



**REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
PROTECTOR OF CITIZENS**

281 – 21 / 16  
Belgrade



Заштитник грађана  
Zaštitnik građana



БЕОГРАДСКИ ЦЕНТАР  
ЗА ЛЈУДСКА ПРАВА

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## **NATIONAL PREVENTIVE MECHANISM**

### **MONITORING OF THE TREATMENT OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

# **Report on the Visit to the Subotica Reception Centre**

Belgrade, March 2016

## MANDATE OF THE NATIONAL PREVENTIVE MECHANISM

Under the Act Ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Degrading or Humiliating Treatment or Punishment<sup>1</sup>, the National Preventive Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture (NPM) shall visit institutions where persons are or may be deprived of their liberty with a view to deterring any form of torture or other form of ill-treatment by state authorities or public officials and to providing guidance to state authorities on putting in place accommodation and other living conditions in institutions where persons are deprived of liberty in accordance with the valid regulations and standards.

The NPM is entitled to unimpeded and unannounced access to all institutions where persons are or may be deprived of liberty at all times; to hold private interviews with such persons, with public officials, who are under the obligation to cooperate with it, and with any other persons who may have information of relevance to the treatment of persons deprived of liberty; to access all documentation regarding those persons; to issue recommendations to the competent authorities with a view to improving the treatment of persons deprived of liberty and the conditions in which they are held or detained.

Under Article 2a of the Act, the Protector of Citizens shall perform NPM duties and, in performing these duties, cooperate with the Ombudspersons of the autonomous provinces and with associations, the Statutes of which include the goal of improving human rights and freedoms in accordance with the law.

The Protector of Citizens and the AP of Vojvodina Provincial Ombudsperson have signed a Memorandum on Cooperation in Performing NPM Duties<sup>2</sup>, under which the Provincial Ombudsperson shall actively partake in the visits by NPM Monitoring Team to institutions in the territory of the AP of Vojvodina where persons are deprived of liberty.

Pursuant to the procedure implemented after the publication of the Public Call<sup>3</sup>, the Protector of Citizens selected the associations with which it will cooperate in performing NPM duties, notably: the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), the Victimology Society of Serbia, Group 484, the Mental Disability Rights Initiative - Serbia (MDRI-S), the Committee of Human Rights Lawyers (YUCOM), the International Aid Network (IAN), the Human Rights Committee - Valjevo, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia and the Human Rights Centre - Niš.

After its visits, the NPM prepares reports which it forwards to the visited institutions. Thereinafter, the NPM maintains continuous dialogue with the visited institutions and the authorities within which they operate, with a view to eliminating the identified deficiencies that may lead to torture or inhuman or humiliating treatment.

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1 Official Journal of Serbia and Montenegro - International Treaties Nos 16/2005 and 2/2006 and Official Gazette of RS - International Treaties No. 7/2011.

2 Signed on 12 December 2011.

3 Published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia on 29 January 2016.

## MAIN INFORMATION ON THE VISIT

VISITED INSTITUTION	Subotica Reception Centre
PURPOSE OF THE VISIT	Monitoring of treatment of refugees and migrants
VISIT CONDUCTED BY	Protector of Citizens in cooperation with the Provincial Ombudsperson and the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights
DATE OF VISIT	25 March 2016
VISIT ANNOUNCED	The visit was announced in advance
VISIT TEAM	<p><b>Team Leader:</b> Aniko Širkova <i>Deputy Provincial Ombudsperson</i></p> <p><b>Team Members:</b> Dušan Pokuševski <i>Belgrade Centre for Human Rights</i> Marko Štambuk <i>Belgrade Centre for Human Rights</i></p>

## COOPERATION OF OFFICIALS WITH THE NPM TEAM

All officials of the Subotica Reception Centre fully cooperated with the NPM Team, providing it with all the information it required and free access to the documentation on request.

## 1. Introduction

The Subotica Reception Centre is located around 3.5 km from the centre of the city. It was opened on 16 November 2015. The Centre is managed by the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration. In addition to the Manager, the Centre is staffed by four other Commissariat personnel.

Since the beginning of the year, 201 people have stayed in the Centre (99 in January and 102 in February). No migrants or refugees have stayed in the Centre since 24 February 2016.

## 2. Admission to the Centre and Notification of Rights and Duties

The refugees are admitted to the Centre after the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration notifies the Centre Manager of the refugees' arrival by phone. According to the Manager, this arrangement prevents all potential abuses of the Centre, given that it is designated for accommodating only refugees and migrants. The Commissariat staff keep records of the people who have stayed in the Centre.

Refugees stayed at the Centre several days on average, to sleep and rest, before heading on, towards the European Union.

According to the Manager, the Commissariat engages interpreters when necessary. An Arabic interpreter was present at the Centre in February. The Centre has no House Rules or publications notifying the refugees/migrants of their rights and duties.

### ***RECOMMENDATION***

**Draft the House Rules and visibly display English, Arabic and Farsi translations of them in the Reception Centre.**

According to the officials, the Centre Management is under the duty to notify the competent Social Welfare Centre of any unaccompanied minors it admits, but none of the aliens who had passed through the Centre since it opened were identified as unaccompanied minors. As of the day of the visit, the Centre staff did not notice any cases of ill-treatment or trafficking in humans.

## 3. Health Care

According to the Manager, all people residing at the Centre are provided with health care. The Centre has established good cooperation with the Subotica Outpatient Health Clinic and its doctors come to the Centre and extend medical aid when necessary. As of the day of the visit, the doctor came only once to treat a resident, a child with a high fever.

## 4. Accommodation

The Centre facility, in which the refugees are accommodated, comprises six rooms (five dormitories and a living room). The dormitories are furnished with bunk beds, mattresses, bed linen and small wardrobes, where the residents can keep their belongings. The living room is furnished with tables and chairs.



The Manager says that the Centre can take in up to 55 people, but that it can accommodate more people if necessary. The Centre staff turned the living room into a dormitory whenever larger groups of refugees arrived; men were accommodated in this makeshift dormitory.



The Centre has two bathrooms (one for men and one for women). Each has three shower cabins and three toilets. The hygiene in the Centre is good. All the Centre accommodation premises have gas heating.



A first-aid room and an office for police officers are located in the Centre's Management Building. Foundations for a future storage facility have been laid behind the refugee accommodation facility.



## 5. Meals and Humanitarian Aid

According to the Centre Manager, the Red Cross provides all the Centre residents with daily rations of packed meals that meet the dietary requirements of the refugees and migrants. The Red Cross also provides the refugees and migrants with the clothes and footwear they need.