

1 July 2011

Leoš Heger
Minister of Health
Ministerstvo zdravotnictví
Palackého nám. 4
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Czech Republic

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Dear Mr Heger,

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), an international public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma, is writing with regard to the recently published guidelines of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) with specific focus on female contraceptive sterilisation.

As you know, in the former Czechoslovakia there was a state policy to encourage the sterilisation of Romani women; even after the policy no longer existed, the practice continued, including the practice of coercive sterilisation. ERRC has identified such cases as recently as 2007.

The ERRC has been heavily engaged in on this issue as it pertains to Romani women. We have been closely cooperating with the Association of Women Harmed by Involuntary Sterilisations (Spolek žen poškozených nedobrovolnou sterilizací), conducted extensive research in the field, filed complaints domestically and also regularly report about the situation to the UN Treaty Bodies. There are cases against the Czech Republic pending on this issue in front of the European Court of Human Rights. The ERRC has been part of the campaign on coercive sterilisations which started at the 2008 Women's World Congress in Madrid, Spain.¹

In order to ensure that medical services are provided in line with human rights standards we would like to draw your attention to the recently published FIGO guidelines, which, *inter alia* confirm the following standards:

- Performance of surgical sterilisation must be preceded by the patient's informed and freely given consent [...]. Information for the consent includes, for instance, that sterilisation should be considered irreversible, that alternatives exist such as reversible forms of family planning, that life circumstances may change, causing a person later to regret consenting to sterilisation, and that procedures have a very low but still significant failure rate;
- Sterilisation for prevention of future pregnancy cannot be ethically justified on grounds of medical emergency.

We ask you to widely distribute the attached FIGO guidelines to all relevant medical practitioners in the Czech Republic and amend legislation to comply with these guidelines. We also welcome the opportunity to meet you in person to discuss potential cooperation on the issue.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Kushen
Executive Director

¹ For more information see: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2965>

1 July 2011

David Cibula
Chairman
Association of Hospital Gynaecologists and Obstetricians
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Dear Mr Cibula,

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We ask that you widely distribute the attached FIGO guidelines to all relevant medical practitioners in the Czech Republic, urging the utmost attention to their use in practice as an important step in ending this deplorable practice. We also welcome the opportunity to meet you in person to discuss potential cooperation on the issue.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Kushen
Executive Director

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1 July 2011

Vladimír Dvořák
Chairman
Czech Gynecological and Obstetrical Society
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Dear Mr Dvořák,

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), an international public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma, is writing with regard to the recently published guidelines of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) with specific focus on female contraceptive sterilisation.

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We ask that you widely distribute the attached FIGO guidelines to all relevant medical practitioners in the Czech Republic, urging the utmost attention to their use in practice as an important step in ending this deplorable practice. We also welcome the opportunity to meet you in person to discuss potential cooperation on the issue.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Kushen
Executive Director

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1 July 2011

Miklós Réthelyi
minister
Ministry of National Resources
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Dear Mr Réthelyi,

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), an international public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma, is writing with regard to the recently published guidelines of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) with specific focus on female contraceptive sterilisation.

As you know, the ERRC together with the Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities provided legal representation to a Romani woman who was coercively sterilised in a public hospital in 2001. After the exhaustion of domestic remedies the case was submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2004, which decided in favour of the victim and resulted in compensation of the victim in 2009. The ERRC has been continuously working on full implementation of CEDAW decision to ensure that the Hungarian legal provisions regulating sterilisations are in line with the international standards. This work includes legal representation, monitoring and regular reporting about the situation to the UN Treaty Bodies. Currently the ERRC is providing legal representation to a woman who was coercively sterilised without her informed consent in a public hospital in 2008. The ERRC has been part of the campaign on coercive sterilisations which started at the 2008 Women's World Congress in Madrid, Spain.¹

In order to ensure that medical services are provided in line with human rights standards we would like to draw your attention to the recently published FIGO guidelines, which, *inter alia* confirm the following standards:

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- Sterilisation for prevention of future pregnancy cannot be ethically justified on grounds of medical emergency.

We ask you to widely distribute the attached FIGO guidelines to all relevant medical practitioners in Hungary and amend legislation to comply with these guidelines. We also welcome the opportunity to meet you in person to discuss potential cooperation on the issue.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Kushen
Executive Director

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1 July 2011

Attila Pal
Chairman
Hungarian Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology
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We ask that you widely distribute the attached FIGO guidelines to all relevant medical practitioners in Slovakia, urging the utmost attention to their use in practice as an important step in ending this deplorable practice. We also welcome the opportunity to meet you in person to discuss potential cooperation on the issue.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Kushen
Executive Director

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1 July 2011

Ivan Uhliarik
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Dear Mr Uhliarik,

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1 July 2011

Ján Danko
Chairman
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Dear Mr Danko,

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