



Република Македонија
НАРОДЕН ПРАВОБРАНИТЕЛ

Republika e Maqedonisë
AVOKATI I POPULLIT

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

**SPECIAL REPORT ON THE VISIT TO RECEPTION
CENTER FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS**

August 2017, Skopje

1. DATA ON THE RECEPTION CENTER FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS IN VIZBEGOVO

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE VISIT

INSTITUTION	<i>Public Institution for Accommodation of Asylum-seekers "Reception Center for Asylum Seekers" Skopje</i>
TIME OF VISIT	<i>28 July, 2017 from 08:30 to 13:30 h</i>
PURPOSE OF VISIT	<i>Identification of possible risks in order to prevent torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in accordance with the mandate and competencies arising from the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Law on Ombudsman</i>
TYPE OF VISIT	<i>Regular unannounced visit</i>
THE VISIT WAS PERFORMED BY	<i>Ombudsman - National Preventive Mechanism (NPM)</i>

OFFICIALS' COOPERATION WITH THE NPM TEAM

The NPM Team experienced good collaboration and cooperation with the officials employed in the Reception Center, who enabled unfettered access to all facilities and installations and inspection of the documentation requested.

2. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

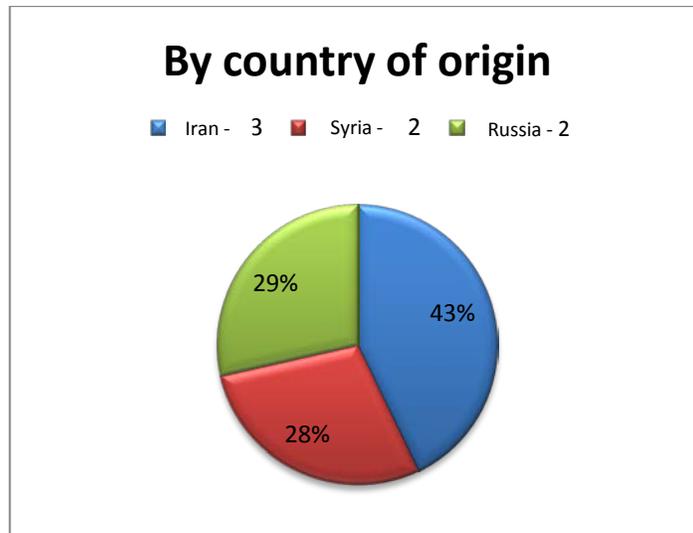
According to the Macedonia's Government Decision No. 19-5620/1 establishing the public institution for accommodation of asylum seekers ("Official Gazette of the RM" No.122/2007), the activity of the Reception Center shall be to provide accommodation, food, social services, cultural, entertainment and recreational activities and other services in compliance with the minimum standards for reception of asylum-seekers, established by international treaties ratified in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia.

From the interview with the Institution's Acting Director, the National Preventive Mechanism Team established that under the Act on Job Organization and Systematization, the total number of employees was planned to be 18, while the actual number of employees at the Center is 13. In this regard, it was noted that one archivist one chef, one janitor and two guards were lacking. The National Preventive Mechanism Team also received information that the job classification did not envisage any positions for a social worker and a jurist despite the need for such staff, given the type and nature of activity performed by this Center.

Within the Reception Center, based on Memorandums signed with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, offices are held by the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, International Organization for Migration, Association for action against violence and trafficking Open Gate - La Strada and Jesuit Refugee Service, which through their representatives, jointly and in coordination with the Center's responsible people, participate and assist in the realization of activities planned by the Center (legal information and advice, psycho-social support, educational activities, etc.).

3. NUMERICAL SITUATION

During the visit, a total of 7 asylum-seekers were accommodated at the Reception Center, of whom 5 men and 1 woman and 1 child (accompanied by a parent).



4. MATERIAL CONDITIONS

While having a tour of the Center's yard, the National Preventive Mechanism Team noticed that the Reception Center's outer fence was damaged in several places. Such damages were found in the fence located adjacently to the social housing building, where refugees from the Kosovo Refugee Crisis are accommodated and they are allowed to enter the Center's enclosure smoothly without being registered or recorded in any way whatsoever. In this regard, the interviewed asylum-seekers stressed out that people placed in social housing entered the Center's enclosure on a daily basis, very often in the evening, and disturbed them or bothered them (which sometimes leads to mutual rows or similar incidents) and some of the asylum-seekers suspect that these people have taken away (stolen) their clothing left to dry on the windows of their rooms.



The Center's enclosure includes a number of sports and recreational areas and corners designed for asylum-seekers, most of which are in good shape and functional, but some pieces of sporting equipment and swings are damaged and have to be repaired. The yard has several resting places, including benches and tables.



The NPM Team also inspected the accommodation facilities at the Center, which due to the small number of asylum-seekers, are mainly empty.

House Rules and Information for Center's residents envisage that immediately after their reception, asylum-seekers shall be placed in quarantine premises for 3-5 days until they are medically examined and the results thereof are obtained, but despite this, the National Preventive Mechanism Team noted that there was no special quarantine room at the Center.

