

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Amnesty International welcomes the commitment of the Czech government to end segregation of Romani children in education

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Czech Republic

Amnesty International welcomes the repeated commitment of the Czech government to desegregate the schools and ensure equal access of Romani pupils to the right to education. However, the organization recalls that despite similar commitments being made in the past, the segregation of Romani in education still persists.

Concerns over continuous widespread and systematic discrimination of Roma children in access to education have been raised in the recent past by a number of human rights monitoring bodies and the European Court of Human Rights.

In September 2011, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) found that segregation of Roma children in education persisted and recommended to the Czech government to take concrete de-segregation measures.

In addition, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Nils Muižnieks in November 2012 stated that “practical schools” (former “special schools” offering reduced curricula) perpetuate segregation of Roma children, inequality and racism. He called for such schools to be phased out and replaced by mainstream schools that would be prepared to host and provide support to all pupils, irrespective of their ethnic origin.

These findings and criticism mirror the 2007 judgement of the European Court of Human Rights that the Czech Republic had violated the right of Roma children to an education free from discrimination by placing them in “special schools” offering a lower quality education. Five years after the judgment, the segregation of Roma children in Czech schools continues.

Amnesty International welcomes that more than 20 states raised the issue of inclusive education in the Czech Republic, including by calling for implementation of the National Plan of Action for Inclusive Education and an end to unlawful segregation of Roma children in schools.

Czech Republic accepted these important recommendations, and made assurances that equal opportunity will be a central aspect of the new education development strategies. Amnesty International appreciates that in a meeting with its representatives in November 2012, the Czech Minister of Education, Petr Fiala, stated that desegregation and inclusive education were priorities for his ministry.

Amnesty International urges the Czech government to confirm its commitment to ending discrimination against Roma children in education. It calls on the Czech authorities to urgently implement the reform necessary to ensure that the thousands of Roma children in the country can enjoy equal right to education, just like their non-Roma peers.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Czech Republic on 13 March 2013 during its 22nd session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above. Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in Czech Republic:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR71/003/2012/en/afb73b78-d8dd-428c-b27f-25e110c8f50f/eur710032012en.pdf>

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