

# Press Release

**Council of Europe Press Division**

**Ref: 286a06**

**Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60**

**Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 11**

**[pressunit@coe.int](mailto:pressunit@coe.int)**

**internet: [www.coe.int/press](http://www.coe.int/press)**



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## **Council of Europe Anti-Torture Committee publishes report on Serbia and Montenegro**

Strasbourg, 18.05.2006 - The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) has published today the report on its first visit to [Serbia and Montenegro](#), which took place in September 2004. The report has been made public at the request of the authorities of Serbia and Montenegro, together with their interim response.

During the visit, the CPT received numerous allegations of physical ill-treatment of persons detained by the police, both in Serbia and Montenegro. The Committee has recommended a series of measures designed to combat ill-treatment by the police, including stepping up of professional training, diligent investigation of all information regarding possible ill-treatment and subjecting perpetrators of ill-treatment to severe sanctions. Other recommendations aim at improving the practical implementation of the fundamental safeguards of notification of custody to a third party, access to a lawyer and access to a doctor for persons detained by the police.

In Serbia, the CPT paid visits to Sremska Mitrovica Penitentiary Reformatory, Belgrade District Prison and Belgrade Prison Hospital. Inter-prisoner violence was a serious problem at all of them; the Committee has recommended the development of a comprehensive strategy aimed at combating this phenomenon throughout the prison system. Following observations by the CPT, the use of chains and padlocks to restrain patients at the Prison Hospital was stopped. The Committee has also called upon the authorities to carry out an urgent renovation programme at the hospital and to increase the medical staffing levels. In their response, the Serbian authorities make reference to measures taken to improve material conditions and employ more staff.

In Montenegro, the CPT visited Spuz Prison Complex. No allegations of ill-treatment of inmates by staff were received. However, the severe lack of staff at the closed correctional facility, combined with overcrowding, was putting both staff and prisoners at risk. The CPT has recommended a full review of the staffing arrangements. Particular attention was paid to the high-security unit; material conditions in that unit were extremely poor and there were no organised activities, apart from outdoor exercise. Urgent measures to remedy this situation have been proposed by the Committee. In their response, the Montenegrin authorities highlight changes made, such as the taking out of service of the disciplinary cells in the high-security unit and increasing staff levels.

In the area of psychiatry, the CPT examined the situation at "Laza Lazarević" Hospital in Serbia and Dobrota Special Psychiatric Hospital in Montenegro. Virtually no allegations of deliberate ill-treatment of patients by staff were received at either establishment. However, the CPT has expressed concern about the excessive reliance on physical restraints at "Laza Lazarević" Hospital. As regards Dobrota Hospital, the authorities have taken steps to improve material conditions in Ward 7, as proposed by the Committee. The visit report also contains recommendations aimed at reinforcing the safeguards surrounding involuntary placement in psychiatric establishments.

The CPT's visit report and the interim response of the authorities of Serbia and Montenegro are available on the Committee's website: <http://www.cpt.coe.int>.

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