

PUBLIC EVENTS AND VIOLATIONS OF DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

MARCH LOCAL ELECTIONS 2013: VIOLATIONS TO THE RIGHT TO VOTE

The Helsinki Committee monitored the local elections completely and made it possible for citizens to report violations to the right to vote on the field and at the office of the Committee. The Committee established violations to the right to vote in the first, second and third election round from the information received from citizens. In terms of the violations to the right to vote which at the same time represents an inviolable political and civil right in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and international documents, the Committee established that the election process was not partly conducted in a free, fair and democratic manner in terms of the motto for non-violation and secrecy of the right to vote. In this respect according to the findings in the complaints of citizens, the right to vote was violated through forms of pressure and manipulation of the Electoral Code through:

- Agitation by members and sympathizers of political parties in front of an electoral post
- Violation of the election silence through delivery of advertizing materials in residential facilities
- Issuance of personal documents, providing service and transfer of citizens from the town Pustec, Republic of Albania to voting stations in the municipality of Centar
- Intimidation of citizens and accredited observers from political parties and observers from NGOs
- Voter Bribery
- Inappropriate labeling of ballot boxes and reading aloud of personal data by members of election commissions.
- Pressure on citizens employed in public institutions and violation of the inviolability and secrecy of the right to vote.
- Presence of police officers in a polling station

Most of the violations were established in the Centar municipality. The Committee calls upon the competent institutions to investigate the findings and to establish the facts about the citizens from the town Pustec, Republic of Albania in order to prevent political manipulation through the Electoral Code and the people who were involved in the process of promotion of the legislative framework and enabling free, fair and democratic election in the Republic of Macedonia.

The Committee regretfully has established that in the Republic of Macedonia the right to vote is still being violated by direct participants in the election process i.e. political parties and activists. Taking into consideration the total electoral atmosphere, the violation of the secrecy and inviolability of the right to vote refers to a democratic deficit in the system and violation of the development of democracy in the Republic of Macedonia.

**UNIVERSITY FOR INFORMATION SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY “ST. PAUL
THE APOSTLE” OHRID**

By monitoring the situation in the education system, especially regarding the work of the universities, their autonomous work and the respect of the provisions from the Law on Higher Education, the Helsinki Committee acted upon the request for legal assistance by professors from the state University for Information Science and Technology “St. Paul the Apostle” – Ohrid. This case is known to the wider public, due to the findings of a group of professors about the illegal election of the Rector of the University.

The applicant, the person Rubin Zemon, professor at the state university, submitted a decision by the State Education Inspectorate – Skopje and a decision by the Ministry for Education, the Appeal Commission for appeals stated against decisions of the State Education Inspectorate. The Helsinki Committee reviewed these documents and established that the state education inspectors have performed an emergency inspection in the state university “ St. Paul the Apostle” – Ohrid, whereby numerous irregularities were established in the work of the University, regarding the choice of the rector, deans, professors and collaborators at the faculty, and also regarding the employment of professors without a validated degree certificate. In terms of the choice of the rector, the State Education Inspectorate established that the election is contrary to Article 134 of the Law on Higher Education in the section regarding deadlines for the election of Assistant, Associate and Full-time Professor for a period of 5 (five) years, as well as Article 136 of the same Law, in the segment where it is stated that for an early election for a higher title there should be an initiative of at least two institutes, i.e. departments, and there were no such or similar degrees in the documentation and the election was done without a validated degree. There was also a violation of the procedure for election of a Rector, whereby instead of with a direct and secret vote, the rector was elected based on an electronic vote. The University had a deadline of 8 (eight) days to remove the established irregularities, with the instruction that the complaint does not prevent the execution of the decision.

The University submitted a complaint to the Ministry for Education, the Appeal Commission that decides on appeals against decisions of the State Education Inspectorate that annulled the decision of the State Education Inspectorate fully. Namely, the Commission established that there were no irregularities in the work of the University and submitted answers in terms of the appointment of the deans and the validation of the diplomas. However, in the decision an explanation cannot be found about the election of a rector of the University and violation to the legal and statutory provisions during this election. The Commission has stated that it has full confidence in the evidence submitted and the rest complaint findings of the University, considering that the University has not violated provisions of the Law on Higher Education.

