

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Slovakia: Amnesty International urges enhanced protection of the human rights of Roma

Amnesty International welcomes the focus by many states during the review on education of Roma children (A/HRC/12/17, paragraph 89, recommendations 71-77).

In its submission to the UPR examination of Slovakia, Amnesty International expressed concern that large numbers of Roma children are placed unnecessarily in special schools and classes for children with mental disabilities. Such schools follow a greatly simplified curriculum, which severely reduces future education and employment opportunities. The procedure and criteria for placing children in special schools are vague and often lead to arbitrary placements. There is no mechanism to regularly monitor and assess of the placement of children in special education, and no independent review mechanism for parents.

Amnesty International encourages Slovakia to ensure the prompt implementation of recommendations 75 and 76, which call for a strategy to address the disproportionate enrolment of Roma children in special schools. Any strategy should include clear selection criteria and an effective independent review mechanism (recommended by New Zealand and Japan, respectively).

Mr. President,

Several states raised concerns about reported cases of sterilization of Roma women without their prior and informed consent. Despite Slovakia's assurances in the Working Group that "forced sterilization of Roma women has never been an official state policy", (A/HRC/12/17, paragraph 17) Amnesty International remains concerned at the continued failure by the authorities to carry out thorough, impartial and effective investigations into all cases of alleged forced sterilizations. To date, according to information available to Amnesty International, no Roma woman who suffered coercive sterilization has received compensation from the government. Rather, the authorities refuse to admit that forced sterilizations took place in the country's public hospitals, and reiterated this in Slovakia's response to the recommendations (A/HRC/12/17/Add.1, paragraph 38). This refusal is particularly worrying in the light of reports of a series of halted prosecutions in the cases of alleged forced sterilizations, the most recent of which was halted by the Regional Prosecutor's Office in Kosice in February 2008 (The criminal proceedings in cases of unlawful sterilizations were discontinued in October 2003 by the police investigator in Kosice, in September 2005 by the Regional Prosecutor in Kosice, and in February 2007 by the Regional Prosecutor in Zilina after a ruling by the Constitutional Court).

In line with recommendations 67, 68 and 69, Amnesty International urges the government to ensure that thorough, effective and impartial investigations are carried out into allegations of forced sterilization of Roma women and that Roma women who have suffered forced sterilization receive prompt and appropriate compensation.

Background Information

The 12th session of the UN Human Rights Council today adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Slovakia. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

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