

HATE CRIME ANNUAL REPORT

2023

HATE
CRIMES



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1. ABOUT THE PROJECT

This report presents the findings resulting from the activities that the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights carried out in the period from April 1st to December 31st 2023, with the financial support from the OSCE Mission to Skopje within the framework of the project “Support to North Macedonia in Improving the Rule of Law and Human Rights III”. This report provides an overview of data reflecting the entire year of 2023, between January 1st and December 31st 2023. The goal of this project is to improve the implementation of the legislation and the institutions’ response in the field of human rights and anti-discrimination by policy amendments and supplements, application of effective legal remedies and strengthening of institutions. One of the objectives was and still is to improve the national response to hate crimes and speech by monitoring, recording and processing hate crimes in compliance with the amended legislative framework. These activities are expected to raise the awareness of the harmful effects of hate speech and intolerance.

The first step in ensuring an effective system for hate crime victim protection is to build the capacities of criminal justice bodies in the area of recording bias incidents. Specifically, the purpose of the report is to be used as an indicator of the extent, nature and frequency of hate crime incidents committed in the country.

As part of its mandate as a project implementing partner, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights implemented the following activities in the course of 2023:

- 1.1.** Providing legal aid to victims of hate incidents and monitoring the court processes for specific hate crime cases committed on various protected grounds;
- 1.2.** Maintaining, updating and promoting the website www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com in Macedonian, Albanian and English;
- 1.3.** Monitoring and recording hate crimes and incidents;
- 1.4.** Compiling and publishing monthly bulletins on the situation with hate crimes in the country based on the collected and analysed data regarding the work of the Helsinki Committee and the two networks – the Network for Protection against Discrimination and the National Network against Homophobia and Transphobia;
- 1.5.** Developing, translating and publishing the 2023 Monitoring Report in Macedonian, Albanian and English;
 - 1.5.1.** Preparing, publishing, promoting and distributing an infographic offering a brief overview of the 2024 data on recorded hate crimes;
 - 1.5.2.** Overview of reported hate crime incidents and contribution to ODIHR 2023 Annual Report on Hate Crimes and Incidents in the OSCE Region;
- 1.6.** Analysis of the national system for hate crime statistics, in the country’s public prosecutor’s offices and courts.
- 1.7.** Celebrating the World Day for Cultural Diversity (May 19th) by organising the “Turlitava 7” event.

2. METHODOLOGY

In North Macedonia, as well as globally, hate crimes are rarely reported, under the assumption that victims do not believe that their reports will receive a positive resolution, or for fear of lengthy court processes and costs. Therefore, any information obtained in relation to prevention is of great importance in order to identify the most common type of incidents, negative trends, crime scenes and the relationship between the victims and the perpetrators. It is necessary to point out that hate crimes is not a phenomenon that only affects specific communities, on the contrary, they are a direct attack on the democratic society and principles underlying the human rights.

Hate crime incidents do not happen accidentally, rather, they are a violent manifestation of divisions, stereotypes and prejudices. Aimed at the identity of a person, hate crimes inflict greater harm and consequences than even the basic criminal offences. The immediate hate crime victim, as well as the people in the victim's immediate environment belonging to the same group, suffer great trauma and acute feeling of insecurity as a result of the fact that they have been targeted exactly on account of certain characteristics which they cannot change. The best solution to a hate crime, once it has been committed, is to initiate appropriate court proceedings and to have it sanctioned. Such a public recognition can reassure the victims that their suffering has been fully and appropriately acknowledged, which will further increase the confidence of other community members that hate crimes will be punished¹.

In this report, "hate crime" is used to mean a criminal offense against a natural or legal person and the associated persons or property that has been committed, in whole or in part, on account of a real or perceived (fictitious, imagined) characteristic or affiliation of the person regarding their race, skin colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, mental or physical disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation and political belief.² Anyone can become a victim of a hate crime, although the most common victims are members of vulnerable communities. Hate crimes are typically aimed at members of a different ethnic community, religious or sacred structures, Roma people, sexual minorities and internally displaced persons.

Hence, the hate crime reporting methodology employed in this report consists of learning from past experiences and data, maintaining an interactive hate crime reporting website, monitoring the national print and electronic media, monitoring the daily bulletins of the Ministry of Interior, cooperating with informal networks for the purpose of monitoring and recording the hate crimes aimed at specific target groups, and reporting and double-checking the hate crimes and incidents with the OSCE Mission to Skopje.

¹ Šečić v. Croatia, application no. 40116/02 of 31.08.2007, pp. 66-70.

² Article 122 Paragraph 42 of the Criminal Code (The Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia Nos. 37/96, 80/99, 4/02, 43/03, 19/04, 81/05, 60/06, 73/06, 7/08, 139/08, 114/09, 51/11, 135/11, 185/11, 142/12, 166/12, 55/13, 82/13, 14/14, 27/14, 28/14, 41/14, 115/14, 132/14, 160/14, 199/14, 196/15, 226/15, 97/17 and 248/18; and The Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 36/23).

2.1. Learning from past experiences and data

In order to apply a diagnostic approach to the collection of hate crime data and deploy a robust monitoring systems, the Helsinki Committee initially relied on past experiences and developed best practices from which the results are applied. On the other hand, data collection is the first step to combating hate crimes because reliable information and statistics are necessary for developing targeted policies and adjusting the support for victims. Therefore, when compiling this report, past work reports in this field were taken into account.³

2.2. Maintaining an interactive website for reporting hate crimes

The web portal – www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com, available since 2013, is an interactive tool where citizens can get informed about the committed hate crimes and report the incidents. It includes an interactive map showing the exact or approximate location where the incident has occurred. The home page offers categories of hate crimes and bias motives, information on how citizens can report incidents, through an electronic application, email and internet forms, with statistical charts also displayed. Frequently asked questions, resources and glossary can also be found on the web portal, which regularly publishes information about the project, the meaning and the scope of hate crimes, as well as publications related to this phenomenon. All materials are available in Macedonian, Albanian and English.

2.3. Cooperation with two informal networks for monitoring and recording hate crimes aimed at specific target groups

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights has established cooperation in the field of hate crime with the two informal networks of which it is a member – the Network for Protection against Discrimination and the National Network against Homophobia and Transphobia, so as to widen the scope of monitoring and recording of hate crimes aimed at specific target groups. The monitoring scope increased through both these networks also meant gaining an access to the victims of bias-motivated incidents based on (perceived) sexual orientation and gender identity, who were provided by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights with advice and support.

2.4. Monitoring of the national print and electronic media

In 2023, the Helsinki Committee continued with monitoring a number of daily newspapers propounding different ideological views and political affiliations. The monitoring of electronic media is carried out daily, through the two most popular news generators (www.time.mk and www.grid.mk), and also by using the advanced browsing options in the “news” section of www.google.com. The main purpose of media monitoring is to identify the potential occurrences of hate incidents and to call the

³ <https://zlostorstvaodomraza.com/izvestaj/>.

alleged victims for an interview, as well as to offer them an opportunity for legal aid or to monitor the judicial process of their case.

2.5. Reporting and verification of hate crimes/incidents with the OSCE Mission to Skopje

Details related to the incidents (what happened, date, time, place, source of information, victims and perpetrators involved, case status, local authorities' response and impact on victims and the community) were regularly reported to the OSCE Mission to Skopje. Case monitoring was greatly facilitated by the continued successful operation of the web-based hate crime mapping platform. In addition to the possibility to follow the hate crime incidents online after their occurrence, the OSCE Mission to Skopje also received a temporary final report prepared by the Helsinki Committee. The findings were also shared with the OSCE/ODIHR for their annual hate crime report in the OSCE participating states.