The Helsinki Committee considers that the Commission has not paid enough attention to the established irregularities of the state inspectors regarding the procedure for election and appointment of the rector of the University. Their decision is annulled in full and still there are no specific reasons given in the segment of violations of the election of a rector

regarding which evidence the Commission took into consideration and established that there are no irregularities in this section. Also, there is no explanation whether the University acted in accordance with the deadline of 8 days considering that the appeal does not postpone the execution of the decision and the Commission has made its decision after almost a month of the given deadline for elimination of irregularities. We consider that the actions of the Universities which are contrary to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and the Law on Higher Education, especially regarding the election of management and professors in the Universities are impermissible, because they influence the quality of the education process. This is why we demand that the supervisory bodies thoroughly research all cases in which there are indications about such violations, with respect to the principle of non-selectivity in the actions and respect of the autonomy of the Universities.

VIOLATIONS TO THE RIGHT TO ASSEMBLY AND VIOLENT PROTESTS

The Helsinki Committee in the last period has paid great attention to violations of the freedom of association and expression through a form of protest or public gathering. In this respect, in the last three months the Committee monitored several protests during which the police reacted in an untimely fashion and unprofessionally.

Peaceful protests of high-school students regarding the termination of the “External Testing”

The first peaceful protest of high school students regarding the termination of the “External Testing” took place on May 24th in Skopje and other towns in the Republic of Macedonia. Several students declared that they were threatened and blackmailed by the educators and directors of educational institutions due to the announced protest in order to prevent them from protesting the decision for “External Testing”. During the protest the police officers were slow in securing the traffic and thus the safety of the participants was endangered although the protest was filed. During the second announced protest which took place on 24.05.2013 the high school students were pressured by anonymous persons which circled around the students while they protested in front of the Ministry for Education with dark glasses. Then they headed towards the group, pulled out a party flag of a political party, took photos of themselves and left. Later, a larger group of unknown persons attempted to cause unrest and attacked the group that protested with stones at the end of the protest in front of Hotel Bristol. After the group began to flee, a representative of the Committee addressed one of the police officers who called police back up that located the perpetrators in the vicinity of the “Disabled War Veterans House” on the street “Dame Gruev”. It is unknown whether infringement or criminal procedure has been initiated against these persons for disturbance of a public gathering.

Violent protests – civil informal movement “Veritas”

Representatives of the Committee established multiple inconsistencies in the conduct of citizens that expressed their discontent with the alleged halting and demolition of the

construction of the church St. Konstantin in the municipality of Centar. Namely, although the mayor of the municipality Centar reported to the public that the construction of the said facility will not be halted or demolished, still the citizens headed towards the premises of the Municipal Council to protest. Shortly afterwards the peaceful protests escalated and the protesters entered the yard of the Municipal Council and demolished the outer fence. After the intrusion the police reacted without the use of physical force and did not arrest or identify any of the persons, which is contrary to Article 47, paragraph 4 of the Law on Police in the Republic of Macedonia. The protest continued late into the afternoon and included hate speech on a national and political basis and anti-Semitic salutation- sharp hand salutation known as “hail”. The occasional stoning of the building caused material damage on public property. Not a single participant in the attacks was arrested. Besides the abovementioned violations, the representatives of the Committee noticed a significant amount of alcohol among the protesters which is contrary to Article 5 of the Law on Public Gatherings.

LUSTRATION

The process of lustration in the reporting period continued to take place in a manner that only confirms the emphasized assertion stated numerous times that the government uses this process to confront political opponents and all of those that have a critical attitude towards the policies of the current government. At the same time, the cases that in the last period were subject to action by the Commission for Data Verification, showed the unprofessional manner of work at the expense of the honor and reputation of citizens.

Namely, in the case PetarKarajanov with a Decision **No. 07-908/1 on 27.5.2013** it was established that he collaborated with the national security bodies in the role of a “secret collaborator” whereby as evidence for his activities the file of another person with the same name and surname was used. The facts for the committed error are undeniable and transparent taking into consideration the basic data about the “other PetarKarajanov”. However, the Commission for Data Verification despite the publicly presented irregularities and indications by the Helsinki Committee, still held to the adopted decision due to which the person PetarKarajanov submitted a lawsuit to the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia within a legally set deadline.

