

HUMAN RIGHTS MONTHLY OVERVIEW

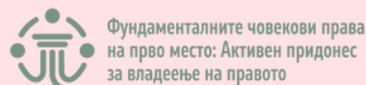
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MONTHLY OVERVIEW ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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INTRODUCTION

In early *August*, the Blueprint Group for Judicial Reform voiced significant concerns regarding the RNM Government's decision to revoke the list of candidates for judges at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and to form a new commission to conduct the selection process again.

The Blueprint Group highlighted that with this action the Government has called into question the legitimacy of the procedure. More significantly, it represents a non-transparent and potentially politicized interference in the process that must be conducted with professionalism, impartiality, and based on clear criteria. In a democratic nation, particularly when appointing a judge to one of the most significant international courts for the protection of human rights, the principles of the rule of law, transparency, and procedural integrity should serve as guiding standards. Decisions made without adequate explanation, in violation of established rules and outside the prescribed procedures, harm the international reputation of the state and undermine the legitimacy of the chosen candidate.

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights endorses the decision by the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office of Kumanovo to initiate an investigation into nationalist and offensive chants recorded during the basketball game between North Macedonia and Romania on *August 2* in Kumanovo.

INTRODUCTION

These chants provoke discord and intolerance based on ethnicity, as outlined in Article 319 of the Criminal Code. The incident makes it evident that sports stands remain a place where offensive and discriminatory messages are spread, especially regarding ethnicity and nationality. Such speech, particularly when expressed publicly, can lead to deep divisions, harm interethnic harmony, and may incite hate crimes.

The Helsinki Committee firmly denounced the proliferation of hate speech and publicly called on all political, sports, and social stakeholders to oppose this issue. A few days later, another incident occurred in the sports stands, prompting the Helsinki Committee to express grave concern and condemn the nationalist and politicized chants during the football game between FC Shkendija and Qarabag on August 5 in Skopje. The game was attended by the President of the Parliament, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Economy, and party leaders. Yet, none of these prominent officials responded to the offensive chants during the game.

The Helsinki Committee has publicly called for politicians to condemn hate speech, which is crucial in combating the spread of this issue, as hate speech often leads to more hate speech and can even result in hate crimes.

INTRODUCTION

In late August, the Blueprint Group for Judicial Reform released a statement supporting the families who shared their statements and testimonies about the Kochani tragedy on August 17. They expressed that, rather than receiving understanding and support, they felt attacked and subjected to various pressures, which further increased distrust in institutions.

The Blueprint Group urged the media to continue covering the proceedings diligently and responsibly, honoring the dignity of the victims and their families, while also persistently uncovering any irregularities and pressures.

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

In August 2025, a total of 75 cases were registered on the web platform www.govornaomraza.mk, of which 43 (45%) were related to ethnicity, 29 (31%) to national origin, and 8 (16%) to political affiliation. Additionally, 5 cases involved religion and religious beliefs (5%), while 3 cases each concerned sex and gender, as well as sexual orientation and gender identity. These cases contained elements of hate speech, incitement, and calls for discrimination or harassment.

Similar to the 2024 parliamentary elections, the announcement of the 2025 local elections has led to heightened ethnic and political polarization within society. This has, in turn, escalated hate speech based on ethnic, political, and national affiliation.

This speech often shifts from disagreement and criticism of political policies to hate speech, particularly on social networks. The narrative becomes more intense, and hostility is evident between the country's two largest ethnic groups, Macedonians and Albanians. Additionally, there is derogatory language and insults, as well as speech that justifies and promotes discrimination against Roma.

On August 2, 2025, during a qualifying game for the World Basketball Championship between North Macedonia and Romania in Kumanovo, at the opening of the renovated sports hall, chants of hate speech were heard from the stands, including anti-Albanian insults like "Death to Albanians" and "Gas chamber for Albanians," along with other threatening messages. Senior government officials, including Prime Minister Hristijan Mickoski, were present but did not respond immediately. The Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Kumanovo launched a pre-investigation and directed the Kumanovo Department of Internal Affairs to review video footage to identify those responsible.

