

HUMAN RIGHTS MONTHLY OVERVIEW

JULY

20

25

MONTHLY OVERVIEW ON HUMAN RIGHTS

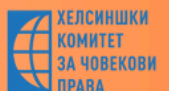
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Фундаменталните човекови права
на прво место: Активен придонес
за владеење на правото



Содржината на овој продукт е единствена одговорност на Хелсиншкиот комитет за човекови права и на никаков начин не може да се смета дека ги одразува гледиштата на Европската Унија.

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INTRODUCTION

In July, various reactions emerged from civil society organizations and platforms. At the outset of July, the Blueprint Group for Judicial Reform articulated grave concerns regarding the manner in which the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia (JCRM) conducted the election of the acting president of the Basic Criminal Court Skopje during the public session held on July 3, 2025.

Specifically, several acting presidents of basic courts were elected at this session due to the expiration or termination of their predecessors' mandates. However, there was a lack of consistency in the procedures and methodology employed in the election of these new acting presidents.

The Blueprint Group underscored that adherence to laws and procedural guidelines, as stipulated by legal regulations, must be the sole imperative and standard to safeguard the independence and autonomy of judges. The Blueprint Group for Judicial Reform also responded to the appointment of the Special Advisor to the Minister of Justice, Andreja Vesov as a member of the Program Council of the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors.

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In accordance with *Article 19* of the *Law on the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors*, a senior civil servant from the Ministry of Justice with no less than eight years of professional experience in the judiciary, who has successfully completed the bar examination, may be elected to serve on the Program Council.

Based on publicly available information, the member of the Program Council who has been appointed is employed as a special *Advisor* to the Minister of Justice. This role does not qualify as that of a senior civil servant under the *Law on Administrative Servants*, but rather constitutes a fixed-term engagement pursuant to the *Law on Public Sector Employees*. Furthermore, the individual's affiliations with a particular political party and his candidacy for Member of Parliament in the most recent parliamentary elections significantly compromise the perception of the independence and impartiality of the *Academy*.

The Network for Protection against Discrimination responded to the Draft Law on Religious Schools by asserting that it constitutes an unconstitutional, legally inconsistent, and perilous attempt to compromise the secular nature of the state.

INTRODUCTION

The network has called for the immediate withdrawal of the Draft Law and urged the Government to uphold the constitutional principle of secularism, emphasizing that the enactment of such legislation signifies a significant deviation from democratic and civic values, as well as a direct jeopardy to students' rights and the integrity of the educational system.

Immediately thereafter, the Network for Protection against Discrimination issued a firm response to the statements made by Prime Minister Hristijan Mickovski regarding the consideration of additional taxes targeted at unmarried individuals. The Network cautioned that such taxation would pose a threat to fundamental human rights and the core principles of equality and liberty. Furthermore, such a prospective measure would be not only regressive but also discriminatory, infringing upon human rights, including the right to personal choice, privacy, and family life, as well as the right to plan one's family, lifestyle, family status, and future.

On July 7, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights appealed to the Ministry of Health to refrain from implementing informal restrictions on media operations

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Furthermore, the committee encouraged journalists to persist in reporting with professionalism, ethical considerations, and sensitivity towards the victims of the Kocani tragedy, while maintaining a clear sense of responsibility towards the public interest. Any efforts to restrict these principles are viewed as undermining the rights and freedoms of all citizens.

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights has strongly condemned the physical and verbal assault directed at the Mayor of Skopje, Danela Arsovska, which transpired on July 11 during an official inspection of an illegal construction site. In this context, the Committee has called for an immediate and impartial investigation into the incident, accountability for the police officers who failed to respond appropriately at the scene, criminal charges against the perpetrators, and suitable proceedings against them.

Furthermore, it urges the provision of effective and immediate protection for the Mayor and other officials who were subjected to attack, as well as universal condemnation of the assault by all political and social entities. The Committee has assessed that the failure of relevant authorities to intervene in cases of clear violence not only fosters a culture of impunity but also poses a direct threat to the rule of law and democratic principles.

