

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL and EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTRE PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Slovak authorities must investigate the police action in Romani settlement Moldava nad Bodvou

Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre are concerned over the reports of excessive use of force during the police action in the Romani settlement Budulovská in the town of Moldava nad Bodvou in eastern Slovakia carried out last week. The organizations are calling for an immediate investigation of the allegations. Anyone responsible for the arbitrary or abusive use of force should be brought to justice.

According to media and NGO reports, in the afternoon of 19 June, 63 police officers entered the settlement in Budulovská Street aiming to carry out an investigation into “increased criminal activity”. The police action reportedly resulted in injuries to over 30 individuals who – according to the media and the community activists – did not resist or obstruct the police. Among the injured were reported to be young children.

An NGO that runs a community centre in the settlement, ETP Slovakia, provided further information about damages to the properties of the settlement’s residents. The police allegedly failed to communicate or explain to the residents the purpose of the action. Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre learned that they were entering individual houses, kicking out doors and breaking windows.

Under international human rights law and standards, the use of force by the police must be proportionate, lawful and necessary. The UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms specify that police may use force or firearms only where unavoidable and proportionate to a legitimate objective.

The Act no. 171/1993 Coll. on Police Forces regulates the duties of police officers when on duty. It obliges them not to interfere with rights of others more than the extent unavoidable to pursue the legitimate aim they are following and to respect the Code of Ethics issued by the Ministry of Interior of Slovak Republic.

Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre consider that these requirements were not met in the police action in Budulovská settlement.

Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre are also concerned about the announcement that the police aim to continue carrying out similar interventions, “especially in areas with a reported rise in criminality”. The areas quoted by the media as possible targets for future interventions are known for their Romani settlements.

The organizations are calling on the Slovak Ministry of Interior to ensure the police action carried out in the Bukulovská settlement on 19 June 2013 is investigated in line with international human rights standards. In particular, the organizations are calling for a prompt, independent, thorough and effective investigation that would also look into any possible discriminatory element

of the police action. Those responsible for human rights violations must be held accountable.

Furthermore, Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre are calling on the Slovak Ministry of Interior to ensure that any police actions are carried out in compliance with domestic and international human rights standards and do not amount to unlawful use of force or discrimination.

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