

Center for Civil and Human Rights



2018 – 2019

BI – ANNUAL REPORT

Citizen Assembly
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English translation of the annual report has not been edited.

About us

„Our vision is a society where minorities do not face discrimination, a society with respect for human rights of vulnerable groups, a society where legal tool on protection of human rights are effectively implemented and human rights violations are sanctioned and compensated.”

We are Slovak non-governmental, non-profit organization founded in 2001.

Our work aim is at the protection of human rights with a special emphasis on the rights of minorities in Slovakia. We focus on issues of discrimination, police violence, protection of reproductive rights and specifically a topic of forced sterilizations of Roma women. We provide the necessary support to Roma, so they can effectively protect their human rights and the rights of others. We pay specific attention to support the activism of Roma women.



Within our work:

- We conduct strategic litigation: in selected cases, given their broader strategic importance, we provide free legal representation and advice.
- We work closely with local Roma women activists and support their mobilization to protect the rights of the Roma minority, with emphasis on the rights of Roma women and their children.
- We perform field monitoring with a focus on identifying cases of human rights violations.
- We propose and comment on legislative measures and promote systemic changes at the political level.
- We provide information to international institutions that oversee Slovakia's compliance with international human rights treaties.
- We carry out publishing and educational activities for various target groups.



Protection against discrimination

- We monitored cases of discrimination against the Roma minority in various areas of public life in Slovakia and provided free legal advice to discriminated people.
- We mapped in more detail the cases of discrimination against the Roma minority in access to public services (cases of denial to provide service to Roma in restaurants, cafes, etc.). In connection with several identified cases, we turned to the Slovak Trade Inspection and participated on some inspections.
- We prepared an analysis with the aim of contributing to a better identification and proof of discrimination by the Slovak Trade Inspection. We also shared in it our many years of experience with proving discrimination in court proceedings and the implementation of the so-called situational testing as useful mean of gathering evidence of discriminatory treatment.
- We provided free legal representation in strategic court proceedings to 17 discriminated persons, including their representation before the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Our goal was to improve access to justice in cases of discrimination and to stimulate public debate on discrimination against the Roma minority in Slovakia.
- In February 2018, we reached a significant decision of the Regional Court in Košice, which confirmed that the city of Spišská Nová Ves discriminated against a Roma woman in a competition for the position of field social worker on the ground of her ethnicity. The injured woman was financially compensated in the amount of 2500 EUR. This was one of the first final decisions of Slovak courts in the case of racial discrimination in access to employment in favor of the discriminated person.

- Based on the so-called actio popularis lawsuits, we conducted five strategic proceedings in the areas of segregation of Roma children in education, discriminatory legislation, and segregation of Roma women in maternity hospitals.
- We drew attention to delays in court proceedings, which we consider to be one of the major obstacles in access to justice. In this regard, we reached several important decisions of the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, which ruled on the violation of the right of our clients and Poradňa itself, in the case of court proceedings based on actio popularis, to hear their cases without undue delay.
- We pointed out the persistent occurrence of segregation of Roma children in Slovak education and promoted the necessary measures to combat it. We provided the European Commission with up to date information in connection with the infringement proceedings against Slovakia.
- In cooperation with the partner NGO Forum for Human Rights, we promoted measures to ensure equal access to drinking water in marginalised Roma communities.
- On behalf of our clients, we have filed a lawsuit pointing out the responsibility of the state for fully implementing the decisions of the UN committees. The state continues to refuse to compensate injured individuals who have been successful with their complaints before those human rights institutions.
- Through our alternative reports, we have informed the UN committees and other international human rights institutions and several embassies about the persistent discrimination against the Roma minority as well as shortcomings in the application of the anti-discrimination law. In October 2019, we personally informed about shortcomings in this area in Slovakia at a meeting of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Geneva.

"It took almost 8 long years - a very long time. Sometimes you feel helpless and if I was alone in it, I would definitely give up. I would not have so much strength to fight, and only thanks to the support of the Center for Human and Civil Rights in Košice I did not give up this fight and I won. I want to tell those who will read my story not to be afraid to stand up against injustice and not to let others to step on your honour and your rights. There are deep prejudices against the Roma in Slovak society, which need to be eliminated. I believe that my story will inspire many who have encountered discrimination but were or are afraid to combat it. Come and reach out to people who can help you, it's worth the feeling of victory I have experienced."

Passage from the blog of Mrs. Viera, who with our legal support successfully achieved justice for discrimination in access to employment and the Regional Court in Košice in February 2018 finally awarded her financial compensation.

