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*Shadow Report to the*

**Second and third periodic reports of Montenegro<sup>1</sup> under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**

*being considered by the*

**United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**

*at the forthcoming 84th session (3 to 21 February 2014)*

January 2014

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<sup>1</sup> This document contains the second and third periodic reports of Montenegro, due on 3 June 2011, submitted in one document. For the initial periodic report and the summary records of the meetings at which the Committee considered this report, see documents CERD/C/MNE/1 and CERD/C/SR.1924, 1925, 1930 and 1931.

## 1. Introduction

CEDEM and YIHR Montenegro are human rights-based civil society organizations working on fostering human rights promotion and protection, by monitoring compliance and implementation of Montenegro's international obligations with the requirements of the ratified international conventions. To date, CEDEM and YIHR have prepared several reports and information for relevant UN treaty bodies to be considered alongside official reports, including the recent one concerning the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

CEDEM and YIHR appreciate this valuable opportunity to present their views to the Committee.

## 2. Executive Summary

This report seeks to raise concerns regarding certain issues in relation to Montenegro Government's 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> periodic report (hereinafter: the government report) to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

As the government report has covered many issues, we do not seek to address all of them. Instead, after careful consideration of the government's report, we focused on a number of particular issues of concern, notably with regards to discrimination towards women, minorities and migrants, and effective mechanisms to prevent and combat discrimination in Montenegro. To facilitate comparison of this report with the government report, we have addressed issues in the same order as they appear in the government report.

CEDEM and YIHR note that there is no general hostility towards and among national and ethnic minorities in Montenegro and that the country represents a solid example of multi-ethnic tolerance. However, certain dose of nationalism in public and political discourse is noticeable; ethnic divisions are being often emphasised in relation to electoral rights and employment. There are strong negative attitudes and widespread prejudice towards **Roma and Egyptians**, especially towards those coming from Kosovo. According to the recent research on ethnic distance, Roma are the most discriminated national group in Montenegro<sup>2</sup>. Every second citizen of Montenegro opposes to living next to Roma. Pronounced discrimination towards **LGBT persons** and to a lesser extent, towards elderly people and drug addicts, exists. However, discriminatory or racist language and behaviour against national, ethnic or sexual minorities are still isolated cases, all of which should be properly investigated and addressed by the authorities.

The anti-discrimination policy framework is in place, but its effective implementation is missing; there are no final judgments in discrimination cases up to date, along with the lack of precise records on registered and processed cases of discrimination. Anti-

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<sup>2</sup> CEDEM, Ethnic distance, December 2013, available at: <http://www.cedem.me/en/ostala-istraivanja/viewdownload/38-ostala-istraivanja/457-etnika-distanca-2013-prezentacija.html>.

discrimination bodies lack functional and financial independence. Additional efforts are needed in order to ensure greater financial autonomy of judicial bodies. Special rules of behaviour of responsible bodies towards discrimination victims have not been developed, which puts them at the risk of additional victimization. There are no **enforceable judgements** in discrimination cases. The Council for the Protection against Discrimination has still not been fully operational. **Proportional representation** of minorities in political and public life of the country has not yet been achieved.

Considerable restrictions in relation to socio-economic rights of asylum-seekers exist, in particular in relation to **labour rights** and **access to healthcare**. Access to certain social services, such as to public kitchen in Konik Camp, is still conditioned by the citizenship. Amendments to the Law on Education, which would enable persons with foreigner status and permanent residence to work in **educational institutions**, have not yet been adopted.

### **3. General legal and political framework in relation to the elimination of discrimination: introduction (Para 1- 18)**

In its report, the Government briefly mentions the Article 9 of the Constitution that stipulates the supremacy of international law. However, the Law on Constitutional Court of Montenegro raises doubts in relation to direct effect of international treaty in the proceedings before national courts, in the way that in its Article 44, as noted in government's report, it is prescribed for a national court, when in doubt about the discord between a national law and international law, shall suspend the proceedings until the Constitutional Court makes a meritorious decision on that matter, which would in such case be legally binding for national courts. This raises doubts about the principle of direct application of international treaties, since it is implied that national courts are not obliged to know and apply international standards without the "assistance" of the Constitutional Court. This situation may also refer to the conventional standards regarding discrimination and racism as well.

