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Council of Europe anti-torture committee calls on Romania to combat ill-treatment in prisons

Strasbourg, 24.09.2015 – In a [report](#) on Romania published today, the Council of Europe anti-torture committee (CPT) expresses its concern about numerous credible allegations of ill-treatment by persons held in prisons, although it also points out significant progress in reducing such practice in police stations.

The CPT, which visited Romania in June 2014, received the most serious allegations from inmates held in high security conditions in the Arad and Oradea prisons; where even beatings to inmates by special intervention forces were reported, including punches (sometimes with reinforced gloves), kicks with knees and feet, and truncheon blows. The delegation collected information in a number of medical files which were consistent with these allegations. It seems that most often these cases were disproportionate reactions aimed to punish inmates involved in violent incidents.

The Committee also received allegations of ill-treatment in Târgșor women's prison, where apparently staff had warned inmates not to speak to the CPT delegation. In all three prisons inmates seemed reluctant to speak out of fear of reprisals.

The CPT urges the Romanian authorities to prevent and combat any kind of ill-treatment by regularly reminding police and prison staff, and in particular members of intervention forces, that ill-treatment is a crime and will be prosecuted, and that proportional force should be used to deal with violent inmates.

Overcrowding, which is a persisting problem in the penitentiary system, was observed in all prisons visited. The Committee is concerned about the lack of guards since this can increase the risk of violence among inmates, as well as heighten the tension between inmates and prison staff. Medical staff was not sufficient in Arad and Târgșor prisons, whereas it was satisfactory in the Bucharest-Rahova penitentiary hospital.

Most individuals interviewed by the CPT in police stations said they had been treated correctly. The number and seriousness of ill-treatment allegations by police decreased with regard to the previous visit in 2011, and mostly took place at the moment of the arrest or during questioning.

Living conditions at police stations remained mediocre due to overcrowding, disrepair, insalubrity, and insufficient access to natural light and ventilation.

The CPT found satisfactory material conditions in the Sector 2 Bucharest neuropsychiatric recovery and re-adaptation centre, but not in the Sapoca Hospital, where in many units space for patients was insufficient and some even had to share beds with other patients. Both institutions were understaffed.

In their [Response](#), which was published together with the CPT report, the Romanian authorities refer to the zero tolerance policy towards police ill-treatment and provide detailed information on the training activities of police officers in the human rights field. They also provide detailed information regarding the management and professional training of members of the intervention groups, among other measures.

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) organises visits to places of detention in the 47 Council of Europe member states in order to assess how persons deprived of their liberty are treated. These places include prisons, juvenile detention centres, police stations, holding centres for immigration detainees, psychiatric hospitals and social care homes. After each visit, the CPT prepares a report containing its findings and recommendations.

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