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Please find attached an allegation letter sent by the Independent Expert on Minority Issues and the Special Rapporteur on the right to education



**Mandates of the Independent Expert on Minority Issues and**  
**the Special Rapporteur on the right to education**

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REFERENCE: AL Education (1998-8) Minorities (2005-1)  
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27 May 2008

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Independent Expert on Minority Issues and Special Rapporteur on the right to education pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/33, to the General Assembly resolution 60/251 and to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and 7/6.

In this connection, we would like to bring to your Government's attention information we have received concerning the education of Roma children in Slovakia and issues relating to the closing down of the Lucenec high school, reportedly a high school for the Roma community.

According to the information received:

On 11 April 2008, the assembly of the Banska Bystrica self-governing region, central Slovakia, approved the closing down of the high school for low-income students, seated in Lucenec, reportedly the country's only high school for Roma, also including dormitories for students coming from other regions.

Reportedly this high-school was established four years ago as a pilot project aiming to enhance the education needs of the Roma community in Slovakia. The high school's operation was financed from the European Social Fund for the first three years. Its operation is to end due to the alleged lack of money and shortcomings in local teaching methods.

The regional Governor of Banska Bystrica allegedly said in a television interview that "the school has only few pupils, therefore it receives little money," and that extra subsidies would mean discrimination against other schools. The regional assembly reportedly decided that the Governor should ask the Central Education Ministry to abolish the school in June 2008. Until then, the region would negotiate with the Central Government on the possible preservation of the school under certain conditions. If the negotiations were to be successful, the assembly could revoke its decision.

It is further reported that the planned closure of the school has been criticized by Deputy Prime Minister Dusan Caplovic, who allotted the budget of 6 million crowns to it last year.

H.E. Mr. Anton Pinter  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Permanent Mission of Slovak Republic  
to the United Nations Office at Geneva

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of this information, we would like to refer Your Excellency's Government to article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and articles 28 and 29 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, both Conventions ratified by your country in 1993, which consecrate everyone's right to education. In this context we would like to bring your Excellency's attention to The Special Rapporteur on the right to education Annual report 2005 (E/CN.4/2005/50), where it is stated that security in schools forms part of the human right to education and that security means not only physical, psychological and moral safety but also a right to be educated without interruption in conditions conducive to the formation of knowledge and character development. We would also recall to Your Excellency's Government the provision of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

Slovakia joined the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, an intergovernmental initiative to break the vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion experienced by Roma communities. The Slovak government has asserted the need for better education for the Roma community as one of its priorities, as only 3 percent of Slovak Romanis have high school education and only 0.3 percent are university graduates. According to several reports received by Special Procedures, the causes behind this lay in the fact that Roma children are unnecessarily placed in special schools or special remedial classes on the basis of assessments which do not take into account cultural and linguistic differences. In such segregated schools Romani children reportedly receive a substandard education and have almost no possibilities of integrating into mainstream schools or of advancing beyond compulsory education. Subsequently high drop out rates of Roma children are reported.

In addition, the right to education can be outlined through the 4-As framework: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. This means that educational institutions and programmes must be available in sufficient quantity and must be accessible to everyone, without discrimination. In addition, these institutions and programmes should be relevant, of a good quality and culturally appropriate and they must respond to the needs of communities and of students within their diverse social and cultural settings.

We urge your Government to take all necessary measures to guarantee that the rights and freedoms of Roma children and the Roma community are respected in regard to education and we request that your Government adopts effective measures to this end.

Moreover, it is our responsibility under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention. Since we are expected to report on these cases to the Human Rights Council, we would be grateful for your cooperation and your observations on the following matters:

1. Are the facts alleged in the above summary of the case accurate?
2. Has a complaint been lodged? If so, please provide the details, and where available the results, of any investigation, or other inquiry which may have been carried out in relation to this case.
3. Please provide full details of your policy and practice in regard to Roma education, including: What measures and policies have been taken to ensure access to and integration of Roma children into the mainstream school system in Slovakia? Are there any concrete plans and measures to eradicate alleged school segregation and discriminatory placement of Roma children in special schools or remedial classes? In the case of the closing of the Lucenec high school, how would the Roma students be guaranteed the right and access to a culturally adequate education? To what extent do mainstream schools in Slovakia take into account the linguistic and cultural rights of Roma children? What measures are taken to ensure that the 4As framework will be respected for the Romani children?
4. Has there been an evaluation of the pilot project aimed to enhance the education needs of the Roma community in Slovakia, which led to the establishment of this high school? If so, did the Roma community participate in this evaluation?

5. Has there been an evaluation on the quality of this high-school (quality of curriculum, teachers, etc.) and has the Government taken steps to encourage attendance and to reduce drop-out?

We would appreciate a response within sixty days. We undertake to ensure that your Government's response to each of these questions is accurately reflected in the reports we will submit to the Human Rights Council for its consideration.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.



Gay McDougall  
Independent Expert on Minority Issues



Vernor Muñoz Villalobos  
Special Rapporteur on the right to education