

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Slovak government commits to end segregated education**

Following yesterday's approval by the Slovak National Assembly of the new coalition government's programme for the next four years in office, Amnesty International welcomes the stated commitment to adopt measures to eliminate segregation in education on the basis of ethnic origin.

This acknowledgement by the Slovak government that ethnic segregation in education is an existing problem within the country's educational system is the first step to ending decades of discrimination and segregation of Romani children in inferior education in Slovakia. It will require strong and concrete measures to strengthen the legal and policy framework around the prohibition of discrimination and segregation, which already form part of the country's anti-discrimination and education legislation.

Concrete measures towards enforcing the ban on segregation would include empowering the State School Inspectorate to fulfil its human rights obligations to prevent, prohibit and eradicate segregation through the provision of adequate resources, including robust, detailed guidelines and procedures on how to identify, monitor and combat segregation in practice. This will also require the systematic collection of statistical data on education disaggregated on the basis of gender and ethnicity, something which Slovakia has been requested several times to do by international and regional human rights bodies, such as the Committee of the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.

Amnesty International has been campaigning against segregated education of Romani children in Slovakia since 2007. The organization will continue to monitor the government's efforts against its stated commitment and will continue to campaign for concrete measures to ensure that Romani children in the country can enjoy their right to education free from discrimination.

#### **Background**

Thousands of Romani children in Slovakia are placed in special schools and classes designed for pupils with "mild mental disabilities" or in ethnically segregated mainstream schools and classes providing a substandard education. This not only violates their right to an education free from discrimination, but in the longer term also deprives them of a wide range of other human rights, including the rights to health, work and freedom of expression. Systemic violations of the right to education exclude Roma in Slovakia from full participation in society and lock them into a cycle of poverty and marginalization.

#### **Read more:**

- Roma children still lose out: Segregation persists in Slovak schools despite new law - Campaign Digest <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR72/004/2009/en>
- A tale of two schools: Segregating Roma into special education in Slovakia <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR72/007/2008/en>
- Still separate, still unequal: Violations of the right to education of Romani children in Slovakia <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR72/001/2007/en>

- Story - Slovakia plans to remove Romani children from their families  
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/slovakia-plans-remove-romani-children-their-families-2010-03-09>

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