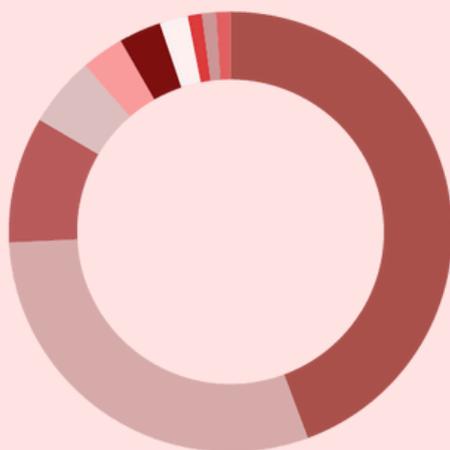
THE SITUATION WITH HATE SPEECH IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, MONTHLY REPORT -AUGUST 2025

On August 5, 2025, during a football game between FC Shkendija and Qarabag at the Todor Proeski National Arena in Skopje, some of the crowd and the fan group "Balisti" were heard chanting nationalist and politicized slogans, including calls for "Greater Albania," "Chamerija," and "Ilirida." The match was attended by senior government officials, such as Assembly President Afrim Gashi, Deputy Prime Minister Izet Medxiti, Minister of Economy Valon Durmishi, and party leaders Ali Ahmeti and Arben Taravari, who did not react to the offensive chants. The Helsinki Committee condemned the event, stating it incited interethnic tensions, and urged immediate action and sanctions from the relevant authorities.

Additionally, on August 24, 2025, during a game between FC Bregalnica and FC Shkupi at the "Belo Brdo" stadium in Shtip, a serious incident took place when a Shkupi parent entered the field and assaulted two young Bregalnica players, approximately 15 years old.

When politicians fail to react or condemn, and law enforcement agencies and courts do not conduct quick and effective investigations, hate speech spreads on social networks and fosters an atmosphere of discord and intolerance.

GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE HATE SPEECH SITUATION IN AUGUST 2025



- Hate speech based on ethnicity (43)
- Hate speech based on nationality (29)
- Hate speech based on political affiliation (9)
- Hate speech based on religion and religious belief (5)
- Hate speech based on sex and gender (3)
- Hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity (3)
- Hate speech based on social origin (2)
- Hate speech based on race/skin color (1)
- Exposure to ridicule of representatives of international organizations (1)
- Exposure to ridicule of representatives of foreign countries (1)



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

Conclusions :

- The 2025 local elections continue to show a growing trend of ethnic and political polarization, mirroring what was seen in the 2024 parliamentary elections. Political rhetoric and campaigning are increasingly widening the divide between communities.
- A significant number of cases have been reported at public events and sports competitions, where hate speech manifests through cheering chants and symbolism. The absence of response from state officials and institutions fosters an impression of tolerance towards this behavior.
- The delay and inadequacy of responses from law enforcement, judiciary, and political leaders enable such speech to proliferate on social networks, fostering a social climate of distrust, intolerance, and interethnic tensions.

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

Recommendations:

- The basic public prosecutor's offices and the Ministry of Internal Affairs must act swiftly and transparently in all instances of hate speech, particularly during public gatherings or sports events.
- When high-ranking state officials attend events where hate speech occurs, they must respond quickly and condemn such actions to clearly communicate that this behavior is unacceptable.

THE SITUATION WITH HATE CRIMES - MONTHLY REPORT FOR AUGUST 2025

During August In 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.

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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 - MONTHLY REPORT FOR AUGUST 2025

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 - AUGUST 2025

In August 2025, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights delivered services under the free legal aid program and the project "Strengthening Human Rights and Services for Children and Vulnerable Persons at Risk in Closed Institutions," funded by the European Union.

- Free legal aid for a child in conflict with the law;
- Monitoring visit to the Tetovo - Volkovija Correctional Institution;
- Organizing an educational and interactive workshop for children on 'Relationship to Animals and Nature,' led by educator Vojo Ivanov, to promote empathy, trust, and positive social skills.
- Providing psychosocial counseling to children through individual and group sessions focused on supporting emotional well-being and personal growth.

2. Brief overview of legal services provided

Free legal assistance

- Review of legislation and legal advice provided;
- Submitted requests for free access to information to the competent institutions;
- Provided legal information, advice and referrals to clients.

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

- **The institution features an outpatient clinic, a medical technician, weekly doctor visits, a dentist, and a hired psychiatrist, with regular health monitoring for each child.**
- **New and well-maintained facilities include an outdoor and indoor classroom, multiple classrooms, a fitness center, a barbershop, a garden, and a yard with sports equipment; activities to promote hygiene and teamwork are also carried out.**
- **Family contact is maintained via visits and phone/video calls. There is also a highlighted need to develop a "halfway house" service and improve cooperation with the Centers for Social Work, aiming to ease children's reintegration after discharge.**
- **During the monitoring period, it was observed that one girl, currently undergoing an educational measure, is being held at the Idrizovo Correctional Facility because the Tetovo Correctional Facility has not yet finished adapting its space to establish a separate women's ward.**
- **Within the project framework, a workshop on human relationships with animals and nature was conducted with educator Vojo Ivanov, fostering engagement, empathy, and positive experiences among children.**
- **Throughout the month, children received psychosocial counseling via group and individual sessions to support their mental health and personal growth.**