Article 7 of the Constitution prohibits the infliction or incitement to hatred and intolerance on any grounds, while the Article 8 prohibits direct or indirect discrimination regardless of any particularity or personal feature. This Article also envisages special measures to be undertaken in order to achieve the equality of persons in all respects to achieve the purpose for which these measures were undertaken. However, the Constitution does not contain any non-exhaustive list of prohibited ground of discrimination<sup>3</sup>. According to our opinion, particular reference to the Constitution of race, colour, language, religion, national or social origin, association with a national minority would pointed to the importance given to the fight against racial discrimination.

Further, the Article 45 of the Constitution limits the right to vote and to stand for elections to nationals residing in Montenegro for at least two years. According to this Article, only citizens who have residence for at least two years in Montenegro have the

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<sup>3</sup> Similar provision is contained in the Article 1 of the Protocol 12 to the European Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

right to choose and to be chosen. CEDEM and YIHR consider this provision unreasonably restrictive, as significant group of people who reside in Montenegro may be denied the opportunity to exercise their political rights at the local level, which prevents their sustainable integration into the local society.

Although Montenegro signed the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families on 23 October 2006, there have been no improvements in regards of the ratification process, despite it was planned for 2012, as stated in the government's report.

Montenegro has not acceded to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (1961) either, though this Convention determines safeguards against statelessness at birth and later in life, such as prohibiting the withdrawal of citizenship in the context of transfer of territory.

The current Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination (Official Gazette of MNE 46/2010) contains no provisions pursuant to which discrimination is the act of putting someone in a less favourable position on the basis of wrong concept of the existence of grounds for discrimination. Defining child discrimination as a separate form of discrimination is also lacking, while there are no provisions on hate speech<sup>4</sup>, either. The Law does not envisage rigid sanctions for more serious forms of discrimination recognised by the law.

Although the amended Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms from 2010 introduced new rules for the election of minority councils, as well as new rules for the allocation of funds based on quality of the project and not on the size of the minority community, these amendments are not yet properly implemented as their implementation should be followed by proper procedural acts. In addition, the risk of the conflict of interest has not been eliminated, which remains to raise disputes regarding the allocation of minority funds. Several decision of the Minority Fund have been already contested before the Administrative Court and annulled as unlawful up to date.

#### **4. Asylum (Para 19 – 23)**

In comparison with 2009, the number of asylum seekers in Montenegro has tripled. According to data by the Ministry of Interior, the total number of asylum applications to date is 5241. However, despite the increasing number of asylum claims, the recognition rate is still very low; the asylum protection has been granted in 7 cases only. The law prohibits the expulsion of asylum-seekers and foreigners who reasonably fear prosecution on the ground of their race, language, religion or political beliefs and who may face prosecution, torture and humiliation in case of expulsion. However, due to poor recognition of international standards and capacity constraints on the side of border police, a risk of the chain effect of *non-refoulement* principle with regards to transferring potential *bona fide* refugees to neighbouring countries without considering whether they will be granted fair and transparent asylum procedure in the country of

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<sup>4</sup> The definition on hate speech is contained in the Law on Public Order (Official Gazette of MNE 64/2011), but not in this systemic anti-discrimination law.

extradition, has been noticed. Additional efforts are needed in order to ensure the protection of human rights, so as to clearly distinct perpetrators from bona fide refugees and allow refugees to claim the asylum before the expulsion from the country.

There are considerable restrictions in relation to accommodation, labour rights (it is only allowed within the reception centres) and access to basic medical care (there is no mandatory medical triage when entering the country; access to health care is not guaranteed as for the citizens).

The Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers is still not operational, although it was expected to start with its function by late 2011, as stated in the government's report. In addition, its accommodation capacity of 65 places has already proven insufficient and additional accommodation facilities need to be ensured in light of a sharp increase of asylum seekers. Given these deficiencies, asylum seekers are being accommodated in private facilities that do not meet the minimum reception standards in terms of the quality of accommodation conditions and nutrition. Asylum seekers who are staying in these facilities till the end of the asylum procedure have only one free meal per day. There is no separate facility for accommodation of minor asylum seekers, particularly female minors. Apart from that, some pieces of secondary legislation relevant for efficient functioning of the Reception Centre have not been adopted yet, such as the Rulebook on registration of these persons, Rulebook on placement in the Centre, Rulebook on house rules. In addition, there is a need to plan funds for the functioning of this Centre and to ensure these funds are properly planned by the state budget.

