

Mr. Suad Numanovic
Minister of Labor, Health and Social Care

Podgorica, 25 March 2010

Dear Mr. Numanovic,

We address you with concern regarding years-long inhuman and degrading treatment of residents of the Institute "Komanski most".

The first information about negative practice in this institution we received in 2001, when the "Shelter for Women and Children Victims of Violence" received a photograph showing sexual abuse of a minors by an adult. That was followed by the reaction in the form of letter to the police and authorities, but an adequate response was never received. The then director of this institution, Mr. Vuk Mirkovic, who is still on the same post, commented at the time, to our dismay, that "that is not unusual" (!)¹

In 2001, the beginning of construction of a special pavilion to house minors was announced, who were back then, as well as in 2010, completely inadequately, in the same area with adult residents.

Following the visit of the representatives of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (hereafter CPT) in September 2008, the report was published confirming not only the claims of the Shelter presented back in year 2001, but pointing out a number of shortcomings in the work of this institution related to the inadequate care and living conditions, as well as the severe cases of physical punishment of the residents and the problem of sexual harassment and abuse.

Thus, in the third section the CPT report, which deals with the living conditions of the residents of this institution the following was stated:

"At the time of the visit, residents' living conditions were appalling. Ward B was accommodating 67 residents distributed into 12 dormitories. In the totally bare and malodorous rooms, residents (some of whom were physically handicapped or blind as well as mentally disabled) were seen to lie alone, occasionally with their heads covered with a blanket, some naked, with flies crawling on them. In a locked „baby room“, the delegation saw 5 bedridden residents, aged between 3 and 19, lying in cots. There is also a locked dayroom where about 25 residents (men, women and children together) were left wandering alone. Further, in an unstaffed and locked part of the ward where residents appeared to be left alone, the delegation found a dayroom in which 7 residents were fixated to furniture (see paragraph 127)...“ It is further stated.. „the level of hygiene, particularly on Ward B, holding the more vulnerable and challenging residents, did not befit a care institution. In some of the dormitories there was

¹ The daily "Dan", 5 November 2001

urine and faeces on the floor. Walls and bedding. Furthermore, the establishment was infested with mice“..

The report further emphasizes the policy of the institution on the performance of abortions in cases of pregnancy of the residents of this institution, not to inform or consult their guardians².

In addition to the aforementioned report, our non-governmental organizations have received several complaints by parents of the children who wish to remain anonymous because of their safety and welfare of their children.

Taking into consideration the aforementioned report, the complaints of the parents and the recent case of return, and re-admission to this institution of the daughter of Svetlana Knezevic Bozovic, after her appeal to the Shelter for Women and Children Victims of Violence, indicate that the situation in this institution is, unfortunately, still very bad.

We believe that the requirements for fundamental changes in the work of this institution have been reached, therefore in this way we plead for:

1. immediate dismissal of the administration of Komanski most, which was responsible for the unacceptable conditions in this institution, stated in the CPT report, and which to date did not provide the conditions necessary for humane treatment of persons with special needs, also proved by the case of the attempt to deny necessary care to the daughter of Svetlana Knezevic Bozovic;

2. immediate creation of the conditions for separate rooms for adults and children and the adoption of all recommendations from the CPT report, related to a comprehensive review of the situation in Komanski most and creation of a detailed action plan for the reform of this institution.

NGO Shelter for Women and Children Victims of Violence

NGO EKVISTA

NGO Human Rights Action

NGO The first association of parents of children with special needs

Aleksandar Zekovic, human rights violation researcher

² Chapter no. 5, paragraph 123, page no. 70 of the CPT report