By implementing these activities, the Helsinki Committee recorded 197 hate crimes/incidents for the period between January 1st and December 31st 2023, an increase of 23% compared to 2022. 27 of the recorded cases have clear bias indicators, while for the rest of the incidents, according to other indicators (location, method of commission, involvement of minors and high school students, etc.), a reasonable belief exists that they were committed because of the ethnic affiliation of the victim, or of the perpetrator.

These results are presented in the summary of key findings, but the report also includes an annex detailing each of the hate crime incident reported through the website www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com in 2023.

3. SUMMARY OF

KEY FINDINGS

Context

For the fifth consecutive year⁴, the European Commission (EC) has noted, in its 2023 Report on North Macedonia, that the availability of official data on hate crime remains sporadic despite the authorities' efforts to develop a data recording and collection system. Moreover, the European Commission has emphasised the need for efforts to be made to strengthen the capacities of the police and the judicial authorities to more effectively prevent and prosecute all instances of violence, hate crimes and hate speech, as part of a broader effort to encourage a more tolerant and non-discriminatory culture in the society.⁵ The EC also identified the Helsinki Committee as the only civil society organisation that continues to successfully collect and analyse the data on hate crimes. The EC stated that a systematic practice should be put in place for collecting data and dealing with hate speech and hate crime.⁶

The general conclusion is that the adequate and timely identification and recording of hate crimes by police officers, prosecution authorities and judicial authorities remains at an unsatisfactory level. The Ministry of Interior reported to the OSCE/ODIHR about 52 unspecified incidents in 2023 and two incidents of physical attack on LGBTI people.⁷ The Ministry's 2023 Annual Report, in its hate crimes section, includes data on a total of 41 criminal offences that incorporate elements of hate.⁸ However, a review of the Ministry of the Interior's statistics reveals that 31 of these criminal offences constituted "Dissemination of racist and xenophobic material through a computer system", 6 had to do with "Endangering one's security through an information system", 2 were criminal offences of "provoking hatred, discord or intolerance based on national, racial, religious and other discrimination ground", and one of each was "violence" and "racial and other discrimination".⁹ Presenting the statistics in this way only shows that the Ministry of Interior has failed to make a distinction between hate speech and hate crime.

This report shows precisely whose rights were most violated in the period between 01.01.2023 and 31.12.2023 in North Macedonia, as a result of bias-motivated incidents and hate crimes. This report provides an overview of the number of incidents, type of criminal offences, place and time of commission, protected characteristics of victims (race, skin colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, mental or physical disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation and political belief),

4 European Commission, *North Macedonia 2019 Report*, Brussels, 29 May 2019, pp. 20, 24, 30, 31., European Commission, *North Macedonia 2020 Report*, Brussels, 6 October 2020, p. 32., European Commission, *North Macedonia 2021 Report*, Brussels, 19 October 2021, p. 32., European Commission, *North Macedonia 2023 Report*, Brussels, 12 October 2023 pp. 32-35.

5 European Commission, *North Macedonia 2023 Report*, Brussels, 8 November 2023 p. 34.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

7 For more details, see: <http://hatecrime.osce.org/north-macedonia>.

8 Ministry of Interior, 2023 Annual Report. p. 69. Available at: https://mvr.gov.mk/Upload/Editor_Upload/Godisen%20izvestaj/%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%B5%D0%BD%20%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%98%202023.pdf

9 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

as well as data on perpetrators. At the end, the conclusions point to where immediate and effective interventions are necessary to prevent future harm. Hence, this report may prove a useful tool for further steps to be taken by decision makers in their fight against hate crime.

3.1. Number of incidents

In 2023, the MHC recorded 197 potential hate crime incidents, of which, 35 incidents had clear bias indicators.¹⁰ The incidents were recorded immediately after they were published by the media or by the Ministry of Interior in its daily bulletins.

Confirmation of the potential incidents was requested from the Ministry of Interior, specifically for 151 potential incidents from SIA Skopje, for 14 potential incidents from SIA Tetovo, for three potential incidents from PS-GC Gostivar, and one potential incident each from SIA Kumanovo and SIA Strumica. In its response, SIA Skopje gave us data only on the filed criminal/misdemeanour charges and the criminal offences/misdemeanours for the potential incidents, without responding to whether indications exist that the incidents have occurred on account of a specific protected characteristic of the persons involved in accordance with Article 122 Paragraph 42 of the Criminal Code. However, from the response received, it can be noted that in none of the cases for which charges were filed was the action qualified as a criminal offence or misdemeanour committed out of hatred. SIA Tetovo has explicitly stated in its report that the specified actions were not committed out of hatred, while PS-GC Gostivar submitted data from which it can be noted that there are no bias indicators in the specific cases. SIA Kumanovo and SIA Strumica did not submit any response to the submitted requests for public information.

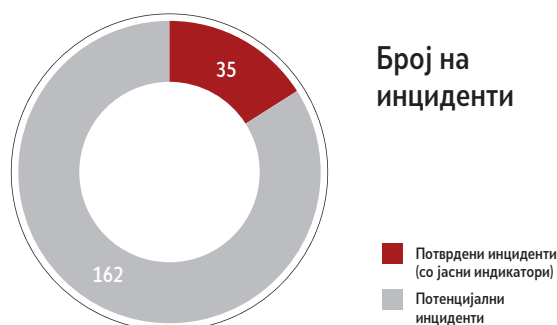
For most of the unconfirmed potential incidents and hate crimes, and according to other indicators (location, method of commission, involvement of minors and high school students, etc.), a reasonable belief exists that they were committed because of the ethnic affiliation of the victim, or of the perpetrator. These unconfirmed potential incidents were nevertheless included in this report because they are related to situations where, according to other indicators, grounds exist to believe that these incidents were bias-motivated. These bias indicators include:

- victim/witness perception;
- onsite commenting;
- ethnically based difference between the victim and the perpetrator;
- pattern/frequency of previous incidents;
- nature of the violence;
- absence of other motives; and
- place and time.

More precisely, the potential incidents have been included in this report because of information obtained about the location (example: ethnically mixed neighbourhood or school, bus routes used by members of different ethnic communities, locations where hate crimes have taken place in the past);

¹⁰ The incidents with clear bias indicators were posted on the website www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com.

the type (example: larger group of minors attack one or more victims without any provocation, group confrontations, attacks on buses or at bus stops); the time (example: after previous confrontations as a form of revenge, after school, during or after a sports match); and the property damaged during the incident (example: sites of religious ceremonies).



Once again, ethnicity accounts for most of the grounds of committed hate crimes in 2023 (179 incidents, 90.86%). The motive in 2 incidents is political belief and political affiliation, 6 incidents happened as a result of religious beliefs, 2 incidents were motivated by sexual orientation, and 8 incidents occurred based on some other protected characteristics. Victims and perpetrators are mostly young people and members of different ethnic communities, members of sports teams' supporters' clubs, or supporters of political parties. It often happens that one incident meets the criteria for suspecting the existence of two or more criminal offences, resulting in the number of criminal offences being greater than the number of incidents.

Most of the alleged criminal offences include: violence (153), bodily and grievous bodily harm (24), damage to property (7), robbery (2), destruction of symbols (4), inciting national, racial, religious hatred, discord and intolerance (5), serious threat (1), endangering one's security (3) and causing public danger (2). Details of the incidents, such as brief description, date, time, place, source of information, victims and perpetrators involved, case status, local authorities' response and impact on victims and the community, are found in the Annex to this report under the heading "Hate crime incidents in 2023". The Annex also includes a field on "bias indicators" for each individual incident. Following data are specified in this field: victim/witness perception; onsite commenting; ethnically based difference between the victim and the perpetrator; pattern/frequency of previous incidents; nature of the violence; absence of other motives; and place and time.