INTRODUCTION

The Platform for Gender Equality responded strongly to the draft amendments to the Law on Police, which propose the removal of Article 96 from the existing legislation. This article explicitly stipulates the obligation to uphold the principle of equality in employment within the police force. "This amendment abolishes the sole article that explicitly addresses equality and inclusiveness within the police structure, which is not only contrary to national legislation and the commitments undertaken under the Istanbul Convention and other international treaties, but also conveys a dangerous message that gender equality and inclusiveness are irrelevant in the development of security institutions," the statement reads.

The Platform for Gender Equality has called for the immediate withdrawal of the proposed amendment repealing Article 96 and has demanded a clear commitment from relevant authorities that the right to equality and gender representation remain inviolably protected and mandatory throughout all levels of the system, particularly within the police.

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (CPPD) have initiated a public interest lawsuit against the Government of North Macedonia and the Ministry of Health.

INTRODUCTION

This legal action addresses ongoing systemic discrimination against female farmers insured under the mandatory health insurance system. The core issue is a legal gap that denies these women the right to paid maternity and sick leave, even though they regularly contribute to health and social insurance. Consequently, female farmers face discrimination compared to other insured individuals, resulting in intersectional discrimination based on sex, gender, personal status, and marginalized group membership.

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights criticized the Parliament's decision not to vote on the Resolution demanding Israel permit food and medical supplies into Gaza. This stance aligns North Macedonia with those committing severe human rights violations. Rather than taking action to ease the suffering of the survivors in Gaza, our MPs' decision has worsened their plight, effectively perpetuating systematic extermination through starvation of two million civilians, including infants and children.

INTRODUCTION

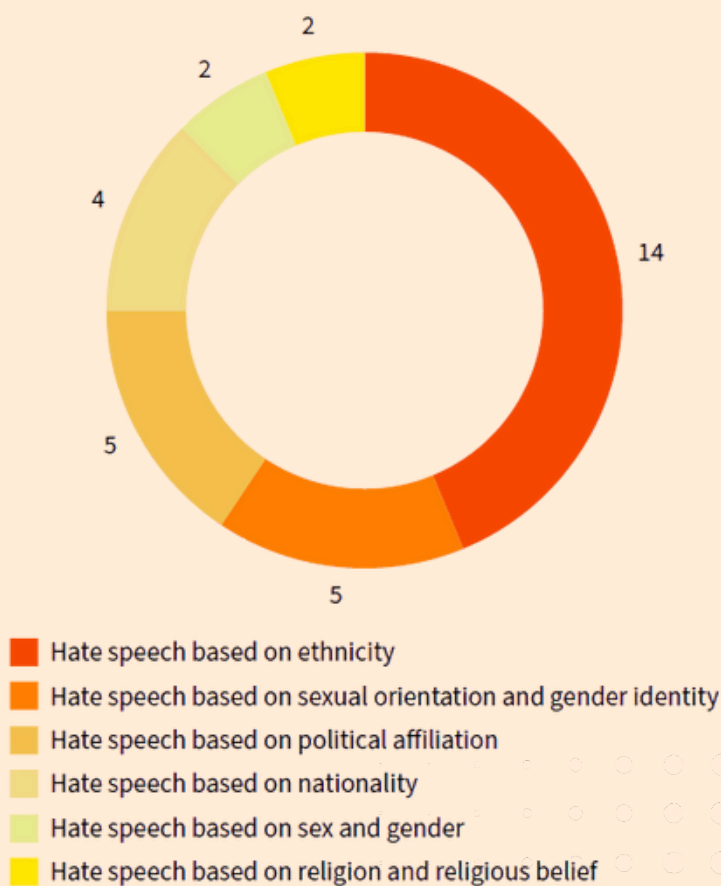
The Blueprint Group for Judicial Reform responded to the proposed amendment to the Law on Police. The change would eliminate the requirement that the Director of the Public Security Bureau must have an education in the field of security, law, defense, or economics. Instead, the amendment would permit someone with any higher education in social sciences to qualify. This shift, along with removing specific educational and expertise criteria, could lead to political appointments lacking proper qualifications, diminish the value of knowledge as a requirement for leadership, and weaken public trust and confidence in institutions' legitimacy.

