

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Serbia: New law will help to end legal invisibility

Amnesty International welcomes the first law to be adopted by the new parliament, which will at last provide the “legally invisible” with access to documentation.

It has been estimated that at least 6,500 people in Serbia - the majority of them Roma – do not have a birth certificate. Without a birth certificate, they cannot obtain other documentation which, in turn, enables them to access rights to education, employment, social welfare and healthcare.

The “Law on Amendments to the Law on Non-Contentious Procedure”, adopted on 3 September, removes administrative barriers and simplifies the procedure of registering a date and place of birth, in order to be issued with a birth certificate. The Law also provides that birth certificates will in these cases, be issued free of charge.

This will greatly assist those who do not have birth certificates, or any other documents proving that they were born in Serbia.

Amnesty International considers that is a significant step forward towards ensuring that Roma and others in Serbia who lack documentation will then be able to obtain citizenship and residency documents, and obtain an ID card, thus entitling them to the same rights as other citizens of Serbia.

Further measures need to be taken to ensure effective implementation of the new law, due to enter into force on 1 March 2013.

Amnesty International notes nongovernmental organizations in Serbia have campaigned for this law for many years. The organization hopes that this is the first of many measures which the government will take to end to discrimination against Roma in Serbia.

Public Document

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