

# HUMAN RIGHTS MONTHLY OVERVIEW

NOVEMBER

20

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# MONTHLY OVERVIEW ON HUMAN RIGHTS

**This publication was funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights Skopje and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.**



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



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# INTRODUCTION

**In early November, the European Commission released its Progress Report on North Macedonia. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights highlighted concerning issues in the sections on non-discrimination, gender equality, and the position of civil society. The report unequivocally indicates that the country is delaying the harmonization of the principles of non-discrimination in all relevant laws, which represents a serious step back compared to the previously obtained results.**

**The report notes that there has been no progress toward judicial independence. It also states that "corruption remains a cause for serious concern."**

**"The incident at the 'Pulse' discotheque in Kocani, in which 62 people died, exposed institutional negligence and corruption," the Report states.**

**The recent amendments to the Law on Primary Education, the Law on Secondary Education, and the Law on Textbooks, adopted through a summary procedure without proper consultation with stakeholders, are particularly alarming. These amendments removed content on sexual and reproductive health and gender equality, directly violating European values and the obligations the country has undertaken in the EU accession process. In addition, hate speech based on gender and sexual orientation, as well as threats against women human rights defenders, remain widespread, especially on social media.**

# INTRODUCTION

**The findings of the European Commission's Report on the Human Rights Situation largely align with those of the Helsinki Committee. The Platform for Gender Equality expressed great concern about how some media outlets reported on the tragic case of the young student from Kosovo, who was found dead in Tetovo on 5.11.2025. The Platform noted that instead of professional, responsible, gender-sensitive, and ethical reporting, we are witnessing a series of reports that rely on sensationalism, speculation, and sexist language, including revealing the girl's identity and sharing her photos. Such practices constitute a serious violation of the Journalists' Code, which requires impartial reporting, the protection of privacy, and respect for the dignity of victims.**

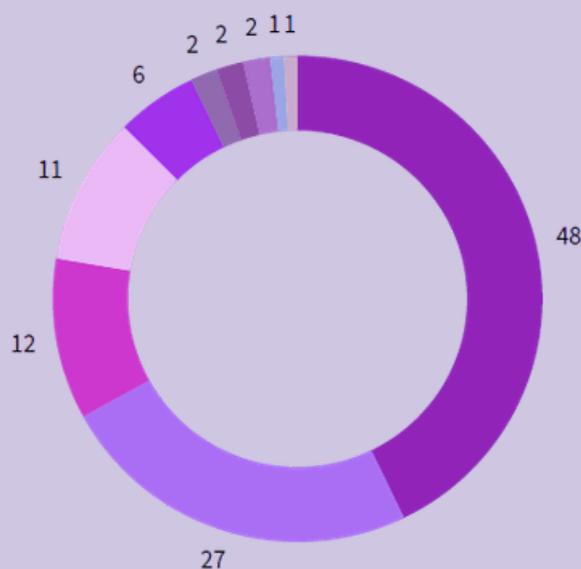
**Before the first court hearing, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and the organizations that are members of the Blueprint Group for Judicial Reform announced that they will monitor the court proceedings related to the tragic fire at the makeshift "Pulse" disco in Kocani, in which 63 young people lost their lives and more than 200 were injured.**

**The Committee called on the judiciary to ensure a public, fair, and impartial process, full accountability for all who, through their actions or omissions, contributed to the tragedy, and the protection of the dignity of the victims and their families throughout the process.**

# INTRODUCTION

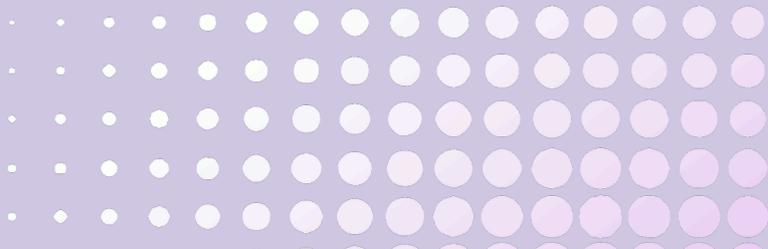
**In a separate public statement ahead of the trial, the Blueprint Group for Judicial Reform emphasized that the distrust voiced by parents and the public is a valid and vocal response stemming from a loss of trust in institutions. On 25 November, during the activities for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the OSCE Mission to Skopje introduced the Femicide Watch Platform. This new mechanism is implemented by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, in partnership with the National network to end violence against women and domestic violence, with collaboration from various state institutions.**

