



PRESS RELEASE

UN CRC calls on the Slovak government to comply with its human rights obligations on children's rights

Budapest, Košice, 22nd June 2016

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) together with the Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa pre občianske a ľudské práva) welcome the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) issued recently after its session on Slovakia. The report urges the Government of the Slovak Republic to take steps towards proper fulfilment of children's rights in Slovakia. The Committee draws special attention to the long-term violations of the rights of Romani children, earlier highlighted by the ERRC and Poradňa in their alternative report to the UN CRC.

The Committee rightfully expresses its concerns over persistent discrimination regarding "the equal enjoyment by Roma children, especially those living in segregated settlements, of their rights to education, health care and adequate standard of living".

The illegal practice of school segregation is highlighted in the report, and the Commission recommends that the Slovak national authorities put in place measures to ensure inclusive education is given priority over segregation via specialized institutions and classes.

The inability of the State to acknowledge their responsibility in discrimination against Roma is a stumbling block which the Commission attends to. This is a necessary step to begin to fully investigate the extent of "past systematic practices of unlawful sterilization of Romani women and girls" in the country. The UN CRC calls on Slovakia to provide appropriate, effective and gender-sensitive remedies in a timely manner to Romani women and girls who were subjected to forced sterilization. The Committee also noted the shameful practice of hospital segregation of Romani children and women from the majority population, and asks for the introduction of systematic measures to effectively monitor, prohibit segregation in hospitals in all its forms.

In addition to this, the report urges the authorities to effectively investigate violent attacks, and other incidents of harassment, and provide access to justice for Romani child victims of harassment, perpetrated in particular by the police, as well as "private individuals, including all violent police raids in Roma settlements".

In Slovakia, a large proportion of Roma families continue to live in segregated areas without access to adequate housing and often lack access to basic facilities such as water and sanitation. The report recommends the Slovak authorities to "adopt policies and allocate budgets for connecting Roma settlements to public drinking water and sewage systems". Instances of forced evictions from these sites are far too common and further aggravate the situation of the Romani children and their access to basic human rights. The ERRC applauds the Committee's recommendation for Slovakia to stop the forced eviction of Romani families without provision of "adequate alternative housing", in line with relevant international standards.

Slovakian provisions which set conditions on child benefit, parental care allowance and child birth allowance disproportionately affect marginalised and vulnerable Roma families. The Committee rightly calls this out as effective discrimination in practice and calls on the government to amend these legislative provisions.

"We welcome the UN CRC recommendations concerning the rights of children including Roma in Slovakia. We urge the authorities to act resolutely, end discrimination of Romani children and comply with all

recommendations made by the UN CRC as we believe they reflect the best interests of children.” said Đorđe Jovanović, ERRC President.

“The UN CRC recommendations provide a clear picture about shortcomings in the protection of the rights of children including Roma in Slovakia in many areas of life. They confirm that the extent and gravity of human rights violations against Romani children in the country remain very disturbing. These recommendations should be a wake-up call for the authorities to significantly improve the protection of the rights of Romani children and thoroughly address human rights violations they are facing,” said Stefan Ivanco, Poradňa program coordinator.

This press release is also available in Slovakian.

UN CRC Concluding observations on Slovakia are available at:

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fSVK%2fCO%2f3-5&Lang=en

Parallel report of the European Roma Rights Centre and Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa pre občianske a ľudské práva) is available at:

<https://www.poradna-prava.sk/en/documents/written-comments-for-the-un-committee-on-the-rights-of-the-child-2016/>

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The Center for Civil and Human Rights (*Poradňa pre občianske a ľudské práva*) is a non-governmental organisation based in Slovakia focused on the protection of human rights with particular emphasis on the rights of minorities and protection from discrimination. Poradňa has for a long time worked on the issue of discrimination against the Roma ethnic minority in various areas of public life. It has also been active in the protection of reproductive rights and protection from police brutality. Poradňa employs strategic litigation to combat discrimination and human rights abuses against minorities. Visit us at www.poradna-prava.sk.

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is an international public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma through strategic litigation, research and policy development, advocacy and human rights education. Since its establishment in 1996, the ERRC has endeavoured to provide Roma with the tools necessary to combat discrimination and achieve equal access to justice, education, housing, health care and public services. The ERRC has consultative status with the Council of Europe, as well as with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Visit us at www.errc.org.