

The State of the World's Human Rights; Slovakia 2024

Strict eligibility criteria for scarce public housing left thousands without adequate access to affordable housing. The government introduced amendments to existing laws that disproportionately restricted the rights to peaceful assembly and expression. Roma continued to face discrimination and social exclusion. LGBTI people's rights remained unprotected by law. Stigma and stereotypes against minorities were widely perpetuated by state representatives. Information regarding arms transfers to Israel was kept classified. The government's actions undermined its commitment to transitioning from fossil fuels.

Right to housing

The authorities' failure to recognize housing as a human right caused a public rental housing crisis, affecting marginalized groups and other households struggling with excessive housing costs.¹

Municipal housing stock was scarce, leaving thousands of low-income households without adequate access to public rental housing options. The strict eligibility criteria for public housing, including minimum income requirements, further limited access, leaving many ineligible to apply. Roma households faced systemic discrimination and segregation in the distribution of municipal housing.

Emergency housing options, intended as short-term solutions, often became long-term substitutes due to the lack of affordable housing.

Freedom of peaceful assembly

New legislation on the right to peaceful assembly, adopted in June, violated the constitution and Slovakia's international human rights obligations.² It imposed several new restrictions on the right to protest and granted municipalities broad powers to prohibit peaceful assemblies.

Freedom of association

NGOs, particularly those focused on human rights and transparency, faced criticism and attacks from government officials. This demonization led to the first parliamentary vote on a bill that was in breach of EU law.³ At the end of the year, parliament was debating an amended version of the bill that could potentially restrict the right to freedom of association. Several measures to reduce NGO funding were also successfully implemented.

Freedom of expression

In June, parliament passed a new national broadcasting act that increased political influence over public media.⁴

Excessive use of force

The government failed to implement effective measures to fully comply with judgments on excessive use of police force against Roma people. It failed to improve investigations into police violence, address potential racial motives, and strengthen the independence of the investigative body.

Discrimination

Roma

The persistent and systemic segregation of Roma children in both mainstream and special education led the European Commission to file a complaint with the European Union Court of Justice in December 2023 for breaching the Equality Directive. The Ministry of Education further entrenched such segregation by expanding already segregated schools.⁵

A memorandum to establish the first national school for Roma was announced. The adoption of the School Act amendment relaxed the criteria for establishing Roma national schools. The reform was not supported by the Roma community.

LGBTI people

In May, parliament voted down an attempt to make legal gender recognition de facto impossible.⁶ However, transgender people continued to face barriers to accessing legal gender recognition and gender-affirming healthcare.

There was no progress on granting same-sex couples the legal right to civil unions or parenthood.

Some members of parliament continued to express homophobic and transphobic views, while LGBTI people faced ongoing discrimination and hostility from the state and within society.

Gender-based violence

There remained no consent-based legal definition of rape. Parliament attempted to shorten the statute of limitation for crimes of sexual violence from 20 to 10 years, but this effort failed due to strong opposition from experts and the public.

Sexual and reproductive rights

There remained no effective compensation mechanism for women who were subjected to forced sterilization between 1966 and 2004.

Irresponsible arms transfers

Information regarding arms transfers to Israel was kept classified, in conflict with the principles of transparency and reporting in the International Arms Trade Treaty.

Right to a healthy environment

The government supported a commitment at COP28 in 2023 to transition away from fossil fuels. Yet, it continued to invest in a liquefied so-called “natural” gas terminal in the capital, Bratislava.

The integrated National Energy and Climate Plan lacked a clear timeline for reducing fossil fuel use and fell significantly short of the EU’s 2030 targets on the use of renewable energy sources.