# THE SITUATION WITH HATE SPEECH - MONTHLY REPORT FOR NOVEMBER



- Hate speech based on ethnicity
- Hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity
- Hate speech based on sex and gender
- Hate speech based on race/skin color
- Hate speech based on intellectual or physical disability
- Hate speech based on nationality
- Hate speech based on political affiliation
- Hate speech based on social origin
- Hate speech based on religion and religious belief
- Hate speech at a sports match

In November 2025, a total of 88 cases were registered on the web platform [www.govornaomraza.mk](http://www.govornaomraza.mk), of which 43% were based on ethnicity, 27 cases (24%) on national origin, 12 cases (11%) on sexual orientation and gender identity, 11 cases (10%) on political affiliation, and 6 cases (5%) on sex and gender, all containing elements of hate speech, incitement, and calls for discrimination and harassment. Two cases each were recorded on the basis of social origin, skin color, and religious belief.



# THE SITUATION WITH HATE SPEECH - MONTHLY REPORT FOR NOVEMBER

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**VMRO-DPMNE's victory in Kichevo, a municipality that had been governed for years by a candidate affiliated with DUI, was perceived as part of broader political shifts in local elections across the country, in which the ruling coalition won a significant number of municipalities. This result was not only experienced as a local political change, but also as a symbolic turning point in an environment with pronounced ethnic and political sensitivities, which further increased the tension in the public discourse.**

**In this context, the election outcome was quickly ethnicized and cast as a narrative of "victory" and "defeat" for entire communities, rather than a contest of political programs and candidates. Political competition shifted from a programmatic to an identity level, with opponents framing themselves as threats to the collective identity, dignity, or rights of a particular ethnic group. This framework created fertile ground for the spread of hate speech, which manifested in insults, degrading epithets, and generalizations targeting ethnicity, language, or political affiliation.**

**Furthermore, social media acts as a amplifying platform for such speech, allowing manipulative content and unverified claims to spread quickly, often lacking accountability.**

# THE SITUATION WITH HATE SPEECH - MONTHLY REPORT FOR NOVEMBER

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**The lack of timely and firm condemnations from political leaders and institutions has helped normalize and justify hate speech as a form of "political reaction" or "expression of revolt," instead of acknowledging it as a significant threat to social cohesion.**

**This way, the election process in Kichevo demonstrated how political messaging that employs exclusionary and ethnic-focused narratives can lead to the rise and intensification of hate speech, potentially causing long-lasting effects on interethnic relations and confidence in democratic institutions.**

**Additionally, disturbing speech related to the celebration of November 28, Albanian Flag Day, was recorded. Content was documented during public celebrations and on social media that included offensive and provocative ethnically based speech directed at members of other communities. These occurrences were not isolated incidents, but fit into a broader context of increased interethnic tensions and insufficient institutional response to hate speech in sensitive periods related to national and ethnic symbols. Such speech has the potential to contribute to deepening mistrust between communities and disrupt social cohesion, especially when it is not promptly and clearly sanctioned.**

# THE SITUATION WITH HATE SPEECH - MONTHLY REPORT FOR NOVEMBER

## CONCLUSIONS

- 1.The ethnicization of the election outcome directly contributed to hate speech. The election victory in Kichevo was interpreted as a defeat or a victory for entire ethnic communities, shifting political competition from a programmatic to an identity level and creating conditions for the escalation of hate speech.**
- 2.The lack of institutional and political response has normalized hatred. The absence of clear, timely, and unequivocal condemnation from political leaders and institutions has allowed hate speech to be justified as a legitimate political reaction.**
- 3.Sensitive periods and symbols pose an increased risk. The election process and the celebration of November 28 have shown that national and ethnic symbols, in the context of political tensions, are easily misused to incite interethnic intolerance.**

# THE SITUATION WITH HATE SPEECH - MONTHLY REPORT FOR NOVEMBER

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Political actors should stop with exclusionary narratives. Public communication must focus on policies and accountability, not on identity-based divisions that fuel hatred.**
- 2. Institutions should react promptly and clearly to hate speech.**
- 3. Enhanced monitoring and prevention during high-risk periods. Establish strengthened mechanisms for monitoring and preventing hate speech during elections and important national holidays in cooperation with the media and civil society.**

# THE SITUATION WITH HATE CRIMES - MONTHLY REPORT FOR NOVEMBER

During November 2025, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights recorded one potential incident with a biased motive, for which, in accordance with other indicators (location, method of commission, involvement of minors and high school students, etc.), there is a reasonable belief that it was committed due to the ethnicity of the victim, i.e., the perpetrator. Namely, this is a potential incident based on ethnicity, when at the "Fortuna" stadium in Skopje, during a football match between the teams of FC "Shkendija 77" and FC "Bregalnica", a fan of FC "Shkendija 77" physically attacked a player of FC "Bregalnica". 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 - MONTHLY REPORT FOR NOVEMBER**