In June 2023, the MHC sent its 2023 Annual Hate Crime Report to the OSCE/ODIHR¹¹ and is still the only non-governmental organisation that systematically supplies information to the OSCE/ODIHR regarding the situation with hate crimes in the country.

With only 2 recorded incidents committed on the ground of political affiliation and belief, it can be said that the number of incidents with political bias continued to decrease this year, unlike

¹¹ See: <http://hatecrime.osce.org/north-macedonia>.

previous years when, before and during the electoral processes, the number of hate incidents based on political affiliation would increase significantly.¹²

The most prominent is the trend of incidents that have occurred based on the different ethnic origins of the perpetrator and the victim. In 2013 these incidents accounted for 84% of the total incidents (98 out of 116), while in 2014 this share was 61% (53 out of 87). In the course of 2015, only 36% of incidents (16 out of 44) took place between Macedonians and Albanians, in 2016 the share was 49% of all incidents (34 out of 70), and in 2017 – 29 incidents (41%). In 2018, the number of recorded hate crime incidents based on ethnic origin increased again to 64% (79 out of 123) of all recorded incidents. In 2019 – 85% of all recorded incidents (135 out of 159); in 2020 – 73% (76 out of 104); and in 2021 – 36% (29 out of 80)¹³. In 2022, 83.75% (134 incidents) of the total number of incidents occurred based on the different ethnic origins of the perpetrator and the victim.¹⁴ In 2023, too, the trend of ethnically based incidents continued, and accounted for 90% (179 incidents) of the total number of recorded cases (197). The incidents mostly take place between members of the Macedonian and Albanian communities.

3.2. Types of criminal offences

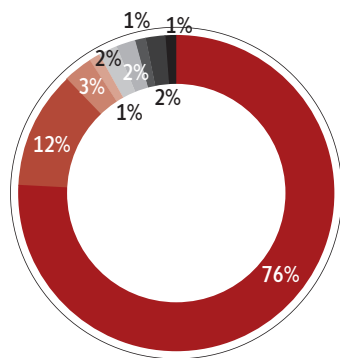
Most of the incidents were committed by young people, while most of the perpetrators are unknown. The victims and the perpetrators are usually members of different ethnic communities, while the reported incidents are related to specific criminal offences from the Criminal Code: violence (153), bodily and grievous bodily harm (24), damage to property (7), robbery (2), destruction of symbols (4), inciting national, racial, religious hatred, discord and intolerance (5), serious threat (1), endangering one's security (3), and causing public danger (2). Very often, one incident meets the criteria for two or more criminal offences (for example: violence and theft), so the number of criminal offences is sometimes higher than the number of incidents shown in the data.¹⁵

12 All recorded incidents on this ground were recorded in October 2021 during the local elections. In most incidents committed as a result of political affiliation or political belief, the victims are not people, but legal entities, as a result of the fact that the majority of these incidents involve property damage and material damage. For more details, see: <https://mhc.org.mk/reports/godishen-izvestaj-za-sostojbata-so-chovekovite-prava-vo-2021-godina/>.

13 In the course of 2021, a total of 80 incidents were recorded, which is 20% less than the year 2020. The reason for the reduced number of recorded incidents is that in 2020 the MHC had a more restrictive approach, and due to the lack of feedback from the Ministry of Interior regarding potential hate crimes, we only recorded those actions for which clear indicators existed that they were hate crimes, whereas, for actions which had not enough indicators, it was decided not to publish them until feedback is received from the Ministry of Interior. For more details, see: <https://mhc.org.mk/reports/godishen-izvestaj-za-sostojbata-so-chovekovite-prava-vo-2021-godina/>.

14 Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (2023). 2023 Annual Hate Crime Report. Available at: https://zlostorstvaodomraza.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/GODISEN-IZVESTAJ_ZLOSTORSTVA-OD-OMRAZA-2023_MK_ALB_ENG_PO653136_23.08.2023.pdf

15 Hate crimes are regulated by the Criminal Code, whereas incidents cover a larger volume of cases that include misdemeanours as well, such as: hateful graffiti, nationalist chanting and so on.



Кривични дела

- Насилство
- Телесна и тешка телесна повреда
- Оштетување имот
- Разбојничка кражба
- Предизвикување национална, расна, верска омраза, раздор и нетрпеливост
- Сериозна закана
- Загрозување на сигурноста
- Предизвикување на општа опасност

3.3. Incidents by location

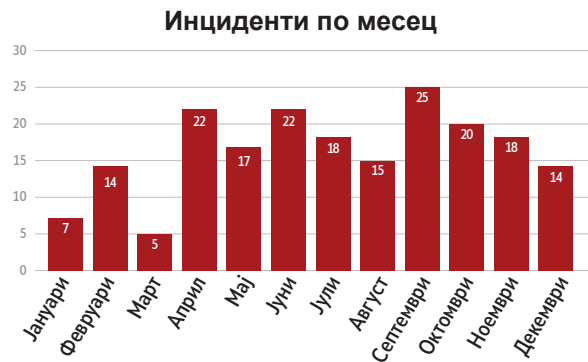
Majority of incidents – 164 – have taken place in Skopje and the surrounding municipalities. 16 incidents have occurred in Tetovo, 3 incidents in Gostivar and Kumanovo, 2 in Bitola, 1 each in Štip, Veles, Strumica, Kriva Palanka and Prilep.

Most of these towns are located in regions inhabited by a larger ethnic minority of ethnic Albanians (Skopje, Kumanovo), ethnic Macedonians (Tetovo and Gostivar), or several minorities that together constitute a significant part of the population (Bitola, Štip, Strumica, Prilep, Veles, Kriva Palanka). Debar is among the few towns where both Macedonians and Albanians live, and where not a single hate crime was recorded this year.








3.4. Incidents by month

The largest number of incidents happened in September (25). In this month, incidents were recorded between young people from ethnically mixed neighbourhoods and/or schools, or on bus routes used by members of different ethnic communities. 16 incidents happened in April and June, 20 in October, 18 in July and November, 17 in May, 15 in August, 14 each in February and December, 7 in January and 5 in March.



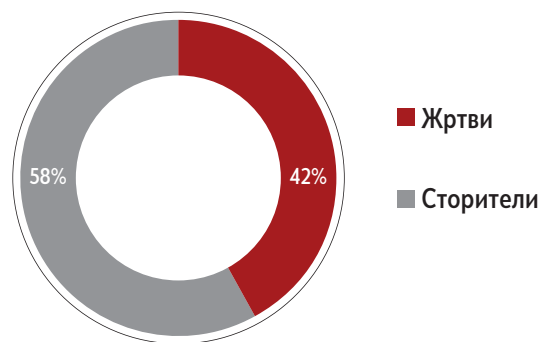
3.5. Incidents by bias motivation

Once again, ethnicity accounts for most of the grounds of committed hate crimes in 2023 (179 incidents, 90.86%). The motivation in 2 incidents was political belief and political affiliation, 6 incidents occurred as a result of religious beliefs, 2 incidents were motivated by sexual orientation, and 8 incidents happened based on some other protected characteristics.

