

Annual Report 2013

The state of the world's human rights

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Czech Republic

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Head of state **Václav Klaus**
Head of government **Petr Nečas**

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Intergovernmental bodies, NGOs and human rights experts voiced strong criticism of the government's failure to take effective measures to address segregation of Romani pupils in education. Roma continued to be forcibly evicted.

Discrimination – Roma

Intimidation and violent attacks against Roma continued. The European Roma Rights Centre reported arson attacks on the homes of Romani families, anti-Roma rallies and other attacks.

Education

The Minister of Education, Josef Dobeš – in the past heavily criticized by NGOs for stalling efforts to end Roma segregation in schools – resigned in March and was replaced by Petr Fiala in May. The new Minister made a commitment to end discrimination of Romani children in access to education.

In October, the Czech Republic's human rights record was assessed under the UN Universal Periodic Review. The Czech Republic was urged to eliminate continued segregation of Romani children at school and fully implement the National Plan of Action for Inclusive Education.

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, stated in November that "practical schools" (formerly "special schools") perpetuate Roma segregation, inequality and racism. He called for such schools to be phased out and replaced by mainstream schools prepared to host, and provide support to, all pupils, irrespective of their ethnic origin.

In December, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers expressed concerns that, five years after the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic, there had been little progress in addressing the causes of discrimination against Roma in schools. The Committee, however, acknowledged the government's renewed commitment to end Roma segregation in education.

Housing

- More than 300 Romani residents of Přednádraží Street in Ostrava were threatened with forced eviction in August, after receiving an eviction notice which left them 24 hours to vacate their houses voluntarily. Most of the residents eventually left the area and moved to temporary accommodation they were offered in hostels despite concerns raised by NGOs over affordability and overcrowding. In response to this, both the government and the Mayor of Ostrava declared that it was not their responsibility to resolve these problems.
- In October, the High Court in Olomouc held that Ostrava municipality had not discriminated against Romani applicants for permanent housing when it imposed additional administrative requirements on them.
- In November, Ústí nad Labem municipality evicted 36 inhabitants from a building in Předlice, a predominantly Romani neighbourhood. The municipality argued that the building was uninhabitable due to structural hazards. Residents and local activists alleged that the eviction was carried out without adequate consultation and that the municipality had failed to provide adequate alternative housing. The evicted Roma were moved temporarily to a local gymnasium and eventually transferred to unaffordable and unsuitable workers' hostels. The inhabitants also experienced difficulties accessing schools and other municipal services. Those remaining in Předlice were concerned that further forced evictions would follow.

Enforced sterilization of Romani women

- In October, in the course of the UN Universal Periodic Review, the Czech Republic was again asked to investigate cases of sterilization without consent of Romani women and to ensure adequate compensation and reparation were provided.

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Migrants' rights

NGOs continued to criticize the detention of asylum-seekers and the absence of effective legal remedies against this practice.

- Criminal investigations into allegations of fraud, trafficking and blackmailing of foreign migrant workers in the forestry industry continued. Lawyers representing affected workers issued several complaints against decisions by the police to close investigations of individual cases. Lawyers also expressed concern that the length of proceedings was resulting in the loss of essential evidence.
- In October, the European Court of Human Rights held in the case *Buishvili v. the Czech Republic* that the Czech authorities violated the right of a Georgian asylum-seeker to challenge his detention in judicial proceedings. The man had been transferred to the Czech Republic from the Netherlands under the Dublin II Regulation. On the basis of the Ministry of Interior's decision not to grant him entry to the country, he was held at the reception centre at Prague airport. He successfully argued that he had been prevented from starting judicial proceedings for his release, as a court could quash the Ministry's decision but not order a release.

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Country Visits

- Amnesty International delegates visited the Czech Republic in June and July.

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