



## PORADŇA PRE OBČIANSKE A ĽUDSKÉ PRÁVA

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### **Illegally sterilized Roma women in the Czech Republic are close to compensation - injured Roma women from Slovakia are still waiting**

**On Friday, 4 June 2021, the lower house of the Czech parliament passed a bill on compensation for illegally sterilized persons. Based on it, a number of Roma women in the Czech Republic who had been harmed by this practice in the past could be financially compensated. It is alarming that the nothing of the sort is being planned yet in Slovakia, even though illegal sterilizations have also affected many Roma women in our country.**

The bill, which has [currently been adopted by the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic](#), still must be approved by its upper chamber (the Senate). The bill provides for the payment of one-off financial compensation to injured persons in the amount of 300 000 Czech crowns (approx. 12 000 EUR). Compensation should apply to women who have been illegally sterilized without informed consent between 1 July 1966 and 31 March 2012, thus including the period of former Czechoslovakia.

For many years, international organizations and human rights NGOs have called on governments in the Czech Republic and Slovakia to ensure effective access to justice for illegally sterilized women. While the responsible authorities in the Czech Republic finally came to the adoption of a compensation bill on this issue - in Slovakia, a similar solution is still very far away.

In 2016, the UN Human Rights Committee [recommended the Slovak government](#) to take responsibility and establish an independent body to investigate the whole practice. In 2018, the Slovak Ombudswoman also [issued an opinion on this issue](#), who also highlighted the responsibility of the executive and legislative authorities for its solution. According to her, access to justice for injured women could be ensured precisely through the adoption of specific legislation. In November 2020, the Ombudswoman approached the Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities Committee of the Slovak Parliament with an initiative to discuss the issue of illegal sterilization of Roma women and the necessary measures in this regard. The Committee should reportedly discuss this matter in the near future.

With the support of the NGO Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradna), a group of illegally sterilized Roma women and other Roma women has long been involved in advocating for necessary measures towards the Slovak government and other responsible institutions. They welcome the adoption of the bill in the Czech Republic.

#### ***Mrs. Veronika Duždová - one of the Roma women survivors - said on the adoption of the bill:***

*"Czech women are finally so close. In Slovakia, we - illegally sterilized Roma women - have also been fighting for a long time to achieve justice. We are disappointed that our Slovak government has not been dealing with this issue for many years,"*

**Mrs. Kristína Kalejová - another survivor from the group of illegally sterilized Roma women - said:**

*"I was sterilized in 1987. I can't read or write. I didn't know what they did to me. I wanted to have another baby. To this day, I also have health problems from it. I am 63 years old, for many years we have been striving for justice with other Roma women. I believe that I will live to see it one day."*

**Vanda Durbáková, a lawyer cooperating with Poradna added to the current adoption of the law in the Czech Republic:**

*"I believe that the current development in the Czech Republic will encourage the responsible authorities in Slovakia to finally take action on this issue. The Slovak Ministry of Justice should come up with a bill as soon as possible and compensate the survivors. Roma women have been waiting too long. Together with them, I believe that, as in the Czech Republic, they will one day achieve justice. It's important not only for them, but for our whole society. "*

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### **Context of this practice in Slovakia**

Cases of illegal sterilizations were documented by the Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradna) in cooperation with the international NGO Center for Reproductive Rights in 2003 in the published report [Body and Soul: Forced sterilization and other assaults on Roma Reproductive Freedom in Slovakia](#). Its conclusions were based on 230 interviews conducted with Roma women from socially marginalized communities in eastern Slovakia, most of whom suspected that they had been sterilized without prior informed consent. In recent years, the Poradna has provided legal assistance in court proceedings for twelve illegally sterilized Roma women. Many of them [sought justice and redress only at the European Court of Human Rights](#).

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In case of interest, we can also mediate contact with illegally sterilized Roma women.

**The Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradna)** is a Slovak based grass-root non-governmental organization dedicated to the protection of human rights and freedoms, focusing on the protection of minority rights and protection from discrimination. It has been giving attention to issues of discrimination of the Roma ethnic group in various areas of life in Slovakia. In 2002, the Center documented cases of forced sterilization of Roma women in Slovakia and since then has provided support to Roma women in litigation before domestic courts and at the European Court of Human Rights. Web: [www.poradna-prava.sk](http://www.poradna-prava.sk)

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