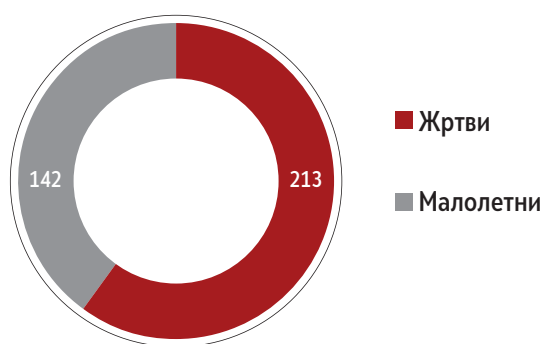
	Ethnic affiliation	179
	Political belief or political affiliation	2
	Religious beliefs	6
	Sexual orientation	2
	Other protected characteristics	8

3.6. Victims and perpetrators

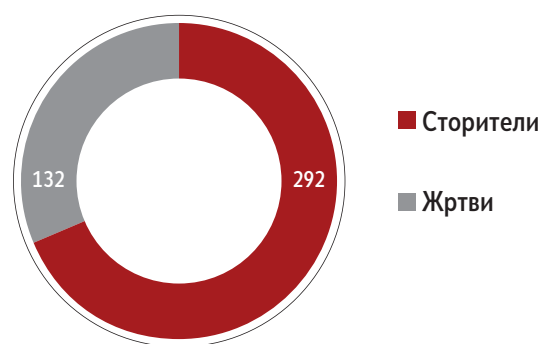
Victims and perpetrators are mostly young people and members of different ethnic communities, members of sports teams' supporters' clubs, or supporters of political parties. The Helsinki Committee recorded a total of 197 cases involving 213 victims and 292 perpetrators. The exact number of perpetrators cannot be determined due to the lack of information shared by the competent authorities. 142 out of 213 victims are minors; and out of 292 perpetrators 132 are minors.



Вклученост на малолетници во вкупниот број на жртви



Вклученост на малолетници во вкупниот број на сторители



3.7. Analysis of the national system for hate crime statistics, in the country's public prosecutor's offices and courts

Taking into account that the recording and collecting of reliable hate crime statistics is essential for effective policy making and taking appropriate measures to deal with hate-motivated incidents, the project team made an analysis of the national system for hate crime recording and statistics. The analysis will focus on the way the country's public prosecutor's offices and courts collect data on hate crimes and will provide an overview of the number of criminal offences committed; which groups are targeted; the number of criminal offences that were successfully identified as hate crimes; and information about decisions and sentences imposed. The review made by the project team after analysing the information received from the public prosecutor's offices and the courts is presented in the 2023 Annual Hate Crime Report.

To this end, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights submitted requests for public information to all basic public prosecutor's offices and to all courts in the country. In doing so, data were requested on the criminal charges filed in 2023 with the basic public prosecutor's office and on the indictments the prosecutor's offices have filed with the competent courts, and on criminal offences where the element of hatred exists as an aggravating circumstance.¹⁶ Moreover, the public prosecutor's offices

¹⁶ Article 123 Paragraph 2, Article 130 Paragraph 2, Article 131 Paragraph 2, Article 139 Paragraph 2, Article 140 Paragraph 2, Article 142 Paragraph 2, Article 144 Paragraph 3, Article 155 Paragraph 2, Article 186 Paragraph 6, Article 187 Paragraph 2 и Article 319.

in the country were asked about the protected characteristics referred to in Article 122 Paragraph 42 specified in the filed criminal charges/indictments, for each of the criminal offences.

Three public prosecutor's offices (Resen, Kavadarci and Gostivar) did not respond to requests for public information. 14 basic public prosecutor's offices responded that they have not received criminal charges nor have they filed indictments for hate crimes. The Skopje Basic Public Prosecutor's Office provided data on 108 received criminal charges and 43 filed indictments, noting that neither the criminal charges nor the indictments were received and filed based on the protected characteristics referred to in Article 122 Paragraph 42 of the Criminal Code. The Kumanovo Basic Public Prosecutor's Office provided a response regarding 68 received criminal charges and 1 filed indictment. However, the Kumanovo BPPO did not provide any information as to the protected characteristics in the specified charges and indictments. The Kičevo Basic Public Prosecutor's Office provided data on 22 criminal charges, noting that, based on the charges filed and the hearing of the witnesses in the prosecutor's office, it was established that the criminal offences were not committed out of hatred, as these cases involve domestic violence. Moreover, the Kičevo BPPO informed about 5 criminal warrants, noting that, when filing the indictments with the competent court, they do not apply the Article 122 Paragraph 42 of the Criminal Code, rather, they refer to other legal grounds. Only two prosecutor's offices provided clear data on criminal offences committed out of hatred. The Bitola Basic Public Prosecutor's Office informed us that in 2023 they received only one criminal charge against one person for the criminal offence of endangering one's security committed out of hatred on the ground of ethnic origin, in which case the public prosecutor filed a proposal with the competent court for imposing the measure of security, mandatory treatment and commitment to a health facility. The Veles Basic Public Prosecutor's Office received two criminal charges – one for the criminal offence of bodily harm committed out of hatred and one for the criminal offence of endangering one's security committed out of hatred on account of unresolved property relations. In relation to these criminal charges, two proposals were filed for issuing criminal warrants.

The courts in the country were asked about the number of indictments received and the number and type of decisions made regarding hate crimes and the protected characteristics referred to in Article 122 Paragraph 42 of the Criminal Code. 18 courts provided an answer that they have not received any indictments for hate crimes and, consequently, have not made any decisions in that respect. The Ohrid Basic Court and the Negotino Basic Court provided data on indictments received and decisions made, but did not specify the protected characteristics. The Bitola Basic Court also provided data on indictments and decisions, but stated that no protected characteristics were entered in the records of the court's ACMIS programme. The Kočani Basic Court provided data on 3 indictments received and 3 convictions ruled for the crime of endangering one's security committed out of hatred, but the protected characteristics were not specified. The Veles Basic Court reported that the two indictments filed for hate crimes, in fact, do not refer to the existence of any protected characteristic and are therefore not considered actions committed out of hatred. In 2023, the court ruled one acquittal for the criminal offence of endangering one's security committed out of hatred against a natural person, *"on account of a perceived affiliation of the injured party regarding Bulgarian nationality"*. The Gostivar Basic Court and the Kičevo Basic Court provided data on indictments and judgements, noting that they concern cases of domestic violence, not hate crimes. The Skopje

Basic Court provided a list of all final and received cases related to the requested criminal offences. The court noted that, in respect of the issues regarding the protected characteristics referred to in Article 122 Paragraph 42 of the CC, the system does not generate these data and the only way to verify is to inspect the said judgements, some of which (of those that are already final) have already been made available along with their case number on the court's website in an anonymised form.

The analysis of the data received from the country's courts and public prosecutor's offices shows that the judicial authorities do not keep individual and separate statistics on hate crimes and criminal offences committed during domestic violence. The number of initiated procedures for the protection of victims of bias-motivated incidents and criminal prosecution of the perpetrators is insignificant, and consequently there are not enough court decisions to be able to say that the state is adequately dealing with hate crime. Even in those cases where criminal proceedings were conducted, the bias motivation was not clearly defined and the protected characteristics were not specified (unlike the case of the proposal filed by the Veles BPPO for issuing a criminal warrant for endangering one's security out of hatred *on account of unresolved property relations*), or the imposition of appropriate measures to deal with the hate crime was not proposed (unlike the case of the Bitola BPPO, which filed a *proposal for imposing the measure of security, mandatory treatment and commitment to a health facility* against one person for committing the criminal offence of endangering one's security committed out of hatred based on ethnic origin).

4. PROJECT TEAM

ACTIVITIES

The activities aim to offer indicators of the extent, nature and frequency of hate crimes committed in the country. The objective of this approach is to work on the prevention of hate crimes and hate speech by improving the laws, raising the public awareness, and building the capacities of criminal justice bodies to record bias incidents.

4.1. Providing legal aid to victims of hate incidents and monitoring the court processes for specific hate crime cases committed on various protected grounds

In 2023, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights provided free legal aid in four cases of hate crimes – two incidents were committed on the ground of sexual orientation and/or gender identity, one on the ground of ethnic affiliation, race and skin colour, and one on the ground of religious affiliation and religious belief. The free legal aid included: providing legal advice and legal information about the protection mechanisms available to victims, communicating with the competent institutions, drafting and submitting criminal charges to the public prosecutor's offices, and monitoring the court proceedings for hate crimes.

