

to a vote the resolution at the Commission on Human Rights in April. However, once the resolution had passed, the Bush administration missed key opportunities to press for Russia's compliance with the resolution's requirements.

In June, President Bush and President Putin held their first summit in Slovenia at which Bush declared his support for Putin's leadership, and forfeited the opportunity to publicly ask for Russia's compliance with the U.N. resolution. Subsequent summits brought no U.S. public criticism of the conduct of the Chechnya campaign.

After the September 11 attacks, the United States actively sought Russia's support for its response. While the administration continued public criticism of the abuses in Chechnya, it did little more to bring Russia to pursue a more vigorous accountability process.

Relevant Human Rights Watch Reports:

Burying the Evidence: The Botched Investigation into a Mass Grave in Chechnya, 5/01

The "Dirty War" in Chechnya: Forced Disappearances, Torture, and Summary Executions, 3/01

SLOVAKIA

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

Slovakia made progress during 2001 in its efforts to join the first wave of candidate countries for European Union accession, but its human rights record remained uneven. Roma faced continued violence, discrimination, and police abuse, occasionally with fatal consequences. The state response to discrimination was inadequate, with Roma, gays and lesbians, and domestic violence victims lacking full legal protection. A punitive criminal defamation law impinged on free expression. Reforms were also needed to curb the trade in weapons with human rights abusers.

The July death of a Roma man in police custody demonstrated the vulnerability of Slovakia's Roma population. The deceased, Karol Sendrei, and his two sons were detained after a July 5 altercation between Sendrei and the local mayor in Magnezitovce, in which the mayor and his police-officer son seriously assaulted Sendrei. Following their arrest, Sendrei and his sons were handcuffed to a radiator at the police station in nearby Revuca and beaten throughout the night. Sendrei died from his wounds. Seven people were arrested in connection with the incident, including the mayor and his son, who were charged with causing the death, and two other police officers who face abuse of power charges.

Despite the arrests and assurances from the interior minister that he would

ensure that justice would be done and improve police training, Sendrei's death was part of a continuing pattern of police failure to prevent racist violence against Slovak Roma. In a week of incidents, racist gang members beat and harassed Roma in the town of Holic, culminating in an August 13 assault on Milan Daniel that left him needing brain surgery. Roma residents asserted that the police had failed to protect them despite repeated complaints. On August 20, police finally charged two youths with the attack on Daniel. On August 30, Peter Bandur was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for his part in the beating death of a Roma woman, Anastazia Balasova, a year earlier. (See *Human Right Watch World Report 2001*.) While Bandur was convicted of the more serious crime of racially motivated assault, his two accomplices received three and five years respectively for simple assault (without racist intent).

Roma continued to face discrimination in employment, education, and housing. Hostility on the part of other Slovaks formed part of the problem: a government plan to resettle five homeless Roma families in Medzilaborce was met in February by a protest petition signed by around 2,000 of the town's residents. But the government also failed adequately to implement and fund legal and policy measures to combat anti-Roma discrimination. Positive developments came in the form of the replacement in June of Vincent Danihel, the much-criticized minister for Roma issues, by Klara Orgovanova, and the appointment of Roma parliamentarian Ladislav Fizik as advisor to the interior minister.

Equal treatment for gays and lesbians suffered a setback on July 2, when the National Council (parliament) rejected a proposal prohibiting employment discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. There was some progress in official recognition of the rights of national minorities, demonstrated by Slovakia's signing of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages on February 20 and expanded Hungarian-language teaching. Antagonism toward minorities remained, however, with the desecration of Hungarian monuments in Kosice in March and Jewish tombstones in Zvolen in July. Anti-domestic violence laws remained inadequate, although the Alliance for Women cooperated with a government criminal law reform committee in efforts to remedy the shortcomings. Victims of rape faced bias in the justice system. Slovakia continued to lack an ombudsman office, although the government approved a draft law creating the post on September 19. At time of this writing, Parliament had yet to vote on the legislation.