As concerns family unity, the Law on Asylum prescribes that in the asylum procedure measures will be taken to safeguard family unity, subject to consent of asylum seeker; yet, there are no identified criteria to take into account when deciding on re-joining of a family. There is no provision to regulate the situation of family reunification when its members enjoy temporary protection in different countries. With regard to voluntary return and measures taken after cessation of temporary protection, Montenegro currently has no program for voluntary return of irregular migrants to their countries of origin.

Further, although the Law on Asylum guarantees the right of asylum seekers to primary and secondary education in public schools, persons enjoying subsidiary or temporary protection and persons recognized as refugees, this issue is not regulated in more detailed manner by the secondary legislation. There are no developed individual or collective programs to enrol these persons in Montenegrin educational institutions and provide learning of official language. Access to high education is not guaranteed.

## **5. Gender equality (Para 24 – 35)**

While the proclamation of the laws listed is commendable, there are serious gaps relating to the enforcement of gender equality policy and combating discrimination and sexual/gender-based crimes. Favourable environment for the participation of women in political and social life at all levels has not yet been created. Although, following

elections in October 2012, the number of women in the Parliament has increased for 17.2% comparing with the previous composition; the percentage of the current 16% is unsatisfactory. Women are significantly represented on deputy positions; namely, 40.3% deputy ministers and 44.8% deputy directors are female. Out of 22 municipalities in Montenegro, a woman is the mayor in one only, while in two municipalities, women are the presidents of local parliaments. The share of women among local parliament members is 14%.

The maintenance of classified gender-based statistics has not been provided in all areas, especially in the area of women labour and employment. Although the law prohibits inequalities in labour and earnings between men and women, there are many cases in practice, in which women are still less paid than their male colleagues. Lack of understanding and sensibility amongst judges and public prosecutors for language terms directly or indirectly related to gender equality (discrimination, mobbing, economic violence and violence against women) has been noted, along with a lenient penal policy.

The Law on Social and Child Protection (Official Gazette of MNE 27/2013) contains discriminatory provisions related to the compensations that will be awarded to the employer by the state for maternity leaves, which are limited to 2 average salaries in the country. This provision directly discriminates women who held managerial positions, thus leading to the deepening of women discrimination on the labour market. As such, this provision is in contrast with adopted anti-discriminatory policies as well as with the recommendations addressed to Montenegro by the UN CEDAW Committee<sup>5</sup>.

## **6. Protection against discrimination and system of measures for its suppression (Para 36 – 85)**

As stated in government's report, protection against discrimination is regulated by the criminal legislation, in addition to the Law on the prohibition of legislation. Through the Criminal Code contains provisions on the instigation of national, racial or religious hatred (Article 443) they are rarely applied. According to state officials, most of the cases involving incitement to national or religious hatred are treated as misdemeanours in the lower courts and rarely end in convictions. Lack of evidence is given as the most important reason for this, but also the lack of training for determining whether an act is racially motivated or not.

Hatred caused by personal characteristics such as health condition, disability, political or other belief, education or social position, has not been recognised in recent amendments to the Criminal Code as aggravating circumstances in the enforcement of criminal offences. However, the Criminal Code does not prescribe the existence of qualified forms in cases of hate crimes, such as Light bodily injury, Abuse, Torture,

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<sup>5</sup> Recommendations of UN CEDAW Committee available on the following link:  
<http://www.minmanj.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rId=90081&rType=2>.

Rape and Cruel Murder<sup>6</sup>. Unlike the valid Law on the Prohibition of discrimination, the proposed amendments to this law which have been recently adopted by the Government, address racial discrimination as a specific form of discrimination.

When the Ombudsman (Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro) is concerned, the Constitution defines the institution of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro as an independent and autonomous body which is taking measures to protect human rights and freedoms. CEDEM and YIHR have welcomed the recent proposal of the Law on the Protector that envisages greater financial autonomy of Ombudsman in disposing funds allocated by the state budget. However, CEDEM and YIHR consider that additional efforts are needed to ensure functional and financial independence of the Protector so as to enable it to assume full range of possible powers to effectively fight against discrimination. According to our opinion, the recent constitutional amendments (July 2013) should have been used to stipulate qualified majority for the election of the Protector, instead of the current solution on simple majority.