One of these cases concerned two LGBTI people who were attacked in a local café. The perpetrators attacked them verbally, too, on account of their sexual orientation. The victims were offered legal aid – the procedure for criminal prosecution of hate crimes was explained to them, they were advised to obtain medical documentation, and were offered the possibility to be accompanied to the competent police station so as to report the incident, as well as the possibility to file criminal charges with the basic public prosecutor's office. The victims decided not to report the incident in the police station and not to take any action.

On June 7th 2023, news was published in the media about an offensive graffiti displaying swastikas and inscriptions "Gypsies", sprayed in black on the houses of the Roma population in "Debarska" street in Bitola. This is yet another case of hate crime, with a message that calls to violence against the Roma ethnic community. On June 15th, the Helsinki Committee met with one resident of the "Debarska" street in Bitola, who gave us more information about the event itself, as well as the fact that this was not the first time for this kind of intimidation and endangering of the Roma people's safety to take place. Police officers inspected the scene, but the residents have no information about further actions. Segments of the graffiti were cleaned by the residents themselves, but after documenting the remaining graffiti, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, together with one person in the capacity of the injured party, prepared the criminal charges to be filed with the Bitola BPPO for the criminal offence of "inciting hatred, discord or intolerance on national, racial, religious and other discrimination grounds" referred to in Article 319 in connection with "endangering one's security" referred to in Article 144 Paragraph 3 of the CC. In the meantime, a little while before filing

the criminal charges, the injured party was physically attacked at the same site where the graffiti was written; his assumption is that the attack was carried out by the same perpetrators. After several attempts and legal counselling, the injured party decided that he did not wish to initiate criminal proceedings.

In June, the director of the Holocaust Memorial Centre for the Jews of Macedonia approached the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights to inform us that the “Ballistët” supporters’ group from Tetovo wrote graffiti with Nazi symbols on several locations in the city. Moreover, he shared with us the reactions of the Jewish community to the previous events at the carnival in Strumica, where there was a mask with the face of Hitler, as well as graffiti with a swastika on the fence of the Jewish community.

In October, “Komitet” employees reported to the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights that over the weekend a foreign national who identifies as a gay man was physically attacked by two employees of “Giro Beko”. He suffered grievous bodily harm, but left the country immediately after reporting. Police officers from the Centar Police Station immediately inspected the scene and talked to the perpetrators and the witnesses. The Helsinki Committee met with the Chief of the Violent Crime Department at the Kisela Voda Police Station, who had taken the case over, and informed us that they would file *ex officio* criminal charges for grievous bodily harm. To our request to qualify the criminal offence as a hate crime on account of the clear bias indicators, the Chief decided to leave the qualification up to the public prosecutor’s decision.

Maintaining, updating and promoting the website www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com **in Macedonian, Albanian and English**

The web portal www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com, which has been available since 2013, is an interactive tool for informing the people about the hate crimes committed and incidents reported by its users. It includes an interactive map showing the exact or approximate location where the incident has taken place. The home page offers categories of hate crimes and bias motives, information on how citizens can report incidents, through an electronic application, email and internet forms, with statistical charts also displayed. Frequently asked questions, resources and glossary can also be found on the web portal, which regularly publishes information about the project, the meaning and the scope of hate crimes, as well as publications related to this phenomenon. All materials are available in Macedonian, Albanian and English.

4.2. Monitoring and reporting hate crimes and incidents, with particular attention to political, sports, peer and bias-motivated violence among young people

In 2023, the Helsinki Committee continued with monitoring a number of daily newspapers propounding different ideological views and political affiliations. The monitoring of electronic media is carried out daily, through the two most popular news generators (www.time.mk and www.grid.mk), and also by using the advanced browsing options in the “news” section of www.google.com. The main purpose of media monitoring is to identify the potential occurrences of hate incidents and to call the

alleged victims for an interview, as well as to offer them an opportunity for legal aid or to monitor the judicial process of their case.

4.3. Compiling and publishing monthly bulletins on the situation with hate crimes in the country based on the collected and analysed data regarding the work of the Helsinki Committee and the two networks – the Network for Protection against Discrimination and the National Network against Homophobia and Transphobia

During the reporting period, the Helsinki Committee produced 9 monthly newsletters for each month, published on the website www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com/izvestai/:

1. April Monthly Report, published on 10 May 2023
2. May Monthly Report, published on 10 June 2023
3. June Monthly Report, published on 10 July 2023
4. July Monthly Report, published on 10 August 2023
5. August Monthly Report, published on 10 September 2023
6. September Monthly Report, published on 10 October 2023
7. October Monthly Report, published on 10 November 2023
8. November Monthly Report, published on 10 December 2023
9. December Monthly Report, published on 31 December 2023

4.4. Developing, translating and publishing the 2023 Monitoring Report in Macedonian, Albanian and English

The Annual Report was developed, translated and published online on the Helsinki Committee website and on the www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com portal in June 2023. As in the years before, a copy of the report, was sent by mail and electronically to all relevant institutions, media and organisations.

4.4.1. Preparing, publishing, promoting and distributing an infographic offering a brief overview of the 2024 data on recorded hate crimes

Based on the data in the Annual Report, an infographic was prepared, translated and published with a brief overview of the findings and trends regarding the hate crimes recorded in 2022.¹⁷

4.4.2. Overview of reported hate crime incidents and contribution to ODIHR 2022 Annual Report on Hate Crimes and Incidents in the OSCE Region

In June 2023, the MHC sent its 2023 Annual Hate Crime Report to the OSCE/ODIHR and is still the only non-governmental organisation that systematically supplies information to the OSCE/ODIHR regarding the situation with hate crimes in the country. The Helsinki Committee regularly

¹⁷ Available at: <https://zlostorstvaodomraza.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/mkd2022-1.pdf>

reports on recorded incidents and hate crimes, and in May 2023 it sent its contribution to the OSCE/ODIHR regarding the incidents recorded in 2022.

4.5. Analysis of the national system for hate crime statistics, in the country's public prosecutor's offices and courts

Taking into account that the recording and collecting of reliable hate crime statistics is essential for effective policy making and taking appropriate measures to deal with hate-motivated incidents, the project team made an analysis of the national system for hate crime recording and statistics.

The analysis of the data received from the country's courts and public prosecutor's offices shows that the judicial authorities do not keep individual and separate statistics on hate crimes and criminal offences committed during domestic violence. The number of initiated procedures for the protection of victims of bias-motivated incidents and criminal prosecution of the perpetrators is insignificant, and consequently there are not enough court decisions to be able to say that the state is adequately dealing with hate crime. Even in those cases where criminal proceedings were conducted, the bias motivation was not clearly defined and the protected characteristics were not specified (unlike the case of the proposal filed by the Veles BPPO for issuing a criminal warrant for endangering one's security out of hatred on account of unresolved property relations), or the imposition of appropriate measures to deal with the hate crime was not proposed (unlike the case of the Bitola BPPO, which filed a proposal for imposing the measure of security, mandatory treatment and commitment to a health facility against one person for committing the criminal offence of endangering one's security committed out of hatred based on ethnic origin).

4.6. Celebrating the World Day for Cultural Diversity (May 19th) by organising the "Turlitava 7" event

In order to mark the World Day for Cultural Diversity, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights organised the event "Turlitava – Together Tastes Better!" on Friday (May 19th) for the seventh time, supported by the OSCE Mission to Skopje.

