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НАРОДЕН ПРАВОБРАНИТЕЛ

Republika e Maqedonisë
AVOKATI I POPULLIT

O M B U D S M A N
Republic of Macedonia

According to its competencies, powers and mandate, the National Preventive Mechanism carried out unannounced visit to the Temporary Transit Center Tabanovce, on 20.05.2016 in order to assess the treatment of the migrants/refugees accommodated there. Particular attention was paid to the exercise of the rights of these persons guaranteed by the national and international law, as well as by the Convention on the Status of Refugees of 1951.

During the visit NPM got insight into the living conditions in the Center, met with officials and representatives of international and non-governmental organizations and got acquainted with their organizational structure and functional competence. They have also spoken with several persons accommodated in the Center, and therefore gathered information on their treatment and whether they have access to the asylum procedure.

The officials and representatives from several bodies and organizations which participate in the governance and the managing of the Center were constantly present on site (the Crisis Management Center, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Health, UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration - IOM, UNICEF, SOS Children's village, the Red Cross, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association and the NGO Legis).

The Transit Center has accommodation capacity of 1,000 persons. At the time of the visit there were 207 persons accommodated in the Center, of whom 129 were from Syria, 74 were from Afghanistan, 3 were from Iran and one person was from Iraq.

During the visit NPM noted concerning practice by officials of the Ministry of Interior. Namely, they prevent refugees / migrants to apply for recognition of the right to asylum, although this right is guaranteed by the Constitution and the Law on asylum and temporary protection.

In addition, it was found that the authorities responsible for keeping records of the migrants / refugees in the Transit Center do not keep official records on the number of persons who arrive and who leave the Center. Given that the Management of the Center did not allow the NPM to get insight into the official records of the number of persons residing in the Center (categorized by age, gender, date of arrival, etc.), despite the reference to the mandate of the Ombudsman and their insisting, it is obvious that there is an issue with the information in these lists.

In the light of improving the bad treatment of the migrants/refugees, the NPM issued a special report with recommendations to the competent authorities.