THE SITUATION WITH HATE SPEECH IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, MONTHLY REPORT - JULY 2025

In July 2025, a total of 26 cases were registered on the platform www.govornaomraza.mk, of which 14 (44%) were related to ethnicity, 5 cases (16%) to sexual orientation and gender identity, and 5 cases (16%) to political affiliation, involving hate speech, incitement, and calls for discrimination or harassment.

This month, the pre-election atmosphere was intense, with increasing interethnic tension and insulting, derogatory speech between the two main ethnic groups. However, due to policies that deny rights to the LGBTI community, discrimination against this marginalized group was also evident.

GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION ON THE SITUATION OF HATE SPEECH IN JULY 2025



***26 original cases of hate speech were registered on the platform – in some cases, more than one protective feature was registered.**

THE SITUATION WITH HATE SPEECH IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, MONTHLY REPORT - JULY 2025

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Data for July 2025 indicate an increase in the number of cases of hate speech related to ethnicity, as well as continued pressure on the LGBTI community. Such phenomena reflect the polarized social climate and insufficient public awareness of the consequences of hate speech.

Recommendation

It is recommended to enhance the institutional response by ensuring more effective management of reports and accountability among the competent authorities. Furthermore, it is essential to launch public campaigns aimed at promoting tolerance and respect for diversity, particularly among the youth.

THE SITUATION WITH HATE CRIMES IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, MONTHLY REPORT - JUNE 2025

During July 2025, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights recorded three potential incidents with a biased motive, for most of which, in accordance with other indicators (location, method of commission, involvement of minors and high school students, etc.), present a reasonable belief that they were committed due to the ethnicity of the victim, i.e., the perpetrator. There are two incidents related to ethnicity and one related to political affiliation. Based on the type of violence, one incident involves violence, another concerns endangering safety, and the third involves desecration of symbols. Minors are victims and perpetrators in one case. One criminal charge was filed on suspicion of "spreading racist and xenophobic material via a computer system," after someone shared a video inciting hatred and intolerance on a social network.

Potential incidents are included in the Report because they pertain to situations where, based on various indicators, there is reason to believe that these incidents were biasedly motivated. Among these biased indicators are: victim/witness perception; on-site commentary; ethnic differences between victim and perpetrator; patterns or frequency of previous incidents; nature of the violence; lack of other motives; and place and time. Specifically, potential incidents are included in this Report due to information received about the location (for example: an ethnically mixed neighborhood or school, bus routes utilized by members of different ethnic communities, locations where hate crimes have occurred in the past), the type (for example: a larger group of juveniles attacking one or more victims without provocation, group fights, assaults on buses or at bus stops), the time (for example: after previous fights as a form of revenge, after school, or during and after a sports match), and the property damaged during the incident (for example: places of religious ceremonies).

THE SITUATION WITH HATE CRIMES IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, MONTHLY REPORT - JUNE 2025

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions:

- 1. The pattern of events suggests that the biased motives are predominantly ethnic, with various forms (physical violence, threats to security, and desecration of symbols, with minors serving as both victims and perpetrators.**
- 2. These incidents tend to occur in "risk contexts" like schools, mixed neighborhoods, bus lines or stops, and after sports matches. Additionally, there's an online component that amplifies hate speech and incitement to intolerance.**

Recommendations:

- Developing partnerships with the Ministry of Education and Science, schools, the Public Transport Company, and after-hours teachers or security. This includes education on hate prevention, establishing clear reporting protocols, and ensuring rapid response, with a focus on working with minors.**
- Implementing systematic monitoring, providing guidelines for platforms and the public to report incidents, offering legal support to victims, and coordinating with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Public Prosecutor's Office to ensure consistent enforcement of laws against "spreading racist and xenophobic material."**