Free expression continued to mature in Slovakia, but government officials' use of a criminal defamation law against journalists raised ongoing concerns. The office of the Slovak president brought a criminal defamation suit brought against Ales Kratky, a journalist with the daily *Novy Cas*, over an article questioning the president's fitness for office, leading to formal charges by a state prosecutor on July 2. Kratky faced a prison sentence if convicted. On July 12, the European Court of Human Rights found that a Slovak court's 1992 conviction of writer Lubomir Feldek under the same law, for an article about a government official's war record, was a violation of Feldek's right to free expression under article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Slovakia's growing popularity as a transit country for asylum seekers and

migrants and a country of origin and transit for trafficking accentuated its significant shortcomings in refugee and trafficking policy. Principal concerns were the continued lack of an appeal mechanism for asylum petitions, lack of adequate facilities to house asylum-seekers, and inadequate guarantees against return to a country where individuals face threat of persecution.

Slovakia continued to authorize weapons transfers that risked fueling human rights abuses in recipient countries. For example, it continued to be a major supplier of arms to the highly abusive Angolan government, supplying mostly surplus weapons made redundant by military modernization plans linked to Slovakia's NATO aspirations. United Nations investigators found that Slovakia was the point of origin of weapons that were funneled to Liberia, in violation of a mandatory arms embargo. In addition, Slovakia played a role as a transit country for arms shipments originating in other countries. A weapons shipment from Iran apparently destined for Angola via Slovakia and Israel was impounded at Bratislava airport in September because the cargo was wrongly declared. The Slovak government at this writing had not taken action to close a legal loophole that permits weapons to transit through the country for up to seven days without a government license, nor to incorporate in national law minimum export criteria agreed under the 1998 E.U. Code of Conduct and a November 2000 OSCE agreement on small arms. Slovakia, a state party to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, announced on October 18, 2000, that it had completed destruction of its stockpile of antipersonnel landmines.

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

There were no reports of interference with the work of domestic monitoring or international human rights monitors. In March 2001, the Slovak Helsinki Committee initiated a project to monitor news reporting on minorities. Initial findings were encouraging, with more than 75 percent of news reporting on Roma and ethnic Hungarians assessed as neutral. The European Roma Rights Center continued their efforts to secure civil rights for Slovak Roma, filing suit against Slovakia in the European Court of Human Rights on October 5 on behalf of Lubomir Sarissky, a Roma man who died in police custody in August 1999.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

United Nations

In May, the Committee against Torture considered Slovakia's initial report on compliance with the Convention against Torture. The committee expressed concern at police involvement in attacks on Roma, allegations of ill-treatment of detainees in police custody, and the failure of Slovak authorities adequately to respond to police misconduct. The special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Dato'Param Kumaraswamy, visited Slovakia in November 2000 to investigate government attempts to remove the president of the Supreme Court,

Dr. Stefan Harabin, in light of ongoing concerns about political interference in the judiciary. The government proposal to remove Dr. Harabin was subsequently defeated by the National Council in December 2000.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

The death of Karol Sendrei while in police custody was condemned in July by the OSCE contact point for Roma and Sinti. The contact point, Nicolae Gheorghe, emphasized the importance of an effective investigation by the Interior Ministry.

Council of Europe

In addition to signing the minority languages charter (see above) in February, Slovakia allowed publication on July 6 of the Opinion on Slovakia by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities. The opinion, adopted by the committee in September 2000, noted progress in Slovakia's compliance with the convention but expressed concern about the treatment of Roma. Similar concerns were highlighted by Human Rights Commissioner Alvaro Gil Robles while visiting a Roma settlement in Kosice during his May trip to Slovakia.

European Union

E.U. concern over the plight of Roma remained a sticking point in relations with Slovakia during 2001. After visiting a Roma settlement in Jarovnice during a February trip to Slovakia, E.U. Enlargement Commissioner Guenther Verheugen contrasted Slovakia's overall progress towards accession with its continued discrimination against Roma. The European Parliament's rapporteur on Slovakia, Jan Marinus Wiersma, condemned the death of Karol Sendrei. Discrimination against Roma was also noted in Wiersma's May 8 report to the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee on Slovakia's membership application and the related resolution adopted by the full Parliament on September 5. In its regular report on Slovakia's progress toward E.U. accession released in November 2001, the European Commission noted continued concerns about the slow implementation of programs designed to assist Roma.

United States

The State Department country report on human rights practices in Slovakia largely reflected the main developments during 2000, including trafficking, although Slovakia was omitted from the department's July global report on trafficking. The U.S. government's interagency Helsinki Commission maintained its scrutiny of Slovakia's record on Roma issues.