

<http://zpravy.idnes.cz/on-line-rozhovor-s-elenou-gorolovou-ze-spolku-zen-postizenych-sterilizaci-1b6-/odpovedi.asp?t=GOROLOV&strana=1>

## ON-LINE INTERVIEW

**On-line interview with Elena Gorolova from the Group of Women Harmed by Sterilization**



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How did this surgery change the lives of the women who have been harmed by it, what are they demanding and where do the state and the justice system stand on their problem?

### **The interview is over.**

The celebrity is no longer answering. Readers asked questions until 11:23 07.07.2008

- [aktualizovat výpis](#) [update transcript]
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**QUESTION:** I believe you are just trying to get money by looking for a loophole in the system. Make your own money! Go to work for God's sake!!!  
Signed, "Doctor [female]"

The interviewee refuses to answer this question

**QUESTION:** From the ombudsman's report it follows that you are right - in my view, definitely. Do you know any other women who have been harmed by this? Have you received any satisfaction? Are you satisfied with how things are going? (By the way, I also read a shameful article about the sterilization of women in Bohemia in the American edition of *National Geographic*). Many people say you wanted this and that you agreed to be sterilized in order to get money and that you then changed your minds? What is your opinion of these horrible slanders?  
Signed, "Helena"



**ANSWER:** Yes, I know others who were sterilized, and we have received no compensation. This is not about money - we want justice, we want this not to happen to other women, as it did to us, without our informed consent. No, I am not satisfied with how things are going. My opinion of the slanders is that people are unaware of our situation. Those women were offered money under the threat that their children would otherwise be taken away.

**QUESTION:** Did you really not know what you were signing?

“Jan”



**ANSWER:** I really did not know, it was when I was in the birthing room, they just gave me a paper [to sign] with no explanation, and also I was young and no one told me what it meant.

**QUESTION:** Madam, I believe the sterilization, in your case, was done in order to save your life. You signed a “positive reversal”. If you did not know what “sterilization” meant, then you should have asked. Any citizen of the Czech Republic with an average education knows what it means. I don’t know how many children you have, but I believe you have fulfilled your role as a woman many times over. Now you should take care that your children grow up as decent people. Signed, “!Z!”

The interviewee refuses to answer this question

**QUESTION:** Hello, a school friend of mine who wanted to be a doctor her whole life is being sued by a woman who lost her womb during a difficult delivery. The woman might have bled to death and this extreme measure was the only way to save the mother’s life. Don’t you think you have illusions about whether all of the women you are representing are really victims? From my experience I can say that doctors won’t perform sterilization unless they really have to. Thank you for your answer and have a good day.

Signed, “Petr”



**ANSWER:** I am under no illusions, these women filed complaints with the ombudsman and he found in their favor.

**QUESTION:** Do you smoke? If so, did you smoke while you were pregnant?

Signed, “!Z!”

The interviewee refuses to answer this question

**QUESTION:** Isn’t the problem rather your husband, who considers you a less valuable woman since you are sterilized? Aren’t you just trying to place the “blame” on a non-Roma doctor?

Signed, “EW”



**ANSWER:** The problem is not my husband, my husband is by my side in this cause, and I believe that in such a situation both spouses should consent. The doctors are the ones who made the mistake.

**QUESTION:** Hello, what kind of work do you do? Have you considered adoption?

Signed, "Terka"



**ANSWER:** I work at Vzajemné soužití (Life Together), a non-profit organization, doing outreach in the field. I have considered adoption, since my husband was raised in an orphanage, but since he knows what it is like to grow up in one, we were concerned that after raising [an adopted] child, he or she would return to his or her real parents, and that would be a great loss to our lives. We both are both "softies" when it comes to children.

**QUESTION:** Hello, if you had not been sterilized and you had gotten pregnant a third time, would you have gone through with the pregnancy even if it posed a threat to your own life?

Signed, "Eva G."



**ANSWER:** Absolutely yes.

**QUESTION:** Hello, I hope this is not an intrusive question, but don't you think two children are enough these days? It's clear to me that the child support supplement is a supplement, but even so... certainly you can give a better life to two children than you can to four. What other women would only give to have at least one! I do not think there are any grounds for addressing your sterility. Otherwise, have a nice day.

