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PRESS RELEASE

In Košice, 22 May 2018

The public and non-governmental organizations urges the Slovak Government to finally establish an independent body to investigate cases of illegal sterilization of Roma women.

Non-governmental organization Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa), with the support of other organizations and people, urges the Slovak Government to finally establish an independent body with the power to investigate the scope of illegal sterilization practices and to compensate all women harmed.

Today, Poradňa has sent the Government a public call "[Let's face the practice of illegal sterilization of Roma women](#)", pointing at that the fact that issue of illegal sterilization of Roma women is not yet closed in Slovakia and that it is necessary to pay attention to it. It urges the Government to finally set up an independent body with the power to investigate the scope of this practice and provide compensation and apology to the women harmed. Such measure was [already recommended by the UN Human Rights Committee](#) in November 2016, but the Government has not yet adopted it.

The public call was preceded by a [petition campaign](#) initiated in January this year by Poradňa in cooperation with a group of illegally sterilized Roma women from Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Their demands to effectively investigate the practice of illegal sterilization of Roma women were supported by nearly a thousand people.

The public call is also supported by international and domestic non-governmental organizations working in a field of protection of women's reproductive rights and the rights of the Roma minority - Center for Reproductive Rights, European Roma Rights Centre, Citizen, Democracy and Accountability, Women's Circles and Pro Choice Slovakia.

In the past years, individual cases of illegal sterilization of Roma women have also been resolved by courts, including the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, but court are unable to look at this problem in a comprehensive way and to document the overall character and scope of this practice in our society.

Attorney Vanda Durbakova, who represented several illegally sterilized Roma women in court proceedings, also stresses that the Government must finally take responsibility for this issue:

"It is clear that court proceedings are not an effective way to redress and compensate all women harmed, so the Government must finally establish an independent body for that purpose," said Durbáková.

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The Center for Civil and Human Rights is a non-governmental organization dedicated to the protection of human rights and freedoms with a focus on protecting against discrimination and protecting minority rights. The Center has long dedicated its work primarily to questions of discrimination against the Roma ethnic group in various areas of their lives in Slovakia. The organization is also dedicated to protecting reproductive rights and to the issue of police brutality. In its work, the Center develops the method of strategic litigation of cases of discrimination and human rights violations against minorities. Among other activities, the Center provides legal support to illegally sterilized Romani women and undertakes other activities aiming at achieving compensation for the women harmed.

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