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Faculty of Law, University of Niš**

**Међународна научна конференција  
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**ПРАВО И ДРУШТВЕНИ КОНФЛИКТИ  
Law and Social Conflicts**

**Зборник радова  
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## **ROMA AND INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION: A STUDY OF PRISON SENTANCES**

**Abstract:** *On 5 April 2018, the European Center for Roma Rights reported that four individuals of Roma origin, A. Redzhepov (21), Y. Erdal (25), S. Mustafafova (46), and B. Demir (39), died in Macedonian prisons in 2017 due to inadequate medical care and lack of proper supervision by prison staff. Redzhepov and Erdal died from overdoses of methadone and benzodiazepam, despite not being part of the methadone therapy program. Demir died from poisoning after being administered an incorrect dose of 'Prazin' tablets by medical staff. Mustafafova's death occurred after her pre-existing medical conditions had been ignored and dismissed as faked, as a result of which the staff withheld the necessary medical care. However, the autopsy revealed a high dose of benzodiazepine in her body. As illustrated in this article, discrimination against Roma people in prisons all too often results in death. This raises serious concerns about the treatment and conditions Roma face in detention and the degree of discrimination they are subjected to. As one of the most marginalized social groups, the Roma people face alarming levels of deprivation and inequality in nearly all aspects of life, driven by deeply rooted stereotypes and prejudice. In an attempt to provide a realistic depiction of the current situation and draw relevant conclusions, this paper analyzes different forms of discrimination against Roma in penitentiary institutions in North Macedonia and across Europe. The authors call for greater awareness and actionable solutions aimed at improving the treatment and rights of Roma prisoners, and fostering a more just and equitable prison system.*

**Keywords:** *discrimination, Roma, prison, racism, antigypsyism, prisoner rights.*

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*Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future, and renders the present inaccessible.*

– Maya Angelou

## **1. Introduction**

The Roma community in North Macedonia faces persistent and systemic discrimination across multiple sectors, with particularly severe consequences in the criminal justice system. Despite constituting only 2.53% of the national population, Roma individuals are significantly overrepresented in the country's prisons. This overrepresentation is not merely a reflection of social disadvantage but is deeply rooted in institutional antigypsyism, a specific form of racism that normalizes inequality and exclusion of Roma in state systems, including law enforcement, judiciary, and corrections.

This paper examines the intersection of ethnic discrimination and incarceration, with a particular focus on how institutional practices within North Macedonia's penitentiary system undermine the goals of resocialization and rehabilitation for Roma prisoners. Drawing on legal analysis, international human rights standards, and empirical data (including testimonies and case studies), the research highlights systemic failures, including poor prison conditions, unequal treatment, and deaths in custody. It also offers evidence-based recommendations to address the structural drivers of this inequality. By analyzing the treatment of Roma within the prison system, the paper contributes to a broader understanding of how institutional discrimination operates in post-socialist societies and underscores the urgent need for comprehensive justice and penal reform.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach combining legal doctrinal analysis, critical discourse analysis, and secondary data examination to investigate the manifestations of antigypsyism within the North Macedonian penitentiary system and its implications for Roma overrepresentation.

Primary data were not directly collected due to the limited access to penitentiary institutions and official prison records. Instead, this research relies on the secondary sources:

- Legal texts: national penal law, prison regulations, and anti-discrimination laws;

- International and regional human rights instruments: relevant treaties and monitoring reports, including documents from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the Council of Europe's European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), and United Nations human rights bodies;
- NGO and civil society reports: publications by Roma organizations, such as the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), documenting prison conditions and discriminatory practices;
- Statistical data: official statistics on prison populations and ethnic composition sourced from North Macedonian government releases and international databases (e.g., Eurostat); and
- Media and investigative reports: journalistic accounts providing contextual evidence of antigypsyism within law enforcement and judicial processes.

Despite the reliance on secondary data as a result of lack of direct access to prison authorities, the triangulation of diverse sources and methodologies strengthens the validity of the findings and allows for a robust critique of institutional antigypsyism within the North Macedonian penal system.