Signed, "Madox"



**ANSWER:** I am not on welfare, I work, my husband works, and even if we had 10 children, we would still work and we would raise them.

**QUESTION: [in Slovak]** Do you think it is right to produce children mainly so you can get welfare and then keep on demanding even more from the state? To steal from decent people – the Roma don't want to work, they are inadaptable inhabitants?!!

Signed, "juro"

The interviewee refuses to answer this question

**QUESTION:** If you hadn't been sterilized, how many children would you have had? If two are not enough, why don't you adopt some? Thanks and have a nice day.

Signed, "Jana X."



**ANSWER:** I have two sons, and my husband and I wanted to have a daughter, so we would have had three -- and if that third had been a boy, then we would have had four.

**QUESTION:** How did you do at spelling in school?

Signed, "Pavel"



**ANSWER:** I think my spelling corresponds to the fact that I am a Romani woman who is only now completing her studies.

**QUESTION:** You really did not know what sterilization is? That seems rather improbable to me, even if you only achieved the average education of the Czech population.

Signed, “zvědavec” [Curious]



**ANSWER:** I have not achieved an average education; I have been to basic school and technical middle school. The situation was serious - and I had never even heard the word “sterilization” before. In the birthing room, where the birth was taking place spontaneously, complications arose, and at that moment they brought a piece of a paper and literally said to me, “Sign this or you will die.” In that situation I took the pen and signed something that I hadn’t even read and at that moment I would have signed my own death warrant, because I was in enormous pain and under the influence of sedatives and I trusted the doctors.

**QUESTION:** When someone tells me they will perform a surgery on me which I don’t understand the meaning of, then I ask for an explanation, don’t I? Your health is at stake. If they asked you sign your own decapitation, would you agree?

Signed “Divotvorný hrnec” [Thaumaturgic kettle]



**ANSWER:** I would agree with you if the opportunity had been presented differently. There was no time to ask questions of the doctors, it all happened very quickly, my labor pains were increasing, and I was completely out of it – I was in fear, under stress from what was going on around me. I was giving birth in the birthing room and complications had occurred. How was I supposed to ask when no one let me speak, when everyone kept saying “Be quiet, don’t speak”? I wanted to have it all over as quickly as possible, that pain, and I trusted that everything the doctors were doing was correct.

**QUESTION:** Hello, I would like to ask how you know that your life was not at stake during your second Caesarian such that there was no time to explain the surgery. Thank you in advance for your reply.

Signed, “PB”

The interviewee refuses to answer this question

**QUESTION:** Hello, as is typical, every time this has to do with you immediately suing. Didn’t the doctors save your life? Didn’t you sign a “reverse”? I don’t understand how someone can sign something and not ask if they don’t understand it. Shouldn’t you devote your attention to raising your existing children? Thanks

Signed, “doctor”



**ANSWER:** I am not suing I am just fighting for justice.

**QUESTION:** Hello, hasn’t it occurred to you that the doctors saved your life because another pregnancy after two Caesarians is very dangerous?

Signed, “tyna”



**ANSWER:** If my husband and I had been able to think it over, to decide about sterilization, we certainly would have come to the agreement that, if it were life-threatening, we

would have prevented another pregnancy from occurring. I was not provided with any birth control. I believe even in those days birth control existed. Sterilization is not birth control. The doctors decided for us.

**QUESTION:** And how many children had you planned - six? Or even more? I don't believe someone sterilized you against your own will.

Signed, "Miguel"



**ANSWER:** Yes, someone sterilized me against my own will.

**QUESTION:** Two Caesarian sections at 21, don't you think another Caesarian would have really endangered your life? Is there an expert medical evaluation prescribing this? I don't see the opinions of experts here, just a patchwork of emotions.

Signed, "ptiger"

The interviewee refuses to answer this question

**QUESTION:** If you had been able to have more children, would you and your husband have been capable of supporting them? I mean by your own work?

Signed, "Lida"

The interviewee refuses to answer this question

**QUESTION:** Hello, it seems completely unbelievable to me that someone doesn't know what it means to be sterilized and it also seems unbelievable to me that someone doesn't ask when they don't understand something. Do you realize you are making an unbelievable fuss regarding your own stupidity? Why are you making a racial question out of this thing when white women and women of other colors have been sterilized? By the way, communist medicine did not count on the possibility of doctors being sued, that is the only reason your signature was not informed consent, which is the standard today, and all this "drama" is offensive to me.