THE SITUATION WITH CLOSED INSTITUTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, MONTHLY REPORT - JULY 2025

1. General overview of activities

During July 2025, the Helsinki Committee provided free legal aid to convicted individuals in three cases, namely:

- **One case: Conditional release with protective supervision;**
- **One case: Detention case;**
- **One case: Employment of a convicted person in the institution.**

2. Brief overview of legal services provided

- **Review of legal regulations and legal advice offered to convicted individuals and their families**
- **Submitted requests for free access to information to the appropriate institutions**
- **Provided legal information, advice, and referrals to clients**

3. Conclusions and recommendations

- **To promote the wider use of alternative measures, particularly conditional release with protective supervision, aiming to reduce overcrowding, enhance resocialization, and optimize resource use.**
- **To expand and diversify work activities, providing practical skills that support the resocialization of convicted individuals and facilitate their smoother integration after release.**

FLA STATISTICAL DATA FOR JULY 2025

FLA	29	
SLA	/	
Total	29	
	Number	Percentages
Gender		
Men	16	42
Women	13	58
Ethnicity		
Macedonians	26	83.5
Albanians	3	6.5
Roma	1	10
Foreigners	1	0
Geographical regions		
Skopje Region	19	74.5
Vardar Region	1	3
Polog Region	0	0
Pelagonia Region	3	6.5
Southwest Region	1	0
Northeast Region	0	6.5
Eastern Region	3	3
Southeast Region	2	6.5

FREE LEGAL AID, MONTHLY REPORT - JULY 2025 STATISTICAL DATA

Legal areas	Number	Percentages
Property law	9	13
Social protection and insurance	2	6.5
Child protection	2	6.5
Pension and disability	1	3
Health insurance and protection	1	0
Labor relations	6	33
Gender-based and domestic violence	1	3
Status questions	3	3
Protection of human rights	2	19
Others	2	13

CASE STUDY SLA - LEGAL OBSTACLES TO REPRESENTATION IN ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS (PROPERTY-LEGAL ISSUES)

An elderly woman from Shtip, who has been living in a humanitarian shelter provided by the Municipality for 20 years, sought free legal assistance from the Helsinki Committee. Her rights and the use of the shelter were not governed by any legal agreement, such as a contract or rules. Despite this, she was evicted by the Municipality due to neglect of the shelter, which was not maintained regularly and had been unoccupied for a long time. Based on this inaccurate fact, while the woman was staying with her daughter in Skopje for several months and working seasonally abroad, the Municipality initiated an eviction process, removing her from the shelter and replacing her with another person. She was left homeless overnight without any formal notification. When she inquired about the situation, she was told the eviction was legally completed and publicly announced on the Municipality's bulletin board. Upon reviewing the documents, she found that notifications about the eviction had been sent to her old address from 20 years ago.

Throughout 2025, the Helsinki Committee provided ongoing legal support, including requesting inspections and document transcriptions, seeking restoration of her housing, and inspection supervision considering that the Municipality exceeded the deadlines for deciding, both in relation to the Request for Restoration to the Previous Status, and for the appeal after this Request was rejected.

CASE STUDY SLA - LEGAL OBSTACLES TO REPRESENTATION IN ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS (PROPERTY-LEGAL ISSUES)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Law on Free Legal Aid omits an important point regarding the conditions for approving secondary legal aid for citizens at social risk, such as homelessness in this case. Specifically, *Article 22*, under 'Grounds for Refusal of Secondary Legal Aid,' states that requests related to property issues in an administrative process will be denied.

The legislator likely based this provision on the numerous administrative procedures involving property issues at the municipalities and the Real Estate Cadastre Agency, such as registration of cadastral changes, privatization, legalization, denationalization, expropriation, and others. However, when the procedure involves evicting a person at social risk from a humanitarian shelter, the factual and legal situation is entirely different. This context falls under social protection, which is not governed by the restrictive provisions of *Article 22* of the LFLA.

Given all of the above, we once again recommend legal changes to make it easier to approve SLA through an administrative process, particularly for individuals at social risk whose property concerns are solely related to their only asset - their residence.