bombs at a rally in Bratislava. The rally was attended by thousands of people protesting against mandatory EU quotas for the relocation of refugees from other EU member states.

In August, the Minister of Interior announced that the country would admit 200 Syrian refugees, on condition that they be Christians. Slovakia voted against mandatory relocation quotas at a meeting of EU Interior Ministers in September, but was obliged to receive 802 refugees over a period of two years following the proposal's adoption by qualified majority.

1. Slovakia must urgently investigate allegations of arbitrary use of force by police against Roma in the village of Vrbnica ([EUR 72/1403/2015](#))
2. Slovakia: Justice still pending for Romani boys abused at police station in 2009 ([EUR 72/1158/2015](#))
3. Slovakia's "container schools" worsen segregation of Roma children from society ([News story](#), 13 March)
4. Slovakia is the second member state to be subjected to an infringement procedure for breach of EU Anti-Discrimination Law ([EUR 72/1777/2015](#))
5. Slovakia: Racist stereotyping should not determine education policy – International NGOs criticize Slovak Government ([EUR 72/1834/2015](#))
6. Slovakia: Referendum on marriage panders to homophobic discrimination ([News story](#), 2 February)

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