## **2. Conceptual definition of discrimination with special reference to antigypsyism**

“Ground of discrimination” is a quality, property, characteristic or circumstance in which a person or group of persons is; it can be race, skin color, religion, ethnicity, national or social origin, property status, membership in trade union, political belief or opinion, as well as any other circumstance due to which that person or group of persons is denied, injured or made difficult to enjoy a right for that reason alone (Popovska, Dimova, Velkovska, Georievski, Kocevski, 2014: 11).

Discrimination is such behavior by state institutions, employers or any natural person which is aimed at or has the consequence of injuring or hindering the enjoyment of rights of a person or a certain group of persons only because of some of their characteristics, qualities, or characteristics in any area of life. In cases of reported alleged discrimination, the intention of discrimination should not be established as it is irrelevant.

Discrimination implies putting a certain group of people in a less favourable position in a certain situation, as a result of stereotypes and prejudices.

Although many equate the principles of equality and non-discrimination, in essence they differ in one important aspect: the principle of non-discrimination is a narrower concept and refers, above all, to certain vulnerable groups in society. This means that states have a different obligation, positive and/or negative, to act in accordance with the principles of equality and the prohibition of discrimination. The positive obligation implies that the states should proclaim equality between citizens and non-discrimination (primarily in their constitutions), while the negative obligation entails determining a sanction by the state in case of violation of the principles of equality and non-discrimination (Institute for Human Rights, 2020: 7).

Antigypsyism is a special form of racism directed against those stigmatized in the social worldview as “Gypsies”, “tsigane”, “ţigan”, “Zigeuner”, “tatars”, “zingari” or other related terms, which are essentially based on assumptions that they belong to an inferior and deviant group, for which reasons dominating and oppressing them is justified (Rostas, 2019: 11). According to Rostas, the manifestations of antigypsyism are visible through these mechanisms:

- The passivity of state institutions in protecting the rights of the Roma, often violating the European Convention on Human Rights in terms of the doctrine of positive obligations of the state;
- Lack of information about Roma in regular educational programs;
- Denial of equal protection of Roma before the law;
- Ignorance of the Roma history of oppression;
- Lack of gender sensitivity and intersectionality;
- Selective enforcement of laws and policies (Rostas, 2019: 18).

### ***2.1. Analysis of institutional discrimination against Roma in North Macedonia***

Social and institutional discrimination, marginalization, unequal treatment and unequal access to justice, as well as violation of the basic human rights are still current topics in the Republic of North Macedonia, especially when it comes to members of the Roma ethnic community. Roma still face ample problems, such as: lack of personal documents/citizenship, limited access to goods and services, education and employment, health and housing, as well as early or forced marriages. The main reason for the difficult access to edu-

cation, health, social rights and other legal benefits is that some Roma families do not respect the legal deadlines for the registration of newborns, so they are left without adequate personal documents. Roma children are most often exploited for forced labor, commonly in the form of forced begging and human trafficking (Open Society Foundations, 2014: 55).

Roma also face unequal treatment in civil and criminal proceedings, especially when they are in the position of a victim of crime, a suspect or a convicted offender. They are frequent victims of domestic violence but it has been established that such incidents are not reported; in addition, there is no database that would allow monitoring the impact of campaigns and assessing whether the convicted perpetrators have repeated the same or a similar crime, whether the number of victims is decreasing, etc. (European Roma Rights Centre, 2023).

The rights of prisoners and the conditions in the penitentiaries are below human dignity and the established minimum standards, which generally project a dramatically bad image of the Macedonian penitentiary system. Overcrowding, poor hygienic conditions, insufficient medical staff, placing minors in the same rooms with adult prisoners, and torture of prisoners by the prison police are just some of the problems that exist in these institutions (European Roma Rights Centre, 2023: 29).

The submitted complaints about the bad conduct of the police continue to raise serious issues pertaining to the established presence of police impunity and substandard conditions in prisons (especially in Idrizovo and Skopje), police stations, social care and psychiatric institutions (European Commission, 2016), and the need to establish an independent supervision mechanism within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Ombudsman statistics on the ethnicity of petitioners shows that only 4.54% were members of the Roma ethnic community. A total of three Roma submitted petitions against the police for overstepping their police powers, sixteen Roma submitted petitions on issues the field of justice, four Roma submitted petition regarding the conditions in penal and correctional institutions, and one Roma submitted a petition for other issues (Ombudsman of the Republic of Macedonia, 2016).