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

. Conclusions and recommendations

- **Ensure continuity and institutional backing for formal education in line with the new legal amendments.**
- **Strengthen psychosocial support through the ongoing presence of a professional team, including a psychologist, pedagogue, social worker, and psychiatrist.**
- **Increase the number and skills of educators and prison police, requiring mandatory initial training upon hiring.**
- **Establish a "halfway house" service to support children after discharge and enhance links with relevant institutions.**
- **Reconfigure the space to create a women's ward at the Tetovo Correctional Institution, providing conditions that meet international standards for children's rights and ensure physical and programmatic separation by gender.**
- **Continue organizing thematic and creative workshops that promote empathy, trust, and social inclusion among children.**

FLA STATISTICAL DATA FOR AUGUST 2025

FLA	18	
SLA	/	
Total	18	
	Number	Percentages
Gender		
Men	7	38.90%
Women	11	61.10%
Ethnicity		
Macedonians	14	77.80%
Albanians	2	61.10%
Roma	1	5.60%
Foreigners	1	5.60%
Geographical regions		
Skopje Region	12	66.70%
Vardar Region	/	0%
Polog Region	1	5.60%
Pelagonia Region	3	16.70%
Southwest Region	/	0%
Northeast Region	/	0%
Eastern Region	2	11.10%
Southeast Region	/	0%

FLA STATISTICAL DATA FOR AUGUST 2025

Legal areas	Number	Percentages
Property law	2	13.30%
Social protection and insurance	1	6.70%
Child protection	4	26.70%
Pension and disability insurance	/	0%
Health insurance and protection	/	0%
Labor relations	2	13.30%
Gender-based and domestic violence	/	0%
Status questions	3	20.00%
Protection of human rights	3	0%
Others	3	20.00%

CASE STUDY – PING-PONG WITH JURISDICTION IN ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE AND VIOLATION OF LEGAL DEADLINES FOR DECISION-MAKING

The applicant for free legal aid, whose humanitarian shelter in Shtip where she had lived for over 20 years was taken away by the Municipality of Shtip, filed an objection to the decision to terminate the shelter's use in early 2025.

Considering that the Mayor of the Municipality of Shtip did not decide on the complaint within the legally prescribed deadline, the Helsinki Committee addressed the State Administrative Inspectorate on two occasions with requests to conduct extraordinary inspection supervision in the municipality. As can be seen from the last written response of the Administrative Inspectorate to the Helsinki Committee, the applicant's complaint was transferred from one non-competent authority to another. Initially, the Mayor declined to decide on the complaint and forwarded the case to the State Commission for decision-making in the second instance. Subsequently, the case, along with all relevant documentation, was submitted to the Administrative Court with a request for the complaint to be treated as a lawsuit initiating an administrative dispute against the Decision on the termination of the use of the shelter. The most recent information available indicates that the Administrative Court did not accept such a request and returned the case to the competent second-instance authority—the Mayor of the Municipality of Shtip. However, by the end of September 2025, the Mayor had not issued a decision regarding the objection lodged by the claimant, who was at risk of losing her only residence.

CASE STUDY – PING-PONG WITH JURISDICTION IN ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE AND VIOLATION OF LEGAL DEADLINES FOR DECISION-MAKING

The applicant is a 60-year-old woman who is unemployed and has a single daughter renting an apartment in Skopje. Her family and financial circumstances sometimes force her to leave her residence, and after many years, this necessity has become a reason for her eviction. She falls into a social risk group at risk of homelessness, which means she should not be left for months at the mercy of institutions that shift responsibility (i.e., jurisdiction). These individuals must be guaranteed the constitutionally protected right to a two-tier process, ensuring that institutions respond to their requests as a priority and within legally defined deadlines.

RAST STUDIMI – PING-PONG ME KOMPETENCAT NË PROCEDURËN ADMINISTRATIVE DHE SHKELJA E AFATEVE LIGJORE PËR VENDIMARRJE

Aplikantja/Kërkuesja është një grua 60-vjeçare, e papunë, me një anëtar të vetëm të familjes - një vajzë që jeton me qira në një apartament në Shkup. Gjendja e saj familjare dhe financiare e detyron atë të largohet nga vendi i saj i banimit herë pas here, dhe një nevojë e tillë, pas shumë vitesh, bëhet arsyeja/baza për dëbimin e saj.

Aplikantja/Kërkuesja bie në kategorinë e qytetarëve në rrezik të tillë shoqëror (pa strehë) saqë nuk duhet të lihet për muaj të tërë në (pa)mëshirën e institucioneve që zhvendosin përgjegjësinë (në këtë rast, juridiksionin). Këtyre qytetarëve në veçanti duhet t'u garantohet e drejta e garantuar kushtetuese për një procedurë në dy shkallë në mënyrë të tillë që institucionet të veprojnë sipas kërkesave të tyre, si përparësi dhe brenda afateve të përcaktuara me ligj.