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## The State of the World's Human Rights; Czech Republic 2023

Ukrainian refugees suffered hate speech, discrimination, harassment and hate crimes amid rising economic and political tensions. Recent moves towards a consent-based definition of rape were inadequate. De facto segregation of Roma children in education continued. Equal marriage for same-sex couples was not permitted. Sterilization was still a requirement for transgender people seeking legal gender recognition. The police were found to be testing facial recognition technology. Climate action policies remained inadequate.

### Background

As part of the UPR process in January, the Czech Republic committed to improving the rights of same-sex couples, implementing a consent-based definition of rape and outlawing corporal punishment of children. However, implementation of these commitments, and some rulings of the European Court of Human Rights, remained slow or stalled.

### Refugees' and migrants' rights

Some 350,000 Ukrainian refugees remained in the country. Against a background of economic recession and rising inflation, Ukrainians were subjected to hate speech, harassment and hate crimes; in August, two Ukrainian refugee women were violently assaulted in the town of Plasy due to their nationality.

Ukrainian refugees faced obstacles to integration, including language barriers in schools. Only low numbers of pupils enrolled in secondary education. Although the employment rate among Ukrainian refugees was 64%, this was overwhelmingly in low-paid and low-skilled jobs.

### Sexual and gender-based violence

The ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) was debated in parliament but faced strong opposition from government and opposition politicians, some resorting to disinformation.

The Ministry of Justice proposed a new law to introduce a consent-based definition of rape into the criminal code. The bill was awaiting approval by parliament.

Although the term "domestic violence" was used in the criminal code, it was not defined. An amendment to the civil and criminal codes was in preparation but had not been brought before parliament by the end of the year.

## Discrimination

A memorial to the Roma and Sinti holocaust at the former Lety concentration camp was nearing completion and due to open early in 2024. In contrast, very little was done to concretely address the continuing de facto segregation of Roma children in education.

## LGBTI people's rights

The Equal Marriage Bill went through its first reading in parliament. However, the constitutional amendment to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman also passed its first reading, creating uncertainty for the future of equal marriage rights.

Sterilization was still required by law for transgender people seeking legal gender recognition, despite a 2017 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights that this was in breach of human rights. The criminal code still failed to recognize violence directed at people due to their sexual orientation or gender identity as a hate crime.

## Children's rights

The minister of legislation created a working group to establish the post of a children's ombudsperson, announcing that it would be in place in 2024.

Corporal punishment of children remained legal. An amendment to the civil code was being prepared, which would describe corporal punishment as "unacceptable" but not make it punishable by law.

## Sexual and reproductive rights

The law regulating abortion access remained outdated. Many medical facilities refused to provide abortions to non-Czech EU citizens due to

incorrect claims by the Czech Medical Chamber – refuted repeatedly by the Ministry of Health and the ombudsperson's office – that the law did not allow it.

## Irresponsible arms transfers

The Czech Republic continued to export arms to Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, despite substantial risks that they could be used in serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

## Mass surveillance

The Ministry of Interior overturned the police's decision not to provide information about their secret use of facial recognition software. The Ministry was awaiting a response from the police either providing the information or a reason not to do so.

## Freedom of peaceful assembly

An attempt by the mayor of Prague to restrict protest marches on a major road in the city was overruled by the municipal court, which said that this violated the right to freedom of assembly without adequate justification.

## Right to a healthy environment

The government confirmed it was aiming to phase out coal use by 2033 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

The Czech Republic had not yet adopted a legally binding climate law aimed at setting specific targets and enacting concrete measures to tackle climate change.

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