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusions:**

- 1. The registered potential incident indicates that sporting events and matches between teams of different ethnicities continue to be environments with an increased risk of ethnically motivated violence, especially when fans are involved.**
- 2. The presence of multiple indicators of bias (place, time, ethnic difference between the perpetrator and the victim, and the nature of the violence) indicates that such incidents need to be identified promptly and treated as potential hate crimes to prevent their escalation and recurrence.**

### **Recommendations:**

- The Ministry of Internal Affairs, in cooperation with football clubs and organizers of sporting events, should implement enhanced preventive and security measures during and after high-risk sporting events, including the presence of trained officials to recognize biased, motivated behavior.**
- The competent institutions should ensure consistent application of indicators for recognizing hate crimes in handling such incidents, as well as continuous training for the police, prosecutors and judges on the proper qualification and effective processing of bias-motivated acts.**

# **THE SITUATION WITH CLOSED INSTITUTIONS - MONTHLY REPORT FOR NOVEMBER**

**In November 2025, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, within the framework of 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, provided:**

- Free legal aid for a child in conflict with the law;**
- Free legal aid for three convicted persons;**
- Music workshop for the wards of the Tetovo Correctional Institution.**

## **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.**

## **3. Conclusions and recommendations**

**The implemented activities strengthened legal awareness and the protection of the parties' rights through systematic review of the legislation, provision of legal advice, and timely referrals to competent institutions. Filing requests for free access to information has proven to be an effective mechanism for increasing the transparency and accountability of institutions and for providing relevant data for further advocacy.**

# **THE SITUATION WITH CLOSED INSTITUTIONS - MONTHLY REPORT FOR NOVEMBER**

**The project activities at the Tetovo - Volkovija Correctional Institution, especially the interactive music workshop, had a positive effect on the children's psychosocial state. Through creative expression and joint music making, social skills, trust, and a sense of belonging were encouraged, which are essential for the processes of resocialization and reintegration. The activity also contributed to building a safe and supportive environment in the institution.**

- To strengthen the institutional response to protect the rights and health care of convicted persons, especially by ensuring access to adequate and continuous health care, and by improving coordination among penal institutions, health institutions, and competent authorities to provide effective and sustainable solutions.**
  - To ensure continuity of creative and educational activities in the Tetovo Correctional Institution, such as music, art, and psychosocial workshops, as an integral part of the resocialization programs.**
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# FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE

<b>FLA</b>	<b>26</b>	
<b>SLA</b>	<b>/</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
<b>Men</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
<b>Macedonians</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>Albanians</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Roma</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Foreigners</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Geographical regions</b>		
<b>Skopje Region</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>Vardar Region</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Polog Region</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Pelagonia Region</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Southwest Region</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Northeast Region</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Eastern Region</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Southeast Region</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

# FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Legal areas	Number	Percentages
Property law	1	4%
Social protection and insurance	2	8%
Child protection	4	15%
Pension and disability insurance	0	0
Health insurance and protection	0	0
Labor relations	4	15%
Gender-based and domestic violence	4	15%
Status questions	4	15%
Protection of human rights	5	19%
Others	1	4%

# ПОДОБРУВАЊЕ НА УСЛОВИТЕ ВО ЖЕНСКОТО ОДДЕЛЕНИЕ – ТЕТОВО

Во рамките на проектот „Зајакнување на човековите права и услуги за децата и ранливите лица во ризик во затворени институции“, финансиран од Европската Унија, Хелсиншкиот комитет за човекови права спроведе активности за подобрување на условите во женското одделение на Воспитно-поправната установа Тетово. Одделението беше опремено со нов мебел, основна опрема, рекреативни средства и дополнителни ресурси со цел создавање побезбедна, подостоинствена и стимулирачка средина за женските лица што издржуваат воспитно-поправна мерка.

Подобрувањата директно придонесоа за подобрен квалитет на секојдневниот престој и за проширување на можностите за личен развој. Единствената корисничка во моментот го потврди позитивното влијание од интервенцијата, нагласувајќи дека условите се значително подобри од претходното сместување, со повеќе слобода на движење, пристап до активности и пријатно уредени заеднички простории.

Оваа активност претставува дел од пошироките заложби за унапредување на условите, заштита на човековите права и поддршка за децата и за другите ранливи групи што се сместени во затворени институции низ државата.