The Commission for Data Verification in the same period lustrated the professor and former minister for internal and foreign affairs Ljubomir D. Frckovski with the Decision 07-907/1 on 27.05.2013 and established that he was the person giving orders and used the information by the bodies of state security in the period when he performed the function minister for internal affairs. With this lustration act the Commission for Data Verification only confirmed the tendency to prosecute and label all the critics of the current government without taking into consideration the primary function and goal of the lustration law in accordance with the international standards.

The lustration process was also marked with lustration of deceased persons as was the case of the prominent Macedonian writer SlavkoJanevski which is an example of the already transparent policy of prosecuting prominent figures from the former system despite the fact that the lustration above all has the goal to prevent persons from the former system who violated human rights and freedoms from performing a public function in the current system. After their reaction to the lustration of SlavkoJanevski, academician Tome Serafimovski and the writer BozinPavlovski were also lustrated and it was obvious that the intention was to punish them for their public condemnation of the lustration of Slavko Janevski.

With this, the executive power, through the Commission, persistently and insolently continues to violate the Constitution and the decisions of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia (especially in the segment regarding the validity of the law after 1991) and to ignore the opinion of the Venice Commission from 2012 and the recommendations contained in the Resolution of the Council of Europe 1096 (1996). The lustration process in Macedonia with these acts completely shifted from its moral basis and is contrary to all the standards according to which this process should be run. It turned into an open “witch hunt” and dismissals of professors and intellectuals like in the dark days of communism and ideological narrow-mindedness.

The Helsinki Committee once again would like to remind about the indications of the Council of Europe that the process of dealing with the past must be based on the principles of lawfulness and fairness. As opposed to these postulates the lustration process in Macedonia is a classic example of an inquisition procedure in which the defendants are not heard at all and do not have the opportunity to defend themselves. Consequently, for several professions such as journalists, professors, academicians and others, the result of this procedure is equal to the sanction from the Criminal Code- ban on performance of function, activity and duty. This attitude is contained in several verdicts by the European Court for Human Rights. Due to all of these reasons, the Helsinki Committee will continue to actively protect the basic rights and freedoms of the innocent victims of the unconstitutional lustration process. If the Constitutional Court does not secure the secrecy of personal data, the protection of personal integrity, the respect of the privacy of family life, dignity and reputation, the Committee is convinced that justice will be served before the European court for Human Rights.

PROTECTION OF PATIENTS

The Law on Protection of the Rights of Patients¹ stipulates that there are certain protective mechanisms available to patients for the use of healthcare. In this direction, Article 37 paragraph 1 and paragraph 2 of the law stipulates that the hospitals should form internal control bodies, i.e. Commission for Control of the quality of healthcare, as well as a

¹Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 82/08, 12/09 and 53/11.

Commission for Ethical Issues that will deal with issues of medical ethics. The content, competences and responsibilities of these bodies for internal control should be regulated in accordance with the statute of the health institution. Besides these bodies, Article 44 of the same law stipulates that the health institution is obliged to give legal advice and legal assistance to patients regarding the realization and protection of their rights.

However, the case of the person ShaipMemeti is a case that shows that the mechanisms that are established in accordance with this law are not applied completely in practice, and that leads to violation of the rights of patients to use health care. Namely, due to health problems the person ShaipMemeti is being treated in PHI “University Clinic of Neurology” in Skopje, whereby when he was in need of medical assistance, he was expelled from the department of the clinic and therefore he turned to the competent bodies to take measures and establish the responsibility of the medical personnel about their conduct towards him as a patient.

In order to protect and advance the rights of patients, the Commission for Ethical Issues formed within the frames of PHI “University Clinic of Neurology” in Skopje, by demand of the State Sanitary Inspectorate acted on this case, but due to the lack of a legal act in which the competences and powers of this ethical commission are regulated, it could not establish the true factual situation regarding the event. In addition, instead of taking specific measures to resolve the situation that has arisen, this commission has made conclusions regarding this case based on the long-term working experience of its members.

After demanding information regarding this event, the Helsinki Committee was informed by the State Sanitary and Health Inspectorate which is responsible for performing inspection of the implementation of the Law on Protection of the Right of Patients, that it performed an additional inspection in the hospital, and it established that the legal act that regulates the competences and responsibilities of the Commission for Ethical Issues is being prepared. Due to this, the Helsinki Committee would like to advise all competent organs and bodies that are in charge of the protection and advancement of the rights of patients, to fully implement in practice the Law on Protection of the Rights of Patients, because the incomplete implementation of the law bring into question the protection of the rights of patients and leaves the possibility the same to happen again in future.