Supporting activism of Roma women

- We continued to cooperate with Roma women activists from several locations in Eastern Slovakia and together we promoted respect for the human rights of the Roma minority, with an emphasis on the rights of Roma women. In 2018 – 2019 we organised 17 meetings, which created a space for planning joint activities in this direction.



We together with Roma women:

- Carried out a public campaign to obtain compensation for forcibly sterilised Roma women from Slovakia and Czech Republic. As part of the campaign, we created a website through which we widely informed about this practice and the need to compensate injured women. Our calls in this area towards governments in both countries have been supported by hundreds of people and several NGOs. We have prepared a public call, which we addressed to the Slovak government together with expressed support from the outside.
- Communicated with the Slovak Ministry of Health and promoted effective measures to eliminate discrimination against Roma women in health care.
- Stood up against the humiliation and ill – treatment of Roma women in Prešov hospital following the initiated petition of Roma women in this matter.
- Submitted several recommendations to the Slovak Trade Inspection, with which we pointed out the occurrence of discrimination against the Roma minority in access to goods and services.
- Took part in a press conference of the Public Defender of Rights, at which she presented her opinion on the need to compensate forcibly sterilised Roma women.



- Organised two networking meetings with women's rights organisations and women activists, where we discussed possible wider cooperation in promoting the rights of Roma women.
- Organised 6 meetings in selected Roma communities, where Roma women shared their experiences of human rights activism with local Roma women. The meetings enabled us to establish contact with active Roma women and created a basis for possible future cooperation.
- Organised joint meetings of Roma women, which were personally attended by the Public defender of rights, representatives of the Slovak – Czech Women's Fund and representatives of the non- governmental organisation Forum for Human Rights.
- Advocated for the adoption of measures to eliminate discrimination against the Roma minority by the Slovak government at a personal meeting with the delegation of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and at a meeting of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- Shared our experience with the promotion of the rights of Roma women in Slovakia with active groups of Roma women from other countries, developed contact with them and laid basis for possible future cooperation.
- Participated in charity story reading performance Vagina Monologues in Prešov. One of the stories, which was performed was a story of forcibly sterilised women written by Roma women. One of the Roma women also performed at the performance in person.
- Through our participation, we supported the 16 Days of Activism campaign against violence against women in Košice.



Roma women with our support also:

- Actively participated in the long-term field monitoring of the cases of violation of the Roma minority rights.
- Have been involved in litigation of cases of discrimination that we conduct. Some of them testified before the court in the case of segregation of Roma women in a hospital in Prešov or, on behalf of their children, brought legal charges against a local primary school for their discrimination.
- In person, they participated as Roma consumers in some inspection's controls of the Slovak Trade Inspection aimed at proving discrimination in access to public services.
- Shared their experiences of discrimination or other violations of their rights through videos, in order to inspire other Roma to actively defend against the violation of their rights.
- Participated in several cultural events.
- In addition to working with a group of Roma women, we individually collaborated with many other Roma activists from other locations in eastern Slovakia and provided them with legal and other support in their efforts to eliminate discrimination and other human rights violations against Roma women in Slovakia.

"We meet because we want to achieve something. We also fight for other women, we want to fight for them as well and for our rights, of course."

Veronika D.

"The meetings gave me a lot. I learnt what to do and how to help other women. We exchange information at meetings. We want to fight for our children, for our daughters... May my daughter has an education and her husband work."

Ingrid

"Enough discrimination, it cannot continue like this anymore – white separated, Roma separated. White children are separated even in the nursery... it cannot be that way. Why don't they want to take Roma to work for example? Because we are black?! We are not to blame for this when we were born that way. And we will fight against it."

Petra

Statements of Roma women activists captured in a video shot at one of their joint meetings held in June 2018 in village Herľany in Slovakia.



Protection against police violence

- We monitored cases of the police violence in our society and informed state institutions about its occurrence. We pushed for measures that would strengthen the quality and independence of investigations into cases of police violence in Slovakia. We have also informed international institutions about the situation in this area.
- We provided free legal advice and representation in strategic criminal proceedings for 3 injured persons, including the publicised cases of police raids in Moldava nad Bodvou from 2013, Vrbnica from 2015, and the case of abuse of Roma boys from Lunik IX at the police station in Košice from 2009.
- On behalf of the injured Roma, we filed 4 complaints with the European Court of Human Rights, alleging that Slovakia did not provide them with effective protection against police violence, insufficiently investigated their case or did not provided them with effective access to justice.
- In January 2020, we reached an important ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of A.P. v. Slovakia, in which the court found shortcomings errors in the investigation of the police violence against a Roma boy, which was to take a place in 2015. The court awarded the injured boy compensation of EUR 5,000.



