

Slovakia: Amnesty International welcomes recommendations to fight torture

The Slovak authorities should implement as a matter of urgency the recommendations of the United Nations Committee against Torture, Amnesty International said today.

"The conclusions of the Committee confirm the reports of torture and ill-treatment which we have received over the years, and which the Slovak authorities have consistently failed to investigate properly," the organization added.

In its recommendations -- adopted on 11 May after considering the initial report of the Slovak Republic -- the Committee instructed the Slovak authorities to:

adopt measures to initiate an effective, reliable and independent complaints system to undertake prompt, impartial and effective investigations into allegations of ill-treatment or torture by police and other public officials, and where the findings warrant to prosecute and punish alleged perpetrators;

make adequate provisions for compensation and rehabilitation of victims of torture and ill-treatment;

continue to provide human rights training for law enforcement, military and other officials and provide clear guidelines on the prohibition against torture and ill-treatment and the prohibition on returning persons to countries where they would face a probable risk of torture.

The Committee further expressed concern, inter alia, about:

"(c) Allegations of instances of police participation in attacks on Roma and other members of the population, as well as allegations of inaction by police and law enforcement officials who fail to provide adequate protection against racially

motivated attacks when such groups have been threatened by 'skinheads' or other extremist groups;

(d) Failure on the part of the authorities to carry out prompt, impartial and thorough investigations into allegations of such actions or to prosecute and punish those responsible;

(e) Allegations that law enforcement officials have ill-treated detainees during detention and in police custody, particularly in lock-ups and police cells;

(f) Allegations of harassment of human rights defenders as well as threats, reportedly to deter submission of complaints, which are allegedly not adequately investigated;

(g) The lack of adequate guarantees of the rights of persons deprived of liberty to have access to counsel and a doctor of his or her choice as well as prompt medical exams."

In December 2000 Amnesty International wrote to Slovak authorities expressing concern about the continuing reports of police ill-treatment of Roma in Slovakia. The organization also expressed concern that some reported incidents of racist violence have not been effectively investigated and that the alleged victims have reportedly been ill-treated and harassed by the police.

"Five months later we have received no reply from the government," the organization said. "We share the Committee's concern about the Slovak authorities' failure to implement all their obligations under the Convention against Torture."

For more information concerning Amnesty International's recent concerns in Slovakia please see Concerns in Europe: July - December 2000 (AI Index EUR: 01/001/2001) <http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/EURO10012001>

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