POLICE CONDUCT AND CLOSED INSTITUTIONS

POLICE TORTURE IN OHRID

In April the person Jane Milososki from Ohrid addressed the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. According to his findings which are supported by evidence (a notary statement by a witness and a medical report), on 23.03.2013, Mr.Milososki was physically attacked, abused and humiliated by several police officers. The said persons, all of them employees in the Ministry for Internal Affairs in the special unit “Alfa” Skopje, the evening

on 23.03.2013, one day before the local elections, in Ohrid, stopped Mr. Milososki and forcefully pulled him out of his vehicle. Around 12 armed special forces officers in three vehicles for no reason and without any explanation, with automatic guns pointed towards Mr. Milososki handcuffed him, pressed him down on the asphalt and started to kick him and punch him all over his body with the gun butts of the automatic weapons and during the physical abuse one of the persons with an automatic rifle chased the passers-by who were wondering why he was beaten. There are two witnesses for this event who witnessed the whole event directly at the spot and they were only silent observers of the events because although they tried to help Mr. Milososki, they were forcefully removed from the scene by the armed police officers and were threatened and cursed at.

Then they placed a sort of a jacket on Mr. Milososki's head and they forcefully placed him inside a vehicle and was took him to PS Ohrid where the physical torture continued, after which his health deteriorated and he was transferred to the hospital in Ohrid. Due to the seriousness of the injuries with visible external and internal injuries all over his body, he was urgently transferred in the hospital in Struga where he underwent surgery and was held for around 15 days in the intensive care unit in the hospital in Struga. After he was arrested by the officials in SIA Ohrid, a detailed search of Mr. Milososki's vehicle was made, but after the performed inspection it was established that there are no traces of an alleged criminal act after which Mr. Milososki's vehicle was returned to his father. The police officers registered this case as an "Assault on an officer while performing security activities", which according to Mr. Milososki is a notorious lie so that the police officers would protect themselves from being prosecuted for their abuse. Regarding this, it is unclear to the Helsinki Committee what would be the motive of a person to attack a dozen police officers who according to Mr. Milososki, but also according to witnesses, were armed with automatic weapons. Despite the physical and psychological abuse, according to Mr. Milososki the police officers stole his decorative gold chain whose value is that of around 4000 Euros and there is a record and complaint submitted in SIA Ohrid.

From all of the abovementioned findings, according to the Helsinki Committee there are strong indications and a reasonable doubt that the abovementioned and the anonymous police officers committed the criminal act Abduction-Kidnapping from Article 141 Paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Macedonia, Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman and Degrading Treatment and Punishment Article 142 Paragraph 1 of the Criminal code of the Republic of Macedonia, and Infliction of Serious Bodily Injury from Article 131 Paragraph 4 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Macedonia and for the criminal act Abuse of Power and Authority from Article 353 of the Criminal Code.

For this reason, the Helsinki Committee submitted a complaint to the Sector for Internal Control and Professional Standards, with the request to the Sector to take immediate measures to inspect this case in accordance with its legal competences. After a short inspection, according to the Sector there is no abuse of police powers. The Helsinki Committee monitors the current trial in which Mr. Milososki instead of as the aggrieved party appears as the defendant.

**POLICE HARASSMENT IN THE SERVICE IN THE TOPAANA ROMA
NEIGHBOURHOOD IN SKOPJE**

On May 5th, 2013, in the Skopje municipality “Topansko Pole” MIA conducted an action to arrest the convicted person who after using the legal right to a weekend off outside PCI Idrizovo did not return to serve the rest of the sentence. On May 6th, 2013, the media reported about the overuse of physical force by the police officers, who participated in the action for the arrest. After contacting some of the persons that complained in the media about the manner in which the police action took place, representatives of the Helsinki Committee on May 8th, 2013 in the municipality “Topansko Pole” talked with these persons. They talked with a larger group of citizens, members of the Roma ethnic community. Four of them stated that they were direct victims of police abuse which consisted of physical and psychological abuse. Despite the fact that they were innocent victims, they were arrested and brought before an investigative judge who initiated an investigative procedure in which they were accused for an alleged criminal act “Assault on an Officer While Performing Security Activities” and determined a preventive measure “an obligation the accused to report to the court every Monday”.

