



PRESS CONTACT:

Natalia Garzon, Senior Press Officer, Center for Reproductive Rights
Mobile: 00 1 917 257 9793 / Skype: Garzon_crr / Email: ngarzon@reprights.org

Stefan Ivanco, Program Coordinator, Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa)
Mobile: 00 421 908 695 531 / Email: poradna@poradna-prava.sk

NEW REPORT: ROMA WOMEN EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION, RECEIVE POOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE IN SLOVAKIA

11.27.17 - (PRESS RELEASE) Roma women living in Slovakia report facing discrimination, segregation and abuse when obtaining reproductive health services, according to a new report from the Center for Reproductive Rights and Slovak organization Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa).

The report released today [*Vakeras Zorales – Speaking Out: Roma Women’s Experiences in Reproductive Health Care in Slovakia*](#) documents personal stories of 38 Roma women from marginalized communities who reported suffering discrimination and abuse in reproductive and maternal health care facilities in eastern Slovakia. The report also recommends action steps that the Slovak authorities should take to respect the human rights of Roma women.

Recommendations in the report include establishing effective measures to address systemic and intersectional discrimination in reproductive health care, including implementing, and investing adequate resources in, appropriate programs to improve Roma women’s access to good quality reproductive health care services.

“Roma women should be treated with dignity and respect when seeking reproductive health care,” said Leah Hctor, regional director for the Europe Program at the Center for Reproductive Rights. **“The Slovak government must take concrete actions to ensure that Roma women can get the care they need free from gender and racial discrimination.”**

Many of the women’s accounts in [*Vakeras Zorales – Speaking Out*](#) outline experiences of segregation in maternity care departments, racial harassment and humiliation, neglect, physical restraint and abuse during childbirth, and failures related to informed consent and decision-making with regard to medical treatment.

“I decided to speak about my experience and the experiences of other Roma women with humiliation and discrimination in the hospital and the gynecology clinic. I want the situation to improve so Roma women are not segregated in ‘Roma-only’ rooms in maternity departments and receive good quality health care,” said one of the Roma women interviewed for the purposes of the report.

“For a long time Roma women shared with us their personal stories of suffering reproductive rights abuses,” said Agáta Duchoňová, Roma human rights monitor for the Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa). **“Roma women often speak about humiliation, verbal abuse, lack of adequate health care and denial of information—even segregation in maternity wards. We believe that this report should receive attention from the public, and that the Slovak authorities should take effective measures towards meaningful change.”**

An estimated 400,000 Roma live in Slovakia, comprising 7.45 percent of the country’s population. The Roma community in Slovakia has faced long-term and systemic discrimination and racism. Despite some progress Roma remain one of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups in the country, experiencing extreme forms of social exclusion and deprivation.

Vakeras Zorales – Speaking Out is a joint publication of the Center for Reproductive Rights and the Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa).

This report is based on interviews conducted from October 24-27, 2016 by the Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa) and the Center for Reproductive Rights. During the interviews testimonies were collected from 38 Roma women living in four marginalized Roma communities in the districts of Spišská Nová Ves, Gelnica, and Prešov in eastern Slovakia. The women were interviewed about their experiences in reproductive health care settings over the past five years.

In 2003, the Center for Reproductive Rights and the Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa) published a report, [*Body and Soul: Forced Sterilization and Other Assaults on Roma Reproductive Freedom in Slovakia*](#) which documented cases of forced and coercive sterilization and other violations of Roma women’s rights in reproductive health care facilities.

###