Signed, "Filuta"



**ANSWER:** One white woman who had been forcibly sterilized and wanted to come to the group that exists at Life Together contacted us, and her question was, "What *kind* of women are attending?" My answer was, "Romani women are attending this group." The lady then responded that she was not interested in meeting with Romani women. I would like to stress that we are fighting for all women who were forcibly sterilized, that means non-Romani women and any others.

**QUESTION:** If they gave you a paper to sign it must have been written there that you agree with the sterilization. The mistake is that you probably didn't read it. A friend of mine had to undergo this and it is true that she also gave birth to both of her children by "C-section" and she knew what she was signing, so she knew that it meant she would never have children again. The next time around it could have been life-threatening. Are you not concerned about your own life? That another child would cost your own life? That's a bit of a strange opinion.

Signed, "Michal"

The interviewee refuses to answer this question

**QUESTION:** Hello. What do you think about the Roma ethnicity abusing welfare? Do you think that is in order? Working people's taxes, in the form of welfare for the Roma, end up for the most part being spent in video poker machines and on other gambling, drugs and alcohol. Do you think it is in order for several generations of Roma to have grown up who have never worked?  
Signed, "Jan M."

The interviewee refuses to answer this question

**QUESTION:** Mrs. Gorolová, I understand you have two children. Can you tell us how you managed their upbringing? Today they are both over 18, and I am interested in whether they have studied, if they have completed professional training, if you and your husband work – or are you on welfare? If you have raised your children as proper citizens, who are valid members of society, then I understand your anger, but if your children were meant to serve as your source of income (as they do for most Romani families), then I consider the step which the doctors considered authorized to have not been such a great misfortune. Many women cannot have children at all for medical reasons, they are much worse off.  
Signed, "Karel"



**ANSWER:** My children are not my source of income. Why tar everyone with the same brush? Doctors should give information to a patient in advance about the state of their health and the surgery they are going to perform. I am raising my children, we are part of society, and I do not understand why the doctors have caused such pain to me and my family.

**QUESTION:** If I don't know what a certain concept means, then I ask. I completely rule out the possibility that the doctors did not explain what was going on to you. The problem is also that in the recent past women were paid for sterilization. You have "forgotten" to mention that. Moreover, to give birth twice by Caesarian section is a risk and who knows whether it would have worked out a third time. Whatever your husband has labeled you is purely your family matter and the affair of your minority.  
Signed, "Jana"



**ANSWER:** I never received any money and none was ever offered to me. After returning from the hospital I requested an explanation as to what sterilization meant from the social affairs office and they threw me out, no one wanted to communicate with me. I felt powerless - it really hurt me that the authorities would treat someone that way.

**QUESTION:** Don't you think a family should only have as many children as they are able to afford, I mean with money they earn themselves, not that they would be dependent on various kinds of social support, etc.? Statistics say the average is something like 1.7 children per woman. In the case of the Roma ethnicity the average is much higher. If you already have two children, why have more? Why should you give birth over the entire course of your reproductive life and have, for example, five or more offspring?? If someone doesn't know what sterilization means, that is related to the overall education of our Romani fellow-citizens.  
Signed, "M."



**ANSWER:** We Roma love having a large family and I do not think it is so difficult to raise children. The reason to have more than two children is because I love them, but unfortunately I will never have more.

**QUESTION:** Didn't it occur to you to thank the doctors for saving your life? At 19 to have two children, both by Caesarian section ... shouldn't you be suing yourself?

Signed, "woman"



**ANSWER:** It didn't happen to me at the age of 19, I was 21 when it happened, and I do not want to thank them, because I was not informed in advance - when I went for high-risk pregnancy check-ups, I received no information that, should I have to undergo two Caesarian sections, sterilization would result.

**QUESTION:** Hello. Isn't it better to take care of raising your existing children than to give birth to more children? How many of them do you have, how many are at college, how many at high school, how many at grade school and how many at "special" [remedial] school?

Signed, "Pedro"



**ANSWER:** I have two sons, the younger son studies at the social-ethnic middle school and the other son works. For the time being no one is at college and I am also studying at the pedagogical middle school. The children did very well at grade school.