Of particular concern is the occurrence of deaths in prisons, where the largest percentage of deceased prisoners are from the Roma ethnic community.

## ***2.2. The Prison Sentence: Concept and Analysis***

According to Prof. Kambovski, the punishment is an enforceable retribution for the committed crime, that is, it is intentionally inflicted on the perpetra-

tor of the committed crime and within the framework of criminal culpability (Kambovski, 2006: 625). This definition covers the four elements of punishment:

- it constitutes a legal sanction or consequence for the committed criminal act;
- it is a deliberate evil, depriving or restricting some essential freedoms and rights;
- it represents a targeted evil, through retribution calculated on the achievement of certain socially useful goals; and
- it indicates the culpability for that crime, that is, only a perpetrator who has been declared guilty can be punished within the framework of his guilt in the specific crime.

The penalty of deprivation of liberty has the most significant place in the system of criminal sanctions. It is a criminal law measure which has been provided for the largest number of criminal acts since its introduction until today, and it is presented as the main instrument for the protection of society from criminality, ensuring justice in punishment, education, re-education or correction of persons against which it has been pronounced. The wide possibilities of its pronouncement and its frequent application in judicial practice are usually justified from the aspect of the possibilities for the most complete attainment of polyvalent criminal policy goals. In that context, it unites the largest number of characteristics that a criminal sanction should satisfy. It is easily individualized in line with the personal characteristics of the perpetrator, the gravity of the crime, and it can be imposed in different durations. It is revocable; its personal character is more prominent than in other punishments; the public does not object to its imposition, etc. (Sulejmanov, 2005: 453; Jovanov, 2023).

The prison sentence is served in closed or open wards. The legal framework of prison sentences, regulated by the 1997 Criminal Justice Act of the Republic of Macedonia, also includes the international standards on the treatment of convicted persons which rest on the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (United Nations, 1955), adopted at the 1st UN Congress on crime prevention. The development of international norms and standards has reached the level of complex international regulation of all aspects of the prison system: spatial facilities, health and hygiene standards, registration, categorization of convicted persons, work treatment, food, sports, etc. (Kambovski, 2006: 672). The European prison rules, adopted by

the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1987, are also relevant for the Macedonian penitentiary system.<sup>1</sup>

### ***2.3. The impact of prison stays through the prism of resocialization***

As the main goal of the execution of the prison sentence, the Act on the Execution of Criminal Sanctions defines resocialization; in addition to re-education, this term includes social adaptation of the convicted person, that is, preparation for socially acceptable behavior out of prison (Arnaudovski, 1988: 182).

Resocialization is an ongoing and evolving process through which individuals (either adults or minors) who have exhibited behavior that deviates from commonly accepted social norms are influenced and guided. This process involves various forms of treatment aimed at helping them reintegrate into society and adopt ways of living, working, and behaving that align with established values and standards. Resocialization is achieved by applying different forms of treatment; it is a multidimensional process which cannot be reduced only to committing or not committing a new crime, but can be understood as a unique process of measures and activities aimed at achieving positive changes in the social behavior of the convicted person (Arnaudovski, Gruevska Drakulevski, 2013: 274).

The terms socialization and resocialization imply the process of enabling and adapting the convicted person to accept the system of values in the social environment and norms of conduct of the wider social community because, by committing the crime, the convicted person showed that he/she was not properly socialized, adapted and directed (Milutinovic, 1977: 86-87).

The Guidelines for determining the types and methods of treatment of convicted persons (Ministry of Justice MK, 2011)<sup>2</sup> envisage the application of modern forms of institutional treatment, including both general and specific treatment measures (Art. 14).

