



PORADŇA PRE OBČIANSKE A ĽUDSKÉ PRÁVA

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The police officers accused of abusing Roma boys at a police station in Košice are innocent – it was confirmed today by the appeal court, which dismissed the appeal of the Prosecutor against the acquittal judgment

The Regional Court in Kosice at today's public hearing dismissed the Prosecutor's appeal against the acquittal judgment of the District Court Košice II of 4 December 2019 in a widely medialised case of ill-treatment against six Roma boys at a police station in Košice. Judgment by which the accused policemen were acquitted is final.

The incident took place in March 2009 at the Košice – South police station in Eastern Slovakia. Several police officers detained six Roma boys between the ages of 11 and 15 and brought them to police station. There, the officers forced the boys to strip, slap each other, and carry out other police orders that violated their human dignity, as part of the ill-treatment. The officers also threatened the boys with a loaded weapon and goaded police dogs to attack the boys. Some of the actions were recorded on a mobile phone and the edited recording was subsequently published on the Internet.

The Regional Court as appeal court ruled on the case for the third time today. In the years 2016 and 2018 it quashed decisions of the first instance court based on the Prosecutor's appeals, while pointing at the serious procedural flaws in hearing the case. It noted that performing additional evidence is needed to clarify of ambiguities and incompleteness of the facts in the case.

Its today's decision, which dismissed the Prosecutor's appeal, practically confirmed the latest acquittal decision of the District Court of 4 December 2019. It held that the district court as first instance court has performed all the evidence and evaluated them in accordance with the principles of criminal procedure. It did not comply with the reasons given in the Prosecutor's appeal.

The Slovak grass root NGO the Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradňa pre občianske a ľudské práva) has long provided free legal assistance to aggrieved Roma boys. Vanda Durbáková, a lawyer cooperating with Poradňa and the legal representative of the injured boys, reacted:

"In my view, in this court case justice has failed. Sadly, the evidence performed, including audio-visual recording, was insufficient for the condemnation of the accused policemen. The courts in this case were unable to decide fairly, without delay and within a reasonable time and were unable to provide victims with effective access to justice, as required by international law. The criminal proceedings lasted almost 12 years, which is, in my view, an unreasonable long time, especially in case of such serious allegations. The injured are therefore already claiming their rights before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg."

Contact information: Vanda Durbáková - the legal representative of the aggrieved Roma boys: +421 908 695 531 or vanda.durbakova@poradna-prava.sk

The Center for Civil and Human Rights (Poradna) is a non-governmental organization based in Slovakia focused on the protection of human rights with particular emphasis on the rights of minorities and protection from discrimination. Poradna has for a long time worked on the issue of discrimination

against Roma ethnic minority in various areas of public life. It has also been active in the protection of reproductive rights and protection from police brutality. Poradna employs strategic litigation to combat discrimination and human rights abuses against minorities. Poradna offers free legal advice to victims of discrimination and in selected cases free legal representation to victims of discrimination before Slovak courts and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. It also conducts monitoring in the field, advocacy, and educational activities on the protection from discrimination for lay and expert audiences. **Visit us at:** www.poradna-prava.sk

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