"I would like to tell other Roma and all the people who faced police violence – do not let it go and stand up for your rights."

Mother of an injured Roma boy, whom we successfully represented at the European Court of Human Rights



Protection of reproductive rights

- Towards Slovak government, we advocated for the establishment of an independent body that would effectively investigate the practice of forcible sterilisation of Roma women in Slovakia and propose a mechanism for their financial compensation.
- We communicated with the Public Defender of Rights about the need to compensate forcibly sterilised Roma women, as follow up she issued an opinion on this matter in 2018. In it, she agreed with the view that we have been promoting for a long time: that the responsibility for ensuring access to justice for all forcibly sterilised Roma women should be taken by the executive and the legislature instead of courts.
- We provided free legal representation for a forcibly sterilised Roma woman in the last strategic court proceedings conducted in Slovak courts. In November 2019, the Regional court in Košice confirmed her compensation in the full amount of EUR 16,000. The injured woman was sterilised without informed consent in 1999 in Krompachy hospital and sought justice in the courts for 15 years.
- We provided information on the practice of forcible sterilization of Roma women to international institutions, including our personal participation in the 2019 session of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Council of Europe events.
- We promoted measures to eliminate discrimination against Roma women in health care, such as their segregation in maternity wards, racially motivated harassment and humiliation, neglect of care, and rough treatment during childbirth. We also pointed out shortcomings related to informed consent and decision-making on health care.

"It was a very long journey for me. I am very happy about the decision, but no money will compensate what they did to me in the hospital, meaning that I can't have children anymore."

Jana - forcibly sterilised Roma woman, whom we successfully represented in court proceedings and the Regional Court in Košice in November 2019 confirmed her financial compensation in full

"Some women took their case to the court like me. Other women did not seek compensation. I want the state and the government to respond now, that is why I talk about my story and give messages. Not after we are gone. We are here now, and we are fighting now – at this moment. We want the government to answer us now."

Ingrid – a forcibly sterilized Roma woman whom we have successfully represented in the European Court of Human Rights in the past and who advocates for compensation for other affected women. She also shared her experience in the video

People of our NGO

Our team

Denisa Barry – chairwoman
Vanda Durbáková – collaborating attorney
Lenka Tóthová – office manager
Štefan Ivanco – programme coordinator
Agáta Duchoňová – field worker (till 8/2018)
Šárka Dušková - ad hoc cooperating lawyer
Stanislava Liptáková – ad hoc cooperating attorney
Roma women activists cooperating on NGO´s activities

Board

Michal Čermák – lawyer
Ruben Pellar – researcher and translator
Ingrid Giňová – Roma woman activist
Ján Polák – Roma activist

Donors

In 2018 – 2019 our activities were financially supported by:

- Open Society Foundations
- Sigrid Rausing Trust
- Filia Women´s Foundation
- Ministry of Justice of the Slovak republic
- US Embassy in Slovakia
- Slovak – Czech Women´s Fund
- Center for Reproductive Rights
- Individual donors

We would like to thank you to all those who financially and/or personally supported our work in 2018 – 2019. Thank you.

How can you support us

- By regular or one-time contribution
- By 2% tax assignation.

More information about other possible support you can find on our internet site.

Financial report in Euro

INCOME	YEAR 2018	YEAR 2019
Income /gifts from individual persons	3 955,62	5 507,81
Income from other organisations/gifts/ grants	60 021,11	51 428,11
2% tax assignation	1 265,96	577,94
Interest /exchange rate profit	114,37	56,12
Income from services provided	9 094,86	10 105,00
In Total	74 451,92	67 674,98

COSTS	YEAR 2018	YEAR 2019
Office overheads and equipment	669,65	1 300,18
Telephone, internet and postal services	1 270,90	1 344,21
Rent and insurance	3 338,23	3 536,85
Salaries	26 864,97	22 638,08
Tax and fees	155,04	296,01
Legal services – strategic litigation	17 611,88	16 813,89
Accountancy	2 316,00	2 562,00
Travel expenses	2 458,33	3 339,47
Education activities (seminars, meetings, supervisions)	4 497,89	4 173,36
Publications (printing, graphic, translation, authors fee)	1 793,60	580,00
Translations and interpreting	1 026,00	1 521,00
In Total	62 002,49	58 105,05

