



Serbia: More support for minorities and children with disabilities needed to truly advance human rights

UPR adoption of Serbia

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We welcome the acceptance of a number of recommendations by Serbia relating to pressing human rights challenges in the country, including to combat discrimination against minorities and women, and accountability for war crimes. We regret however that Serbia rejected a key recommendation to refrain from prosecuting journalists, human rights defenders and others as a way of deterring them to express opinions.

We note that Serbia has made considerable progress during the reporting period in developing an institutional framework harmonizing the protection of human rights in national law with the requirements to join the European Union. Several newly accepted recommendations relate to further structural reforms and we welcome Serbia's continued commitment. However we regret that on the ground, human rights are not realized for those most in need.

Since Serbia's last review, marginalized communities, in particular Roma people and IDPs have not seen a notable improvement in their situation. They continue to live in squalid housing conditions, and lack adequate access to employment, education and healthcare.

Additionally, newly arriving migrants have been placed in substandard camps, without the prospect of gaining refugee protection, pushed out from the country or left to care for themselves in inhuman conditions.

We remain concerned that journalists and human rights defenders work in a hostile environment characterized by smear campaigns and personal attacks linked to powerful political and business interests. The number and gravity of incidents have only increased since the last review. In the upcoming period, it will be crucial that Serbia genuinely commits to protect journalists and promote free expression.

We urge the government to pursue its previous pledge to implement a national war crimes strategy and prosecute war criminals. To this end, strong political support and commitment to accountability should be demonstrated, and adequate capacities should be allocated.

We welcome that Serbia accepted the recommendation to "work towards the deinstitutionalization of children with disabilities," but regret to see an increase in the number of children with disabilities placed in institutions in Serbia. We call on the government to adopt a time-bound plan to move children and adults with disabilities out of institution and to support them to live in the community.

Thank you.