

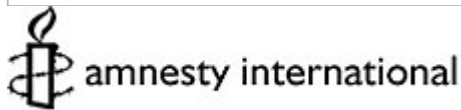
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Amnesty International Report 2014/15 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Croatia

Republic of Croatia

Head of state: Ivo Josipovic Head of government: Zoran Milanovic

Discrimination against Croatian Serbs and Roma continued. Same-sex partnerships were legally recognized. The rate of investigation and prosecution of war crimes remained at a low level.

Discrimination

Croatian Serbs

Croatian Serbs continued to face discrimination in public sector employment and the restitution of tenancy rights to social housing vacated during the 1991-1995 war.

In July, the Constitutional Court ruled unconstitutional a referendum petition seeking to restrict the use of minority language rights to local self-government units where at least half of the population is from an ethnic minority. Although the referendum petition applied to the whole country, the referendum petitioners, a Croat veteran group, specifically sought to ban the use of bilingual public signs in the Cyrillic (Serb) alphabet in Vukovar. The current law on minority rights sets the threshold at one third of the population.

Roma

Many Roma continued to live in segregated settlements without security of tenure and with limited access to basic services such as water, electricity, sanitation and transport facilities. Four years after the 2010 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Oršuš and Others v. Croatia*, many Roma children were still attending segregated classes. Discrimination in the labour market contributed to significantly higher rates of unemployment among Roma compared with other ethnic groups. Those living in rural areas and young women were particularly disadvantaged.

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

A Law on Life Partnership was adopted in July that granted equal rights to same-sex partnerships in all matters except adoption. The law introduced the institution of “partner-guardianship” to allow parents in same-sex partnerships to extend the full range of parental rights and obligations in relation to their children to their partners. The first same-sex partnership was registered in September. Three safe and successful Pride marches were held in Split, Zagreb and Osijek. In March, Croatia granted asylum to a gay man from Uganda who had sought protection following the criminalization of homosexuality in the country.

International justice

In November, an indictment was issued against a former member of the Croatian armed forces for crimes committed during Operation Storm in 1995. In March, Croat Army Officer Božo Bačelić became the first person to be convicted in national courts for war crimes committed during the same Operation Storm. Two further trials relating to war crimes committed during Operation Storm were ongoing by the end of the year. In total, eight members of Croatian military formations and 15 members of Serb formations stood trial for war crimes during the course of the year.

The European Court of Human Rights initiated communication with the government on 17 cases submitted by civilian victims of war alleging violations of the right to life due to the failure of the state to carry out effective investigations into the killing or disappearance of their relatives.

Croatia continued to stall on the adoption of a comprehensive legislative framework that would regulate the status of, and access to reparation for, all civilian victims of war. In a positive development in March, the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs presented a draft Act on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence in the Homeland War, which would grant victims access to psychosocial and medical support, free legal aid, and monetary compensation. However, the draft law failed to specify the level of financial compensation that would be made available.

In August, Croatia signed a regional declaration on missing persons, and committed to pursuing measures to establish the fate and whereabouts of the 2,200 still missing in Croatia. Croatia had yet to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The rights of relatives of missing persons continued to be undermined by the absence of a law on missing persons.

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