

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

Slovenia struggled to provide adequate reception conditions to the large number of refugees and migrants that arrived in the country. The authorities failed to restore the status of the “erased” or provide adequate redress, perpetuating the long-standing violations of their rights. Discrimination against Roma remained widespread.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

More than 375,000 refugees and migrants arrived in Slovenia through the Western Balkans route, a 250-fold increase on the previous year. From September, hundreds of people were detained for entering the country irregularly, among them refugees from Syria. Others were transported to reception and accommodation centres, some of which did not provide adequate shelter and care. The overwhelming majority were able to transit through the country and exit towards Austria; 141 people submitted an asylum application. At least 20 refugees and migrants were expelled to Croatia, which refused the attempted return of hundreds of others.

Discrimination

Slovenia’s anti-discrimination framework remained flawed as institutions created to combat discrimination and consider complaints – such as the Human Rights Ombudsman and the Advocate of the Principle of Equality – continued to be undermined by weak mandates and inadequate resources.

The “erased”

The authorities failed to provide redress for the human rights violations committed against former permanent residents of Slovenia originating from other former Yugoslav republics, known as the “erased”, whose legal status was unlawfully revoked in 1992.

No new options had been offered to the remaining “erased” to restore their legal status and related rights since the expiry of the Legal Status Act in 2013. Less than half of the 25,671 “erased” persons had their status restored.

In June, the Constitutional Court ruled that compensation claims made by “erased” persons should not be subject to a statute of limitations, and courts should take into account the claimants’ special status.

Roma

The majority of Slovenia’s 10,000 Roma continued to face discrimination and social exclusion. Many lived in isolated, segregated settlements, lacking security of tenure and access to basic services such as water, electricity, sanitation and public transport. Discrimination prevented Roma families from accessing housing outside Roma-populated areas.

Over 200 Roma living in the Dobruška vas settlement in the Škocjan Municipality remained without security of tenure. Following the relocation of two Roma families in 2014, no new proposals were presented to residents at risk of forced eviction as a result of redevelopment plans. In December, one individual took the proceeding regarding his house to the Administrative court. Residents of the informal settlements in Loke and Rimš in the neighbouring Municipality of Krško faced similar risks in the face of redevelopment plans that failed to put in place safeguards against forced eviction or provide adequate alternative housing.

The government announced in August that it would prepare changes to the Roma Community Act. However, a draft submitted by the opposition was rejected by Parliament in November without an alternative proposal.

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

The law on marriage and family relations was amended in March in order to legalize same-sex marriage and ensure equal rights to married couples, including to adoption. A referendum challenging the amendments was called by opponents and subsequently referred to the Constitutional Court, preventing the amendments from entering into force. The Constitutional Court ruled in October that the referendum could be held. On 20 December, 36% of the voting-age population cast their vote and rejected the marriage equality law by majority, perpetuating the unequal treatment of same-sex couples.

Freedom of expression – journalists

In April, the prosecution withdrew charges against journalist Anuška Delić, who had been indicted for publishing classified information of public interest, although it maintained that she acted wrongfully. Three other journalists remained under investigation for similar alleged crimes but proceedings were halted before charges were filed. The Criminal Code was amended in July to add a public interest defence for the publication of state secrets.