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08 March 2007

MKD102437.E

Macedonia: Reports of violence and ill-treatment of Roma; their access to identity documents (2006 - 2007)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Human rights sources reported several cases of alleged police ill-treatment of Romani people in Macedonia (ERRC 16 June 2006; *ibid.* 2006; European Court of Human Rights 15 Feb. 2007). In January 2006, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) participated in a trial before the European Court of Human Rights regarding the alleged police abuse of a Macedonian Roma man (ERRC 31 Jan. 2006). The applicant alleged that he had been subjected to "acts of police brutality amounting to torture, inhuman and/or degrading treatment, as banned under Convention Article 3" (*ibid.* 11 May 2006). In its judgment, the Court found that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that the applicant had suffered ill-treatment at the hands of the police (European Court of Human Rights 15 Feb. 2007). However, the Court did find that there was a violation of Article 3 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms with regard to the failure of the authorities to investigate the applicant's allegations of police ill-treatment (*ibid.*). The Court also noted that the eight year delay was "owing primarily to the national authorities' inactivity and reluctance to carry out an effective investigation into the applicant's allegations" (*ibid.*, Para. 53). The ERRC declares that this case demonstrates the impunity of police in Macedonia especially with regard to acts committed against Roma (31 Jan. 2006).

The ERRC also reported that, in June 2006, another Roma man was allegedly beaten by members of the Alpha police unit (ERRC 2006). This man reported to ERRC that the police commander asked him on two occasions not to take any action against the police and indicated that he did not want to pursue the case (*ibid.*). Corroborative information regarding this case could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In May 2006, a Roma youth was reported missing (ERRC 16 Jan. 2006; NRC 20 June 2006). He was last seen being chased by members of the Macedonian police unit "Alpha" (or "Alfi") on 11 May 2006 (*ibid.*; ERRC 16 Jan. 2006). His body was discovered on 28 May 2006 in the Vardar river near the village of Tubarevo (*ibid.*; NRC 20 June 2006) and the cause of death was ruled as drowning (ERRC 2006). The youth's parents complained that the police chase was racially motivated and that Macedonian authorities have a bias against Roma people (*ibid.*; NRC 20 June 2006). No charges were brought against Alpha members (ERRC 2006). The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia reports that there was "lack of appropriate search for the missing child which could indicate absolute indifference for his fate based on discrimination or owing to the attempt to cover the traces of a crime" (n.d.).

In its consideration of reports submitted by Macedonia, the United Nations (UN) Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states the following:

The Committee is concerned about reports that Roma face widespread discrimination in access to employment, social assistance, health care and education, that Roma and Albanian applicants sometimes experience difficulties in obtaining citizenship, and that a certain number of Roma lack

personal documents, such as identity cards, birth certificates and medical insurance or employment cards, which are necessary for them to access social insurance, health care and other benefits. (24 Nov. 2006, Para. 12)

With regard to the access that Roma people have to identity documents, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) reports the following:

One of the major obstacles to greater Roma political participation is lack of official documentation. Many Roma have no identity cards, either because their births or marriages were never registered with the state authorities, or, in the case of many Roma displaced during the recent conflicts in the Balkans, because their documents are not recognized by the state in which they now live. (11 July 2006)

Additional information regarding reports of violence and ill-treatment of Roma and their access to identity documents could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International, Association for Democratic Initiatives, Balkan Human Rights Network, Council of Europe, Dzeno Association, European Centre for Minority Issues, European Network Against

Racism, European Roma Grassroots Organisation, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Minorities at Risk, Minority Rights Group International, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Roma Rights Forum, Transitions Online, United States Department of State, World News Connection.

[▲
Top of Page](#)

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