While inspecting the premises intended for the accommodation of asylum-seekers, the National Preventive Mechanism found that entry doors' knobs of almost all the rooms were removed, and that the number of beds in one room was much larger than the capacity of the room in terms of its proscribed surface area. In addition, other damaged furniture was also spotted in a number of rooms, while in the rooms located on the top floor (the buildings have a ground floor and a first floor), traces of ceiling leakages, dampness and mold on the walls around the windows were observed.



In this regard, the National Preventive Mechanism recommends that repairs should be made to the damaged furniture in the accommodation premises, the roof structure should be repaired if necessary, while the number of beds in a room should comply with the minimum standards envisaged in terms of surface area per person (4m² per person), preferably not accommodating more than 5 people in one room simultaneously.

5. FOOD

Just like during its previous visits, the National Preventive Mechanism found that the quality and quantity of food was not at the adequate level, and in this regard, a number of remarks were also made by the asylum-seekers themselves.

The Reception Center's food is provided by a private company that has a special contract concluded. Given the large number of complaints, the NPM Team inspected the Delivery Notes related to the food delivered in the previous period and it concluded that the food was monotonous and mostly canned, vegetables were in small portions, while fruit and milk were almost non-existent.

5-day Menu according to Delivery Notes submitted					
Meal	17 Jun 2017	18 Jun 2017	19 Jun 2017	20 Jun 2017	21 Jun 2017
Breakfast	Jam and margarine	Feta cheese	Chocolate cream	Yellow cheese	Hot dogs
Lunch	Bread and canned meat	Bread and chicken slices	Bread and bean stew, salad and juice	Bread, mashed potatoes with burger and salad	Bread, peas with steak and dessert
Supper	Salami	Yellow cheese	Pâté	Canned meat	Chocolate cream

6. HEALTH CARE

Health care and the provision of basic health care services to asylum-seekers housed at the Center is provided by a doctor engaged from a private medical facility, who is present at the Center twice a week. The NPM considers it necessary to increase the presence of the doctor at the Center and also recommends that all newly admitted asylum-seekers should be medically examined within 24 hours of their admission to the Center, and if the asylum-seeker was admitted to the institution during a state holiday or weekend, the medical examination should be performed on the first working day after their reception. In addition to standard medical examinations, if possible, other regular

tests (blood tests, etc.) should be performed and also screening tests to identify the early signs of a particular disease, disorder or infectious disease.

7. PROCEDURE WITH UNACCOMPANIED CHILD ASYLUM-SEEKERS

During the visit, the Center had no unaccompanied child asylum-seekers, but in cases of unaccompanied children placed there, they are appointed a guardian from the Center for Social Work (CSW). Given that the appointed guardians are not consistently present in the Center and perform additional duties, the NPM deems it necessary that in cases of unaccompanied children, the CSW should appoint a special guardian who would be constantly present at the Center and in contact with the child.

8. EDUCATIONAL, CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ENTERTAINMENT

Within the Reception Center, educational, cultural and recreational activities and entertainment are organized, mostly by non-governmental and international organizations, and they are intended for both younger and older residents.

In this regard, classes in Macedonian, English, mathematics, science, civil society, etc. are organized daily for children aged 6-16, while for adults, language classes (Macedonian, English and Arabic) are also organized, as well as various creative workshops and sports activities (table tennis, darts, football etc.).

FINDINGS:

1. The Act on Job Organization and Systematization of the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers does not envisage positions for a social worker and a lawyer despite the need for such staff, given the type and nature of activity performed by this Center.

2. Damage to the outer fence of the Center allows uninvited persons to smoothly enter the enclosure of the institution without being registered or recorded in any way whatsoever.
3. Knobs are removed from entry doors, there is damaged furniture and excessive number of beds in some of the premises for accommodation of asylum-seekers.
4. Food distributed to asylum-seekers is not at the adequate level, either in terms of quality or quantity.
5. The Reception Center does not have a separate quarantine room.
6. The presence of the doctor only twice a week at the Reception Center is insufficient to provide health care to asylum-seekers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To the management of the Reception Center and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

1. The Reception Center's Act on Job Organization and Systematization should envisage positions for a social worker and a lawyer.

- To the Reception Center

1. The Center's outer fence which is damaged should be repaired.
2. Damaged furniture at accommodation facilities should be repaired and the number of beds in a room should comply with the minimum standards envisaged in terms of surface area per person (4m² per person), preferably including at most 5 people in one room simultaneously.
3. Urgent measures to improve the quality and quantity of food distributed to asylum-seekers should be taken.
4. A special quarantine room should be adapted.

5. More frequent presence of a doctor should be ensured at the Center, and mandatory medical examinations should be performed on all new asylum-seekers within 24 hours of their admission to the Center, and if the asylum-seeker is admitted to the institution during a public holiday or weekend, the medical examination should be performed on the first working day after their reception.

OMBUDSMAN

Ixhet Memeti