The idea underlying the organisation of this event is to overcome the mutual ignorance of the different ethnic groups in our country, as the most common reason for creating conflict situations, that is, situations that lead to hate crimes.

With the address given by the Executive Director of the Helsinki Committee, Uranija Pirovska, and the Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje, Ambassador Kilian Wahl, as well as with music and a variety of delicious traditional dishes, we showed that diversities may connect to and complement with each other.

Diversity is the "spice" that makes life better and richer. Together tastes better.





5. CONCLUSIONS

North Macedonia is still lagging behind in taking systemic measures for the prevention of hate crime and for adequate data collection in this area. Hate crimes usually go unreported, and when they are, they end up as formal complaints without proper investigation by the authorities because they themselves are not trained to identify and respond to hate crimes. Young people are most affected by all this, particularly young people belonging to minority groups, such as the LGBTI community, who are left to fend for themselves without systematic support for their identity characteristics.

From the report, it is safe to conclude that hate crimes typically take place in public and that a large number of incidents occur on buses, near bus stops, around schools, and near railway stations. Many of the hate crimes are committed out of revenge or as a consequence from previous incidents between young ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. Considering the very little effort invested in terms of preventive measures, human rights education and public awareness raising, it is to be expected for the rise of adverse trends to continue as long as the institutions ignore the problem. The conclusions of the report can be briefly presented in several points:

- The number of recorded incidents and potential hate crimes increased by 23% in 2023 compared to 2022;
- Incidents committed on the ground of ethnic affiliation are still the most prevalent ones, accounting for 90.86% of the total number of recorded incidents;
- Young people are still most often involved in bias-motivated incidents, both as perpetrators and as victims. The Helsinki Committee recorded a total of 197 cases involving 213 victims and 292 perpetrators. 142 out of 213 victims are minors; and out of 292 perpetrators 132 are minors.
- Despite some steps being taken to enhance the protection of the LGBTI community rights, they are still at greater risk of bias-motivated actions, particularly during and after the Pride Parade. However, certain changes in society can be noticed, as indicated by the fact that the LGBTI community is increasingly encouraged to contact the non-governmental organisations working in this area and use their services, such as free legal aid and support. A significant contributor for the increased trust of the LGBTI community are the two positive court rulings,¹⁸ sentencing the perpetrators of a hate crime based on sexual orientation to prison.
- Adequate statistics on bias-motivated incidents are still not maintained by the competent authorities. Although the Ministry of Interior keeps and publishes some statistics in its annual reports, it seems that these reports make no clear distinction between hate speech and hate crimes.

18 For more details, see: <https://www.radiomof.mk/lgbtj-junajted-kazna-zatvor-od-6-meseci-za-liceto-koe-fizichki-go-napadna-aktivistot-bekim-asani/> and <https://libertas.mk/dve-godini-zatvor-za-liceto-shto-go-napadna-aktivistot-bekim-asani-na-ploshtheadot-skenderbeg-vo-skop-e/>.

- Very little effort has been made to introduce preventive measures, including human rights education and public awareness raising, particularly among high school students and youth, given that the majority of victims are minors or youths;
- Bias motives, instead of being transferred from the police to the prosecution and later to the courts, as a key element in hate crime cases, is “lost” throughout the process.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Public engagement strengthens the trust in the institutions. Public prosecutors should not necessarily wait for a hate crime to get attention and media coverage to begin making community contacts. Regular communication and consultation with community groups can yield positive results towards a greater willingness of victims and witnesses to cooperate with the police and increase their understanding of what is happening in the community. Such contacts will ensure that, given the increasing tensions between communities, the police can better defuse the situation and know when to increase the police presence to solve the problems affecting the community. Hence, we make the following recommendations:

- Timely and effective investigation and initiation of court proceedings for hate crimes, with bias motives taken into account during criminal proceedings;
- Taking appropriate measures to facilitate the reporting of hate crimes by victims, including measures to strengthen the trust in the police and in other state institutions;
- Collecting and publishing comprehensive and comparative data on hate crimes, as much as possible, such as the number of these incidents reported by the public and recorded by police authorities, the number of judgements, the bias motives underlying these criminal offences, and the sentences imposed;
- Establishing and maintaining cooperation between state authorities and non-governmental organisations on various aspects of their work to deal with hate crimes, such as training, victim support and increased reporting;
- This cooperation should be based on data and information sharing, joint action with a view to revealing the bias motives, collaboration on the development of guidelines, rules and trainings for recording hate incidents, including sharing expertise on developing, improving and revising bias indicators;
- Providing support and protection to hate crime victims;
- Improving communication and coordination between all competent authorities and institutions in the field of hate crimes;
- Conducting nation-wide surveys on the measures employed to deal with hate crimes, as a key source of information on hate crimes distribution in the country;
- Promoting trainings for the relevant institutions that come into contact with hate crime victims, so that they can effectively help them; and
- More preventive measures, including by revisiting the concept, so as to be remembered, in human rights education, history curricula and relevant training, taking steps to educate the public, particularly minors and young people, about the values of cultural diversity and inclusion, and insisting that all sectors in the society play a role in the fight against such intolerance.

ANNEX HATE INCIDENTS RECORDED IN 2023

1. A hate incident between minors in the Skopje City Park

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: On April 7th 2023, parents reported that their minor children were attacked by three unknown perpetrators in the City Park in Skopje, for no apparent reason.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Location name: City Park

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 3

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

2. Hate incident between minors

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: On April 7th 2023, parents reported that their minor son was attacked by two other minors out on the street in the Ćorĉe Petrov neighbourhood, for no apparent reason.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Location name: a street in Ćorĉe Petrov

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 2

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack

3. An incident at the football match between “Vardar” from Brvenica and “Besa” from Čelopek

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

Incidents committed at sports matches

What happened: On April 9th 2023, SIA Tetovo received a report that, during the second half of the championship football match between the Brvenica-based team of “Vardar” and the Čelopek-based team of “Besa”, dissatisfied with the referee’s decision, forty or so fans and reserve players of “Besa” entered the field and tried to physically confront the referees and the delegate of the match. With the intervention of the SIA Tetovo police officers, the fans were prevented in their intention, however, they continued to behave aggressively, after which the match was terminated.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic origin – the supporters of the two football teams are members of different ethnic communities

Location – the event happened at a football match

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 40

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Violence

4. Incident between GOK “Borec” from Veles and OK “Shkëndija” from Tetovo

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

Incidents committed at sports matches

What happened: On April 10th 2023, SIA Veles received a report that, around 21:10 hrs, the public order and peace were disturbed in the “Gemidžii” sports hall in Veles, after the volleyball match between the Veles-based team of GOK “Borec” and the Tetovo-based team of OK “Shkëndija”, during which some of the players of the visiting team and some of the attending spectators threw various objects at each other. In doing so, one police officer and one player of OK “Shkëndija” were injured.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic origin – the supporters of the two volleyball teams are members of different ethnic communities

Location – the event happened in a sports hall during a volleyball match

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Location name: the “Gemidžii” sports hall in Veles

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Violence

5. A commemorative plaque was damaged in the memorial complex honouring the fallen Albanian martyrs in Sopot, near Kumanovo

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: On April 16th 2023, the media reported that, in the Kumanovo village of Sopot, the commemorative plaque was broken in the memorial complex erected in the honour of the Albanian martyrs who died during a massacre carried out on November 4th 1944, on the unprotected population of this village. According to the president of the Organisational Council of this memorial complex, Shukri Masuritsa, this constitutes an act of vandalism on the memorial structure and appealed to the responsible authorities to investigate the case.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic origin – Perceived difference in ethnic origin of the perpetrators

Location – memorial complex erected in the honour of fallen Albanian martyrs

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Location name: memorial complex erected in the honour of fallen Albanian martyrs

