



PORADŇA PRE OBČIANSKE A ĽUDSKÉ PRÁVA

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PRESS RELEASE

The criminal charges have been brought in a case of police raid in a Roma settlement in Vrbnica

Slovakia, Košice, 19 December 2016

The charges have been brought against a police officer who led a police raid against Roma in a village Vrbnica in Eastern Slovakia. Simultaneously the investigator from the Ministry of Interior's Inspection interrupted the criminal investigation held in a case of police ill-treatment against Roma by certain police officers on the spot. The investigator reasoned his decision to interrupt the investigation in this part by the lack of sufficient evidence against police officers who allegedly used physical violence against Roma.

The police raid occurred in a village Vrbnica in Eastern Slovakia on 2 April 2015. According to the media, the police officers allegedly used violence against Roma and caused them injuries. Also Slovak public defender of human rights Jana Dubovcová concluded the police raid was not necessary.

On 7 April 2015 the Inspection of Slovak Ministry of Interior opened a criminal investigation in a case for a crime of police misconduct.

During investigation the investigator heard aggrieved Roma and also suspected police officers. During their testimonies aggrieved Roma testified they were beaten up by the police officers using also police batons. According to the suspected police officers they did not ill-treated any Roma and during the raid there was no reason to use any psychical force against them. However, a medical expert appointed by the investigator confirmed Roma had injuries which were most probably caused by police batons and could not be caused by Roma themselves.

Some of the Roma testified they would be able to recognise police officers who ill-treated them. The police investigator then conducted so-called "recognitions" in order to allow aggrieved Roma to recognise certain police officers who ill-treated them. Unfortunately the recognitions were not held in a standard way – through the non-transparent wall, but face to face with suspected police officers. As a result, it increased the possible victimisation of aggrieved Roma. During the recognitions no police officer has been identified.

On 28 November 2016 the investigator interrupted the criminal investigation reasoning, there is lack of evidence to bring charges against certain police officers for their ill-treatment. The attorney representing aggrieved Roma disagreed with this decision and on 12 December 2016 filed a complaint against it.

The investigator held also another criminal investigation in this case. This investigation was opened on 7 September 2015 and it was held against the police officer who led a raid on the spot and did not

avoid injuries of 16 Roma by the police officers under his command. On 30 November 2016 the investigator in this case brought the charges against a certain police officers, thus the criminal investigation will go on. It will be up to the supervising prosecutor who will decide whether he will bring the case to the court.

The human rights NGO Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa pre občianske a ľudské práva) is providing a free legal aid to four aggrieved Roma in this case.

Vanda Durbáková, attorney working with Center for Civil and Human Rights stated on the result of investigation: *"It is a good news that the investigator brought charges against a police officer who led a police raid on the spot in Vrbnica. I hope a case will end up in a court which will decide lawfully."*

"On the other hand the inspection did not succeed to bring charges against police officers who ill-treated Roma directly on the spot. I believe inspection could do more to secure enough evidence right after the incident. Despite the fact Roma called the police during the incident, the investigator came on a spot to secure evidence several days after and thus some evidence could be already lost. In this regard the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg repeatedly stressed that the initial period of criminal proceedings in such cases is crucial for disclosing the truth. We also argued the way how the recognitions have been conducted during the investigation. In my opinion these failures led to the fact, that this investigation cannot be considered to be effective", added Durbáková.

Vanda Durbáková, legal representative of four aggrieved Roma, is ready to provide more details on investigation.

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Contact:

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Information about the NGO:

The Center for Civil and Human Rights (*Poradňa pre občianske a ľudské práva*) is a non-governmental organization based in Slovakia focused on the protection of human rights with particular emphasis on the rights of minorities and protection from discrimination. Poradňa has for a long time worked on the issue of discrimination against Roma ethnic minority in various areas of public life. It has also been active in the protection of reproductive rights and protection from police brutality. Poradňa employs strategic litigation to combat discrimination and human rights abuses against minorities. Visit us at www.poradna-prava.sk

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