The general measures applicable in regular programs are as follows (Art. 15):

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<sup>1</sup> The European Prison Rules apply to persons who are detained by order of a court or deprived of liberty on the basis of a judgment.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Justice MK (2011). Guidelines for determining the types and methods of treatment of convicted persons, <https://pravda.gov.mk/Upload/Documents/Upatstvo%20za%20opredeluvanje%20na%20vidovite%20na%20%20tretman%20na%20osudenite%20lica.pdf>

- convicted persons work, which is carried out by instructors and other trained persons whose professional impact and influence contribute to the achievement of the specific goals defined in the individual program for the treatment of the convicted person: changing negative attitudes towards work, developing and encouraging interest for work, respect for general discipline at work, cooperation with other convicted persons in the work group, as well as cooperation with other experts in the implementation of treatment (Art. 19);
- education of convicted persons: the type and degree of education depends on the number and structure of convicted persons who need an educational process, taking into account their psychophysical properties, potentials and interests in acquiring education within the facilities of the institution, as well as the previously acquired degree of education (Art. 22);
- education of convicted persons by occupation (based on individual needs): in line with the individual treatment program, the convicted person can receive training for a specific occupation, advance his/her vocational skills, or be retrained for another occupation (Art. 24);
- moral and ethical education has a positive effect on (re)structuring the personality of the convicted offender, strengthening personal responsibility, ensuring active involvement in accomplishing the goals set the individual treatment program and reintegration in the society after release from the institution (Art. 27);
- convicted persons' self-organization helps them resolve problems related to the common living conditions and work-related issues, develop a sense of responsibility for their actions and encourage them to actively participate in the implementation of the individual treatment program (Art. 28); and
- leisure activities, sports and recreation of convicted persons include ITC, dramatic, musical, artistic, literary, visual and other creative activities, various sports, reading books and newspapers, listening to the radio and watching television programs, attending theater and cinema performances, publication of newspapers and bulletins, attending lectures, attending music concerts and other activities (Art. 29).

In addition to general treatment measures, the Guidelines for determining the types and methods of treatment of convicted persons also envisage spe-

cific treatment measures which may be applied to separate categories of convicted persons (Art. 30):

- treatment of convicted persons who abuse drugs and other psychotropic substances;
- treatment of convicted persons who abuse alcohol;
- treatment of convicted sexual offenders;
- treatment of violent convicted persons in prison;
- treatment of persons convicted of crimes with elements of violence;
- treatment of younger adult convicted persons;
- treatment of children;
- treatment of convicted women;
- treatment of persons sentenced to long-term sentences and life imprisonment;
- treatment of radicalized convicted persons;
- treatment of convicted persons with a high and very high security risk, and
- medical-psychological treatment of convicted persons (for a period of time or for the entire period of the execution of the imposed sentence).

The success of resocialization depends, above all, on the level of training of employees and their motivation for work. It is also necessary to pay special attention when choosing personnel to work in penal institutions; in addition to formal job requirements, they must also have predispositions to work in such conditions, which can be confirmed by testing candidates during employment (Jovanov, 2023: 10).

However, the duty of society does not end with the release of the convicted person from prison. There is a need for state or private agencies capable of accepting prisoners and ensuring their further rehabilitation and effective care aimed at reducing prejudice. This United Nations rule was adopted in 1955 in a document entitled “United Nations Standards of Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners” (United Nations, 1955). The post-penal period often begins with supervision of the person, especially in cases where

a conditional sentence (with probation) or parole with protective supervision is applied. Post-penal treatments consist of effective supervision and assistance programs involving material/financial, psychological and social support and treatments.

### **3. The position of Roma in prisons and the impact of discrimination on resocialization**

The terms “Roma”, “Gypsies” or “Travelers” entail a “complex and multifaceted” (Council of Europe, 2025) conglomerate of multi-ethnic identities, united more by a common experience of discrimination and anti-Gypsyism than by cultural affinity. Roma identity is not defined by their use of language, and it is crucial to note that they experience discrimination in prisons apart from ethnic and cultural differences. Part of the Roma may not speak Roma at all but they still retain different identities that can create social divisions in the context of the general prison population. There are also cases in which Roma in prisons did not identify themselves as Roma in order to avoid constant discrimination. One report from Ireland showed that some Roma individuals avoided opportunities for education and training due to fear of discrimination and harassment (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2014: 19).

