



## PORADŇA PRE OBČIANSKE A ĽUDSKÉ PRÁVA

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **The Slovak Government compensates three Roma who faced violence during police raid in Vrbnica**

**The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has taken note of a friendly settlement reached between the Slovak government and three Roma who faced violence during the 2015 police raid in village Vrbnica. The friendly settlement was reached on the initiative of the Court, which called on the parties to settle out of court, also referring to its judgment in the 2020 *Moldava nad Bodvou* police raid case. The complaining Roma were represented by a lawyer cooperating with our NGO the Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa).**

Commenting on the decision of the ECtHR, the legal representative of the complaining Roma, Vanda Durbáková, said:

*"In cases of police violence against Roma that have ended up before the European Court, Slovakia has paid tens of thousands of euros to Roma who faced police violence. Whether it was the case of the police raid in *Moldava nad Bodvou* or the abuse of Roma boys from Lunik IX. The fact is that the cases of police violence at the European Court have shown that there are still serious shortcomings in the investigation of cases of police violence against members of the Roma minority in Slovakia. The Government must implement the Court's decisions with all seriousness and, even when investigating other cases, avoid the shortcomings of which the European Court reproaches it."*

Štefan Ivanco, Program Coordinator of Poradňa, commented on the verdict:

*"Within our monitoring at Poradňa although we no longer record cases of police raids in Roma communities, we still record other manifestations of police violence against members of Roma minority. The Government must take effective systemic measures to prevent such cases. Body cameras, which have been discussed in recent years, are just one of them."*

The police raid occurred on 2 April 2015 in the Roma community in the village Vrbnica as part of the police search "operation 100" to search for wanted persons. The intervening police officers had many residents of the Roma community physically assaulted. The victims had blood bruises and contusions, which the police officers were supposed to have inflicted on them by beating them with batons and kicking them. The injuries were documented in photos and several persons had to seek medical treatment. The circumstances of the police raid were subsequently reported in the media.

Shortly after the raid, the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Interior initiated a criminal prosecution for the crime of abuse of power of a public official, which was later discontinued. At the same time, criminal proceedings for the offence of obstruction of a public official were initiated against the commander of the police action. The latter was charged with that offence in December 2016, but was later acquitted by the courts. In April 2015, following a complaint, the police raid was also reviewed by Slovak Public Defender of Rights Jana Dubovcová, who said it was not necessary and should not have been carried out. She stated that the police committed excessive violence during the raid and violated the fundamental rights of 15 people.

Vanda Durbáková, a lawyer cooperating with our NGO, provided four affected Roma with free legal representation in proceedings before law enforcement authorities. According to her, the course of investigations by the inspectorate was associated with several shortcomings, despite the fact that the inspectorate started to investigate in the case almost immediately. However, the supervising prosecutor did not find any errors in the course of the investigation and the victims did not succeed with their

complaint at the Constitutional Court of the Slovak Republic, which did not find any violation of their rights in the procedure of the state authorities. One of the complainants died during the proceedings before the Constitutional Court.

After exhausting all available domestic remedies, the affected Roma lodged a complaint with the ECtHR alleging a violation of their rights guaranteed by the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

By judgment of 5 March 2024 in the case of [T.K and Others v. Slovak Republic](#), the ECtHR took note of the friendly settlement agreement between the applicants and the Slovak government, which undertook to pay each of the victims financial compensation and compensation for the costs of the proceedings. The settlement was reached also due to the similarity of this case to the Moldava nad Bodvou police raid case, where the European Court had already ruled on the violation of the rights of two Roma victims in the 2020 judgment R.R. and R.D. v. Slovakia. At the same time, the Government stated in the settlement that the general measures to be taken to implement the judgment in the Moldava nad Bodvou case were also relevant to the present case. However, although the Government has decided to compensate the Roma complainants, there has been no formal apology from the Government to them.

On the basis of the reached friendly settlement, the ECtHR will no longer rule on the complaint lodged by the complainants and has therefore formally struck it off the list. The ECtHR's decision is final.

We would like to thank the Open Society Foundations, the Sigrid Rausing Trust and other donors who supported our work on this strategic case and made this court decision possible.

We also thank the complaining Roma who stood up for their rights for their trust and their commitment to pursue their rights.

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**The Center for Civil and Human Rights** (Poradňa) 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. Poradňa offers free legal advice to victims of discrimination and in selected cases free legal representation to victims of discrimination before courts. It also conducts monitoring in the field, advocacy, and educational activities on the topic of protection from discrimination for lay and expert audiences. Visit us at [www.poradna-prava.sk](http://www.poradna-prava.sk)

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