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Damage to symbols

6. Hate incident between minors at a Čair primary school

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: On May 18th 2023, a parent reported that his minor son was attacked by a peer on the sports field of a primary school in the neighbourhood of Centar, for no apparent reason.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Location name: sports field in a Centar primary school

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 1

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack

7. Hate incident on account of ethnic affiliation

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: On May 22nd 2023, an 18-year-old from Studeničani reported that he and his friend were attacked by two perpetrators, for no apparent reason, and one of the perpetrators threatened them with a knife.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin – members of different ethnic communities live in the Municipality of Studeničani

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 2

Number of perpetrators – 2

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack

8. An incident between minors in front of a shopping mall in Aerodrom

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: On June 2nd 2023, three parents reported that their minor children were attacked by a group of minors in front of a shopping mall in Aerodrom.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Location name: a shopping mall

Number of victims – 3

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

9. A ward of a public childcare facility was attacked

What happened: An employee of a public childcare facility reported that, on June 6th 2023, a group of three minors physically attacked one of their wards, out on the street.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is social status and affiliation with a marginalised community, and the bias indicators include:

Social status, affiliation with a marginalised community

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 3

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

10. Incident on a public transport in Skopje

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: A parent of a minor reported that his son was physically attacked by several perpetrators on a bus in Skopje on June 9th 2023.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

11. A minor was physically attacked in Karpoš

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: A parent of a minor reported that his son was physically attacked by several perpetrators in Karpoš on June 12th 2023, for no apparent reason.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

12. A minor was physically attacked in Gazi Baba

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: A parent reported that his minor son was physically attacked on June 28th 2023, on a street in Gazi Baba, by a minor perpetrator, for no apparent reason.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 1

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

13. Several minors attacked a minor in Ćorĉe Petrov

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: A parent of a minor reported that, on June 30th 2023, his son was physically attacked by several minors, on a street in Ćorĉe Petrov, for no apparent reason.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

14. A group of minors physically attacked a minor

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: A parent of a minor reported that, on July 8th 2023, a group of minors attacked his son on a street in Ćorĉe Petrov, for no apparent reason.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

15. A minor attacked another minor on a Skopje public transport

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: A grandfather reported that, on July 22nd 2023, at around 18:30 hrs, in the area of Bit Pazar, on a JSP bus, his minor grandson was physically attacked by a person.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 1

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

16. Damage to a vehicle because of one's political affiliation

Incidents committed on account of political affiliation

What happened: A passenger vehicle (Audi A6 model) owned by a 35-year-old local man was set on fire while it was parked on the street. The local fire department managed to put out the fire, and a team of the Division for Criminal Police inspected the scene. The entire front and lower front part of the vehicle was damaged by the fire. According to the information shared by the media, the car was privately used by the Deputy Prime Minister, Artan Grubi, although it was registered under a different name. The car was parked at the place where Mr. Grubi lives. The media revealed that two people had arrived at the scene in a pick-up car, doused the car in petrol and set it on fire.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is political affiliation, and the bias indicators include:

Political affiliation – the damaged vehicle belongs to a DUI official

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and in the society.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – 2

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Damage to property

17. Damage to a vehicle because of one's political affiliation

Incidents committed on account of political affiliation

What happened: In the Municipality of Aerodrom, on July 24th 2023, the vehicle of Marija Miteva, the spokeswoman of the political party VMRO-DPMNE, was vandalised. The perpetrators broke the rear window of the car while it was parked on the street in front of the apartment building where she lives

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is political affiliation, and the bias indicators include:

Political affiliation – the damaged vehicle belongs to the spokeswoman of the VMRO-DPMNE political party

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and in the society.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Damage to property

18. A minor was attacked in Kisela Voda

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: A parent of a minor reported that, on July 26th 2023, his son was attacked by a 22-year-old person, out on a street in Kisela Voda, for no apparent reason.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 1

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

19. An incident on a bus in the area of Bit Pazar

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: A parent reported that, on July 28th 2023, on a bus in the area of Bit Pazar, her son was physically attacked by several people, and one of the persons hit him with a hard object.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Absence of other motives – the victims were attacked for no apparent reason

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

20. Incident at the match between “Levski” and “Shkupi”

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

Incidents committed at sports matches

What happened: After the football match between “Levski” from Bulgaria and “Shkupi” from Skopje had ended, several residents from the neighbourhood of Čair attacked the cars displaying Bulgarian registration plates, and one person was seriously injured. The attack was filmed by passers-by. According to the Prosecutor’s Office, Bulgarian supporters in two vehicles were driving near the “Čairčanka” shopping mall, where they first got into a verbal argument with passers-by and residents, which then turned into a physical confrontation. Next, the Bulgarian fans pulled up

and got out of their vehicles, following which the verbal argument turned into a fight with a group of residents who came out of the surrounding buildings. When returning to the car, a 29-year-old Bulgarian national was stabbed in the stomach with a sharp object.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is nationality, and the bias indicators include:

Nationality – an incident between nationals of Bulgaria and North Macedonia

Time – the incident took place after the completion of a football match

Previous incident pattern – confrontations between supporters' groups

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country, the coexistence between the different groups in the society, and the safety of people found at or nearby sports matches.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – 21

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Physical attack, Violence

21. Hate crime on the ground of race, skin colour and ethnic origin

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

Inciting national, racial and religious hatred, discord and intolerance

What happened: On June 7th 2023, news was published in the media about an offensive graffiti displaying swastikas and inscriptions “Gypsies”, sprayed in black on the houses of the Roma population in “Debarska” street in Bitola. This is yet another case of hate crime, with a message that calls to violence against the Roma ethnic community. On June 15th, the Helsinki Committee met with one resident of the “Debarska” street in Bitola, who gave us more information about the event itself, as well as the fact that this was not the first time for this kind of intimidation and endangering of the Roma people’s safety to take place. Police officers inspected the scene, but the residents have no information about further actions. Segments of the graffiti were cleaned by the residents themselves, but after documenting the remaining graffiti, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, together with one person in the capacity of the injured party, prepared the criminal charges to be filed with the Bitola BPPO for the criminal offence of “inciting hatred, discord or intolerance on national, racial, religious and other discrimination grounds” referred to in Article 319 in connection with “endangering one’s security” referred to in Article 144 Paragraph 3 of the CC. In the meantime, a little while before filing the criminal charges, the injured party was physically attacked at the same site where the graffiti was written; his assumption is that the attack was carried out by the same perpetrators. After several attempts and legal counselling, the injured party decided that he did not wish to initiate criminal proceedings.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic origin – the graffiti is targeting the members of the Roma community

Location – the graffiti was drawn in a neighbourhood where Roma people live

Previous incident pattern – a previous event of intimidation and of endangering the Roma people's security in that settlement

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Damage to property, Inciting national, racial and religious hatred, discord and intolerance

22. A hate crime based on religious belief

Incidents committed on account of religious affiliation or religious belief

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

Inciting national, racial and religious hatred, discord and intolerance

What happened: In June, the director of the Holocaust Memorial Centre for the Jews of Macedonia, Goran Sadikario, approached the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights to inform us that the “Ballistët” supporters’ group from Tetovo wrote graffiti with Nazi symbols on several locations in the city. Moreover, he shared with us the reactions of the Jewish community to the previous events at the carnival in Strumica, where there was a mask with the face of Hitler, as well as graffiti with a swastika on the fence of the Jewish community.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is religious belief, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic origin – the graffiti is targeting the members of the Jewish community

Religious belief – the graffiti is targeting the members of the Jewish community

Location – one of the graffiti was drawn on the fence of the Jewish community

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different groups in the society.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: No information

Type of incident: Damage to property, Inciting national, racial and religious hatred, discord and intolerance