Although the electoral legislation and the Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms set provisions to ensure the authentic representation of minorities in the Parliament and local assemblies in those municipalities where minorities make a significant proportion of the population, this principle of affirmative action has not yet been achieved, neither there is proportional representation in public services which reflects the diversity of the population. The lack of verifiable and systematic data, divided along ethnic affiliation, hinders proper implementation of constitutional provisions such as authentic representation of minority groups in the Parliament. The authorities say that the precise figures cannot be obtained because citizens are not required to list their national or ethnic origin, but the lack of data according to ethnicity prevents evaluation of the results of anti-discrimination and minority policy.

Effective prosecution of war crimes is missing. The tendency of non-punishment is noted due to inefficient investigations and non-consistent application of international law standards. Out of only four processed war crime cases, only two are completed (Bukovica and Morinj), in one case (Deportation) the process by legal remedies is ongoing, while in the case of Kaluđerski laz, the first-instance decision has not yet been delivered. Selective accusations in personal sense along with the lack of command responsibility and prolonged proceedings constitute main concerns that prevent the achievement of the restorative justice for victims and their families. Additional efforts are required in order to ensure victims' rights to truth, justice, indemnity and non-recurrence, by taking measures to abolish impunity and bring justice for all presumed offenders in accordance with law and international standards<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> More information available at: [http://www.hraction.org/wp-content/uploads/HRA-JUVENTAS-usvojeni-predlozi-upredlogu-Zakona-o-izmjenama-i-dopunama-KZ-a\\_april-2013.godine.pdf](http://www.hraction.org/wp-content/uploads/HRA-JUVENTAS-usvojeni-predlozi-upredlogu-Zakona-o-izmjenama-i-dopunama-KZ-a_april-2013.godine.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Situation Report on the state of judiciary, corruption and human rights, CRNVO, October 2013, page 48, also available at: <http://www.cedem.me/en/publications/finish/48-publikacije-eng/451-situation-report-in-the-area-of-judicial-reform-and-human-rights-chapter-23-in-montenegro-in-the-period-from-10-october-2012-to-1-october-2013.html>.

With regards to discrimination against Roma, it has to be mentioned that the adopted Strategy for the Improvement of the Position of RE in Montenegro 2012 – 2016 is being slowly implemented and without sustainable funding resources. Roma face severe poverty and the risk of social exclusion which is reflected in difficult access to labour market, social and health protection and education, as well as in insufficient participation in political and social life of the country. There is no authentic representation of Roma and Egyptians in the Parliament of Montenegro, although this right is ensured for all other national communities, including Croats who are represented by 0.97 % in the general population of Montenegro<sup>8</sup>.

Despite the increase in the number of children involved in education, their achievements are low, especially among internally displaced persons. Efficient measures for preventing girls' drop-out are missing. Delays are noted in the implementation of scholarship programs and provision of free-of-charge textbooks. There are no regulations defining the right and number of persons from these communities enabled to enrol at different levels of education based on the principle of affirmative action. There is a huge mismatch between Roma capacities and the labour market; very few Roma and Egyptian representatives are involved in additional qualification programs and vocational trainings.

There is no progress in the standardisation of Roma language; the issue of teaching assistants and mediators of Roma and Egyptian nationality has not been systemically regulated. There are no assistants and mediators in the fields of employment, social and health protection, nor official court interpreters for Roma language, which practically leads to significant delays in court proceedings involving Roma.

The risk of eupatrids among Roma and Egyptian children that are born outside of health institutions and not registered in civil registries should be also mentioned in this report. Namely, due to this risk and the lack of procedure of later post-birth registration of such children, they are denied access to fundamental rights and exposed to severe risk of discrimination and exploitation. In order to prevent this situation, the state should consider amending the Law on Extra-judicial Proceedings, so as to regulate the procedure of later civil registration of children born outside health institutions.

## **7. Respect of special rights and freedoms in function of the elimination of discrimination (Para 86 – 309)**

The right to access the court and the right to public trial are generally respected, but there are still architectural barriers to court buildings; the presence of the general public is still limited by reduced physical capacities of courtrooms.