According to the findings of a larger group of citizens, witnesses of the event, on May 5th, 2013 around 21:00-21:15 at the street 376, a larger group appeared consisted of members of the police, among which were members of the special police units. Immediately afterwards, the policemen in an organized and prompt fashion started to attack the citizens that were on the street. According to estimations of people interviewed, around 50 policemen participated in the action and at first around 10 citizens were attacked. The action did not only take place on the street, but also the policemen without a court order or any information or indications of a committed criminal act, entered 2 households and 2 stores. In the first store there is a video material² where it can be seen that the police attacks random citizens who were surprised by the attack. In the second store 3 other persons were attacked. In one of the households a person was attacked while standing on the terrace of his house and did not provoke the officer in any way.

Four persons were transferred to the Police Station “Kisela Voda”. There, they were placed in 2 cells and although they were locked their handcuffs were not removed. They remained handcuffed for 2 hours and at their request to have their handcuffs removed the police officers replied that the handcuffs cannot be removed because the keys were in the possession of members of the special unit “Alfa”. Their arrest was reported around 3:00 am. They were not informed about their right to contact a member of their family, and one of the inspectors said that they would not need a lawyer present when they give their statement. Only one of the arrested persons was allowed to make a phone call, but after he did, the person contacted could not hear him. The arrested persons were brought in front of an investigative judge around 07:00 pm. After he was interrogated and after the decision for conducting an investigation was reviewed, the Helsinki Committee acting upon the request

²<http://youtu.be/YANe1cn2zFM>

for free legal assistance helped the applicants to submit a complaint against the decision. On June 10th, 2013, the investigative judge on the case, by demand by BPPPO Skopje, stopped the investigation and by doing so he confirmed that the four persons were not guilty of the committed criminal act “Assault on an Official While Performing Security Activities”, as stated by the police officers in the criminal charges.

With these actions the police officers committed several criminal acts: Bodily injury (Article 130 of the CC), Harassment while performing official duties (Article 143 of the CC), Unlawful Deprivation of Liberty (Article 140 of the CC), Disruption of the Inviolability of the Home (Article 145) and False Reporting of a Crime (Article 366 of the CC). Additionally, the police officers violated the procedural rights of the arrested persons to inform a member of the family and the right to an attorney, and they were treated in an inhumane and undignified manner at the police station. Due to all of the abovementioned reasons, we submitted a complaint to the Sector for Internal Control at MIA and we received a reply that the police acted in accordance with their competences.

POLICE TORTURE IN THE IDRIZOVO PRISON

After the submitted application for free legal assistance by Selim Demo, father of Zuher Ibrahimov, the Helsinki Committee actively monitored and acted in the case of torture in PCI Idrizovo in which the convicted person Mr. Ibrahimov after the attack by a member of the security sector, had his liver and spleen surgically removed. The incident occurred in PCI Idrizovo on March 12th, 2013, at the place called “Pigsty” when Mr. Ibrahimov along with another convicted person repaired a broken TV. When Mr. Ibrahimov was seen by a member of the security sector, he was asked what he was doing there after which promptly and for no reason he was beaten. After the brutal beating, Mr. Ibrahimov was locked in his cell but that evening his health deteriorated. When he noticed that there is blood in his urine, he immediately phoned his father and was hospitalized the following day in the Urology Clinic. The nature and severity of the injury was such that a surgery was necessary to remove the left kidney and spleen. According to the doctor’s findings, his health condition was life threatening and therefore the director of the Directorate for Execution of Sanctions allowed his sentence to be put on hold for 30 days. In collaboration with the attorney of Mr. Ibrahimov, the Helsinki Committee asked the warden of PCI Idrizovo and the acting judge for execution of sanctions to allow a longer absence from prison. In both cases the reply was positive.