23. Damaged monument to a fallen defender in the village of Indžikovo

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

Inciting national, racial and religious hatred, discord and intolerance

What happened: On August 2nd 2023, SIA Skopje received a report that, in the park in the “8” street in the village of Indžikovo, the monument to the fallen defender Goran Stojmenović was spray-painted. A UIA Gazi Baba team inspected the scene, and the public prosecutor was notified of the incident.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Location – monument to a fallen defender in the village of Indžikovo

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – 3

Case status: /

Type of incident: Destruction of symbols

24. Incident at a football match in Gazi Baba

Incidents committed at sports matches

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: On August 14th 2023, a person from Skopje reported that, while watching a football match at a football stadium in the area of Gazi Baba, he was physically attacked by another person.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic origin – perceived difference in ethnic origin between the victim and the perpetrator

Location – the incident happened at a sports match

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 1

Case status: /

Type of incident: Violence

25. Ethnically based incident

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: On September 8th 2023, SIA Skopje received a reported that, in front of the Čair Polyclinic, the emergency medical team found two people injured with a sharp and a hard object, who, according to the report, got into a physical fight following a previous argument. The persons were transferred to the “8 Septemvri” City General Hospital and the “Majka Tereza” Complex of Clinics for medical assistance, and later one of the persons was deprived of liberty.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic affiliation – perceived difference in ethnic affiliation between people

Absence of other motives

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 1

Case status: /

Type of incident: Bodily harm, Violence

26. A 17-year-old minor was attacked in Skopje

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: On September 8th 2023, SIA Skopje received a report that an injured 17-year-old from Skopje was brought to the “Naum Ohridski” City General Hospital. According to the report, he was physically attacked with a sharp object by another minor in the area of Čair.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic affiliation – perceived difference in ethnic affiliation between the victim and the perpetrator

Absence of other motives

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 1

Case status: /

Type of incident: Bodily harm

27. Hate incident in Šuto Orizari

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: On September 11th 2023, SIA Skopje received a report that, in the area of Šuto Orizari, a minor was physically attacked by another minor.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic affiliation – perceived difference in ethnic affiliation between the victim and the perpetrator

Absence of other motives

Previous incident pattern

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 1

Case status: /

Type of incident: Physical attack

28. Physical attack on a national of the Republic of Türkiye

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: On September 15th 2023, a citizen of the Republic of Türkiye residing in Skopje reported that he was physically attacked by a person in the Bit Pazar area.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is nationality, and the bias indicators include:

Nationality – the victim is a national of the Republic of Türkiye

Ethnic affiliation – perceived difference in ethnic affiliation between the victim and the perpetrator

Absence of other motives

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different groups in the society.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: /

Type of incident: Physical attack

29. Hate incident based on religious belief and disability

Actions against persons with disabilities

Incidents committed on account of religious affiliation or religious belief

Inciting national, racial and religious hatred, discord and intolerance

What happened: In a parking space reserved for people with disabilities, near the “Ġorġija Pulevski” primary school, graffiti was drawn with a Nazi symbol – a swastika.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is religious belief and disability, and the bias indicators include:

Religious belief – the graffiti with the Nazi symbol is targeting the members of the Jewish community

Disability – the graffiti was drawn in a parking space reserved for people with disabilities

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different groups in the society.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: /

Type of incident: Destruction of property

Case status: /

30. Hate crime based on sexual orientation

Incidents committed on account of sexual orientation and/or gender identity

What happened: Employees of the “Komitet” social and cultural centre reported a foreign national who identifies as a gay man was physically attacked by two employees of “Giro Boko”. He

suffered grievous bodily harm, but left the country immediately after reporting. Police officers from the PS Centar immediately investigated the scene and talked to the perpetrators and the witnesses. The Helsinki Committee met with the Chief of the Violent Crime Department at the PS Kisela Voda, who had taken the case over from the PS Centar, and informed us that they would file *ex officio* criminal charges for grievous bodily harm. To the request of the Helsinki Committee to qualify the incident as a hate crime, the Chief decided to leave the qualification up to the public prosecutor's decision.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is sexual orientation, and the bias indicators include:

Sexual orientation – the victim identifies as gay

Previous incident pattern – previous incidents against members of the LGBTI community

Location – the incident happened in front of the “Komitet” social and cultural centre

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different groups in the society, and in particular the safety and security of the LGBTI community.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 1

Case status: /

Type of incident: Bodily harm, Physical attack

Did you report it to the police? Yes

Are you satisfied with the treatment by the police? Satisfied

How did the police react? They immediately recorded the incident. They are investigating the incident. They caught the perpetrator.

31. Incident at the football match between “Shkupi” and “Vardar”

Incidents committed at sports matches

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

What happened: The media reported that, at the football match between FK “Shkupi” and FK “Vardar”, which took place on November 5th 2023 at the Čair stadium, the supporters' group of Shkupi, “Shvercerat”, displayed slogans with nationalist messages. “We will fulfil the historical pledge to make Skopje the heart of Albania”, one of the slogans read. Moreover, during the match, a message of support was sent for the murderers of the “Komiti” member – Nikola Sazdovski-Sazdo.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic affiliation – different ethnic affiliation of the two supporters' groups

Location – the incident happened at a sports match

Previous incident pattern – incidents like this have happened before between these two supporters' groups

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: /

Type of incident:

32. A damaged grave in the village of Pagaruša

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

Inciting national, racial and religious hatred, discord and intolerance

What happened: On November 22nd 2023 at 22:35 hrs, SIA Skopje received a report that several people had damaged a grave in the cemetery located on the territory of the village of Pagaruša, near Skopje. Measures have been taken to clear up the case.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic affiliation – perceived difference in ethnic affiliation of the perpetrator

Location – cemetery in the village of Pagaruša, which is located in the Municipality of Studeničani, where members of different ethnic communities live

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: /

Type of incident: Destruction of symbols

33. Incident on a bus between minors

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

Violence against minors

What happened: A JSP bus driver reported that, on November 24th 2023, in the area of Kisela Voda, following a prior misunderstanding, the public order and peace were disturbed on his bus, in

that two people and three more minors, all from the village of Gorno Količani, near Skopje, got into a physical confrontation with one person and two more minors, all from the village of Dolno Količani, near Skopje.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Perceived difference in ethnic origin

Previous incident pattern

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – /

Case status: /

Type of incident: Violence

34. A minor was attacked in Šuto Orizari

Incidents committed on account of ethnic affiliation

Violence against minors

What happened: On November 25th 2023, a parent reported that, in the area of Šuto Orizari, his son was physically attacked by four minors and a hard object was used.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is ethnic origin, and the bias indicators include:

Ethnic affiliation – perceived difference in ethnic affiliation between the victim and the perpetrator

Absence of other motives

Previous incident pattern

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different ethnic groups in the society.

Number of victims – 1

Number of perpetrators – 4

Case status: /

Type of incident: Physical attack

35. Hate incident based on religious belief

Incidents committed on account of religious affiliation or religious belief

Inciting national, racial and religious hatred, discord and intolerance

What happened: The media reported that, in the courtyard of the “Sveti Naum Ohridski” monastery complex on Popova Šapka, a person took down the flag of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – OA from the mast located on the church property, and then put up the flag of Albania. The perpetrator was arrested within a few hours by police officers.

Brief description of the incident with bias indicators: In this incident, the bias motive is religious belief, and the bias indicators include:

Religious belief – perceived difference in the religious belief of the perpetrator

Location – a monastery complex

Impact on victims and the community: Incidents of this type call into question the general security situation in the country and the coexistence between the different groups in the society.

Number of victims – /

Number of perpetrators – 1

Case status: Perpetrators identified

Type of incident: Destruction of symbols