Free legal aid is not available to all citizens who, due to their financial situation, cannot achieve effective access to justice and in all procedures in which decision on their

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<sup>8</sup> According to the population census from 2011, there are 6251 (1, 01 %) of persons who declare themselves as Roma and who live in Montenegro.

rights, obligations and legally based interests is made (e.g. in administrative procedure to which the largest number of violations is bind, as well as in misdemeanour procedure). The very Law on Free Legal Aid is not in conformity with relevant standards. Namely, it does not include the representation in the administrative matters, which is very important, especially for persons with poor financial standing and in cases related to pension and disability insurance, etc. Mechanisms and indicators for monitoring the quality of legal aid are not developed. The property census is high and is not aligned with the Law on Social and Child Protection. Also, the law does not recognise victims of torture (by the public officials) and discrimination, such as Roma and Egyptians, as persons who should be given priority, considering their social position and national affiliation. Consequently, the law is insufficiently promoted among and used by these priority groups. Also, although the law recognises asylum-seekers as holders of this right, to date only one asylum-seeker has used it according to the Law on Free Legal Aid<sup>9</sup>.

In relation to absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, and in particular the obligation of effective prosecution of serious allegations of torture and ill-treatment, mild penal policy was noticed, as well as a lack of thorough investigations of allegations of the origin of violations or the circumstances of the case indicating the accountability of public officials. According to the data of YIHR, 24 officers were disciplinary punished by police authorities for exceeding their powers in the period 2009 – 2012. All punishments ranged from 20 to 30 % decrease of salary for one month, except in one case when the police officer was dismissed. YIHR recorded cases where police officers had been validly convicted of torture couple of times, but have not been dismissed from their jobs<sup>10</sup>.

It was also observed that investigations are often managed inefficiently and ineffectively; that the criminal charges do not include all persons apparently involved in the event, and that the obvious high-profile cases of torture are not yet prosecuted despite the recommendations of international bodies on the protection of human rights<sup>11</sup>. Multi-sector team of the Protector of human rights and freedoms for the prevention of torture has not yet been established, the determination of jurisdiction in these cases has been carried out slowly and ineffectively, especially in those cases where the accused are officials<sup>12</sup>.

As freedom of expression and right to information is concerned, there are still cases of the assault of journalists which have not been effectively investigated and processed, i.e. the cases of other assaults against the freedom of expression, in terms of defining

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<sup>9</sup> For more details please see the Report on the implementation of the Law on free legal aid, Civic Alliance and CEDEM, October 2013, available at: <http://www.cedem.me/sr/ostala-istraivanja/viewdownload/38-ostala-istraivanja/434-istraivanje-sistema-besplatne-pravne-pomoi-u-crnoj-gori.html>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.cedem.me/en/publications/finish/48-publikacije-eng/453-upr-montenegro-coalition-report-2013.html>

<sup>11</sup> Prosecution of Torture and Ill-Treatment in Montenegro”, Human Rights Action, Podgorica, 2013 ([http://www.hraction.org/wp-content/uploads/Izvjestaj-Procesuiranje\\_mucenja\\_i\\_zlostavljanja-mart2013.pdf](http://www.hraction.org/wp-content/uploads/Izvjestaj-Procesuiranje_mucenja_i_zlostavljanja-mart2013.pdf))

<sup>12</sup> Idem.

responsibilities of not only the perpetrators, but the principals of these assaults<sup>13</sup>. It is necessary to examine the role of Public Prosecution Office in these cases.

With regards to the freedom of assembly and association, the Law on Public Gatherings is not harmonized with the Constitution and international standards. Namely, the Law on Public Gatherings prescribes limitations of the freedom of assembly for purposes not defined by the Constitution, such as “the protection of mobility and work of a larger number of citizens“. Besides, responsible bodies, i.e. Police Directorate, specifies the existence of grounds for limiting the freedom of gathering on the basis of wide discretionary authorisations, estimating whether the location of a gathering is “nearby” the location wherein gatherings are prohibited, or whether the gathering should be prohibited or not, as it could “seriously endanger the mobility and work of a larger number of citizens“. As such, the provisions of this Law still represent a serious impediment to citizens’ freedom to assembly<sup>14</sup>.

#### 8. Legal protection and control of constitutionality and legality (Para 310 – 315)

The Constitutional Court is competent to decide on constitutional complaints for violation of human rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, after all legal remedies are exhausted. Likewise, the Constitutional Court is competent to initiate the procedure of reviewing the constitutionality and legality regarding the assessments of their compliance with the Constitution and ratified and published international agreements, following the proposal of authorised institutions, the initiative of any person or ex officio. Effectiveness of the **constitutional appeal** as the key legal mean to remedy the violations of constitutionally guaranteed human rights is questionable, in terms of its efficiency and accessibility, due to the lack of compensational effectiveness component and limited competence of the Constitutional Court.<sup>15</sup>