Unfortunately, what turned into a Macedonian practice occurred in this case as well. The Public Prosecution, instead of identifying this case as a classic example of torture and instead of prosecuting him in accordance with Article 142 – Torture and Other Cruel and Inhumane and Degrading Treatment and Punishment, an indictment was initiated for the crime – Severe Bodily Injury. Although the sentence for the second crime, when a vital organ is damaged, is 10 years in prison, the Primary Court Skopje 1 adopted a decision and sentenced the defendant to 6 months in prison. If the verdict becomes final, 3 months which he spent in house arrest will be deducted from his sentence.

The Helsinki Committee sends a message to the authorities to implement a zero tolerance policy for acts of torture by officials. It is high time we faced the phenomenon of impunity and solidarity of the Public Prosecution and Judiciary with the Police. The main focus must be on the victims of torture for which there is still no appropriate legal, medical, psychological and social support. In order to achieve this goal, we urge that the EU Directive 2012/29 for establishing minimum standards for the rights and protection of the victims of crime is implemented.

DISCRIMINATION

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND VIOLATIONS OF RIGHTS

The Helsinki Committee in the last three months noticed an increase and activation of a negative campaign directed at the status and position of women in the Republic of Macedonia, as well their public discrimination, discrediting, labeling and minimizing of human rights and freedoms, as well as violation to certain rights such as reproductive rights, freedom of choice, privacy, independence in making decisions regarding their bodies, as well as presenting their role as subordinate as opposed to the role of men.

Discrimination directed against women in the Republic of Macedonia

The Helsinki Committee condemned the statement of Bishop Petar in which he once again stated that the women are the cause for the increased number of divorces in the Republic of Macedonia because they could not accept that the man is the head of the house and that women should be subservient to men. According to Bishop Petar women will either save or destroy the Macedonian nation and church because what is conceived in the uterus of mothers should be born if we want to survive as a nation, people, state and church.

With these publicly stated opinions the Bishop Petar made a direct violation of Article 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia which stipulates that all citizens are equal in freedoms and rights regardless of gender, Article 25 which guarantees the respect and protection of the privacy and personal and family life of every citizen, their dignity and reputation and Article 41 which stipulates that it is the right of every person to freely choose whether they should have children, as well as violation of the provisions of the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. Additionally, these statements violate the secularity of the state from the church, which is a constitutional category and according to which the church, religious communities and other religious groups are separated from the state.

These misogynic statements are contrary to all international mechanisms through which the equality of women is guaranteed, their right to choose and reproductive rights, especially to provisions of the Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, whose signee is the Republic of Macedonia. Namely, Article 5 of the Convention stipulates that the countries shall take all appropriate measures to alter the social and cultural customs in terms of the conduct of men and women, in order to eliminate prejudices, as well as the usual and every other practice, based on the notion about the inferiority or superiority of one or the other sex or the traditional role of men, i.e. women.

The Helsinki Committee considers that the Commission for Protection against Discrimination and the legal representative for unequal treatment of women and men, as part of the Ministry for Labor and Social Policy, should initiate proceedings for establishing whether there is discrimination based on sex and gender, committed by Bishop Petar.

Violations to rights through amendments to the Law on Termination of Pregnancy

The Helsinki Committee participated in the public dispute organized on the occasion of the Draft-law on Termination of Pregnancy convened in the Commission for Health at the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. Despite the indicated errors in the draft law, the Assembly convened an amendment debate during which small deviations from the first version were made, however the remarks of the representatives of NGOs supported by healthcare workers and the Association of Gynecologists of the Republic of Macedonia were not accepted in full.

The Helsinki Committee along with other civil associations listed the following violations to rights:

- The adopted Law on Termination of Pregnancy introduces restrictive mechanisms which largely influence the freedom of women to choose whether they should terminate their pregnancy. The Ministry for Health through provisions for submitting a written request for termination of pregnancy, as well as mandatory counseling for pregnant women with a doctor, prescribing the form and content of the request and the content and manner of counseling, creates an opportunity to manipulate and restrict their right to choose to terminate the pregnancy.

- There is a possibility the pressure on women to continue within the mandatory waiting period of three days after the counseling, i.e. “time to contemplate and re-examine the decision for abortion.” During the adoption of the Law the latest standards for advancement of the reproductive rights of women were completely ignored and even more so the local context in which the Law should be implemented. Women’s freedom and life choices are restricted to bearing children, uncritical acceptance of stereotypes and social customs regarding women, as well as the oppressive obligations that come along with them.