

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

Croatia struggled to provide adequate reception conditions and access to asylum proceedings to the large number of refugees and migrants that arrived in the country. Parliament passed a law providing survivors of war crimes of sexual violence with reparations. Discrimination against Croatian Serbs and Roma continued.

Discrimination

The state-wide celebration in August of the 20th anniversary of Operation Storm, which saw 200,000 Serbs flee from Croatia in 1995, brought tensions between Serb and Croat nationalists back.

In August, the town council of Vukovar passed a motion to remove public signs in the Cyrillic (Serb) alphabet, and to require a special request and the payment of a fee for the receipt of official communications in Cyrillic, despite the fact that 34% of the town's population were ethnic Serbs. The Croatian law on minority rights entitles minorities amounting to one third of the municipal population to official usage of their languages and scripts. Discrimination against Croatian Serbs in public sector employment and in the restitution of tenancy rights to social housing vacated during the 1991-1995 war persisted.

Social exclusion of and discrimination against Roma remained widespread, particularly in accessing adequate housing and employment opportunities.

The municipal court in Split acquitted three men standing trial for a homophobic attack against six women in the town in 2012. The victims alleged that the local police had threatened them when they filed their complaint, failed to arrest the suspects on the spot and investigate the crime effectively.

Freedom of expression

In June, the Osijek County Court confirmed the decision of the Zagreb Municipal Court, finding that Zagreb Pride, a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) organization, violated the honour and dignity of a former employee of the Croatian Radio Television (HRT) by placing her on the annual list of candidates for the most homophobic person of the year 2013. The Court ordered the organization to pay 41,018.91 HRK (€5,414) to the journalist and to publish the verdict on its website.

International justice

In February, the International Court of Justice cleared Serbia and Croatia of mutual claims of genocide, finding that neither Serbia nor Croatia had established the necessary intent on the part of the other to commit genocide during the conflict in the 1990s.

In May, the Croatian Parliament passed the Law on the rights of victims of sexual violence in war. The Law provides survivors of wartime sexual violence with Croatian citizenship, a lump-sum compensation amounting to €13,000 and a monthly allowance amounting to €328. In addition to the payments, survivors will be entitled to health care, medical rehabilitation and psychological support. The Law entered into force in June with the first allowances due to be paid out in January 2016.

However, Croatia had not yet adopted a comprehensive legislative framework that would regulate the status of, and access to reparation for, all civilian victims of war crimes.

Croatia did not ratify the International Convention against Enforced Disappearances nor did it adopt a law on missing persons. In the absence of these legal instruments, relatives of the 1,600 missing persons in Croatia were denied access to justice and reparations.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

By the end of the year, more than 550,000 refugees and migrants had transited through Croatia towards other EU countries, with the assistance of state authorities providing free transportation.¹ Only a few hundred people made an asylum application and, by October, 37 had been granted international protection. The authorities failed to identify vulnerable individuals, including unaccompanied minors and victims of human trafficking entering the country through its land borders.

1. Hundreds of refugees stranded in dire conditions on Croatia/Slovenia border ([News story](#), 19 October)