#### **CEDEM and YIHR recommend:**

- All political parties should consistently condemn all expressions of incitement to hatred against persons or groups of persons on the grounds of their ethnic origin, language or religion.
- Secondary legislation for the implementation of the Law on Asylum should be adopted as soon as possible so that asylum seekers have full access to rights

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<sup>13</sup> Cases of murder of the chief editor of a daily *Dan*, Duško Jovanović; the assault against the writer, Jevrem Brković and the murder of his escort Srđan Vojičić; the assault against journalist, Tufik Softić, of the assault against journalist, Mladen Stojović, and three consecutive ignitions of the vehicles possessed by daily *Vijesti*.

<sup>14</sup> For more details please see the Situation Report on the state of judiciary, corruption and human rights, CRNVO, October 2013, available at: <http://www.cedem.me/en/publications/finish/48-publikacije-eng/451-situation-report-in-the-area-of-judicial-reform-and-human-rights-chapter-23-in-montenegro-in-the-period-from-10-october-2012-to-1-october-2013.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Please see the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights: *Stakić against Montenegro*, number: 49320/07, para. 55-60, 2 October 2012.

they are entitled to. The state should also take necessary steps to ensure that asylum seekers can appeal against the decision on the request for asylum before an independent and impartial tribunal.

- Through the collection of data on ethnicity constitutes sensitive question that implies certain difficulties in Montenegrin context, the authorities should seeks for ways to ensure that ethnically segregated data exist, so as to be able to properly design, implement and evaluate anti-discrimination policies, by means of raising the awareness of citizens on the importance of such data, as long as their collection does not violate the principles of anonymity, informed consent and voluntary self-determination.
- Although the state implements general anti-discrimination campaign and public polling, more tailored campaign focused on the prevention of discrimination against Roma and Egyptians should be implemented in continuity.
- Authorities should strengthen the initial and continuous training of police officials, state prosecutors, lawyers and judges on issues related to equal treatment and non-discrimination, notably on criminal provisions relating to racism and racial discrimination in order to ensure proper recognition, proceeding and sanctioning of racially motivated crimes.
- The Committee should consider encouraging Montenegrin authorities to complete the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, so as to eliminate possible exploitation and xenophobia and protect migrant workers and other immigrants, most of whom are coming from other Western Balkans countries.

**Centre for Democracy and Human Rights – CEDEM** ([www.cedem.me](http://www.cedem.me)) is an NGO established as a non-profit association of citizens on July 2, 1997 and registered at the Ministry of Justice of Montenegro on July 15, 1998. Its main goal is to advance and raise awareness of the importance of a proper and successful democratic transition; to research, analyze and follow the process of transition; to influence by its activities, as much as possible, the transitional process in Montenegro; and to contribute to the strengthening of civil society and the democratization process as a whole.

In that sense, CEDEM acts as a think-tank group, as an organizer of various kinds of public discussions and as an organizer of practical actions. CEDEM acts mostly through:

- research and analytical projects in the field of democratic transition and human rights in Montenegro;
- organizing conferences, round tables, meetings, seminars, workshops, trainings and other activities aimed at encouraging the process of democratic transition;
- influencing legislative activities through its own propositions;
- publishing its works and results in its own publications or through influential (mostly independent) media;
- cooperating with other similar NGOs from Montenegro and Serbia, and from abroad.

In the latest research conducted under University Pennsylvania's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, CEDEM was ranked **in the top ten** leading think tank organizations in the Central and Eastern Europe.

**Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) Montenegro** ([www.yihr.me](http://www.yihr.me)) is a non-governmental and non-for-profit organization, whose work is based on belief that human rights and civil values represent the basis of open and advanced society to which we all strive. The mission of the YIHR is to contribute to development of the society in Montenegro actively and qualitatively, through the net of cooperation with its partner organizations, and development of the Western Balkan region. Along with NGO 35 mm, YIHR founded the **Civil Alliance** ([www.gamn.org](http://www.gamn.org)).

In its operations, the Initiative is dedicated to protection of victims of violation of human rights, to promotion of the rule of law, and promotion of democratic political culture. Its activities are aimed at:

- Research, monitoring and documenting violation of human rights
- Providing free legal aid to the victims of violation of human rights and public representation aimed at improvement of victims position
- Education and development of capacities of target groups, especially active young persons, through educational programs
- Enhancing regional cooperation in human rights protection