When compared to the percentage of Roma in the general population in Europe, Roma people constitute a drastically large percentage of the prison population. In Bulgaria, where estimates of the national Roma population range from 4.9 to 10 %, the percentage of Roma prisoners in Bulgarian prisons is 50%. In Hungary, despite representing about 7% of the overall Hungarian national population, Roma are estimated to make up about 40% of the total prison population (Children of Prisoners Europe/COPE, 2020).

The percentage of Roma representation in prisons is often significantly higher even in places where their number in the national population is negligible. The increased likelihood of racial profiling, higher rates of poverty, and lack of eligibility for alternatives to incarceration before, during, and after sentencing are cited as reasons for overrepresentation (COPE, 2020).

According to the data from the 2002 population census in North Macedonia, the Roma represent 2.66% (53,879) of the total population in the country (which counts 2,022,547 inhabitants). Located in urban areas, most Roma citizens live in Skopje, Prilep, Kumanovo, Bitola, Tetovo, Gostivar, Shtip and Kočani; according to the government data, “members of this nationality have been identified in more than 50 municipalities” (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2014). The official results of the last census published on 30 March 2022 show that, despite the fact that the total population of the country has

decreased by 9.2% in the last two decades and currently stands at 1,836,713 inhabitants, the ethnic composition of the population has not significantly changed from 2002 onwards. Roma represent 2.53% (46,433) of the total population and their representation in prisons is very high. The research of the Center for Legal Research and Analysis and the Association of Roma Lawyers (2018) shows that conditions in prisons in North Macedonia are below minimum standards. Overcrowding, poor hygiene conditions, insufficient medical staff, mixing of minors with adult prisoners, and abuse of authority by prison guards are just some of the many problems in these facilities. Concurrently, an alarming number of Roma respondents covered by the research reported mistreatment by the prison police and inadequate access to health care (Center for Legal Research and Analysis and Association of Roma Lawyers, 2018). Strikingly, only one respondent reported having access to education and training services, while none reported having access to rehabilitation or support services while serving a prison sentence. Namely, all Roma respondents described the catastrophic effect of the time spent in detention on them and on their families (Center for Legal Research and Analysis and Association of Roma Lawyers, 2018). Some of the respondents' statements recorded during the research are as follows:

- “After the son died [in prison], we all got sick. I don't feel well. The two [sons] were married [before going to prison] and their families are falling apart.” - (interview with Roma respondent no. 2)
- “Going to prison ruined our lives. We have families and small children. There is no one to help the families.” - (interview with respondent Roma no. 3)
- “I became mentally ill from the prison sentence. I get annoyed easily.” - (interview with respondent Roma no. 5)
- “After the death of my brother [in prison], my mother was very broken and died the following year.” - (interview with Roma respondent no. 7).

### ***3.1. Analysis of deaths in North Macedonian prisons***

In the Macedonian penitentiary system, there are more and more cases of death of convicted persons, and the fact that the majority of the deceased prisoners are Roma is worrying. On 30 July 2010, the 19-year-old Roma (publicly identified as R.A.) started serving his three-month prison sentence in Gevgelija. After entering prison, he was placed in a room with six beds, where he was alone. As a drug user, R.A. was prescribed and received a daily

dose of methadone therapy. The methadone was to be kept under lock and out of his reach. On the morning of 1 August 2010, less than 48 hours after the start of his sentence, he was taken to hospital; by the time he reached the hospital, he had already fallen into a coma and had bruises on his head. An autopsy concluded that he died of pneumonia, exacerbated by high levels of methadone and barbiturates that suppressed his breathing, leading to organ failure. The level of methadone in his blood was seven times higher than it should be. The government of Macedonia agreed to pay the family a compensation of 9,000 euros (European Roma Rights Centre, 2017).

In 2017, patterns of similar deaths began to emerge. In March 2017, twenty-one-year-old Roma Andrias Redzepov died in the Skopje prison. His family was told that his death was caused by a combination of methadone and diazepam, but the family members were never shown the autopsy reports; there was also evidence that he was subjected to severe police violence in the hours before his death. In the same month, a 25-year-old member of the Roma ethnic community, father of two children, died in Shtip prison. The media reported that he didn't get enough food and that he was mistreated by prison guards and doctors. At the time of his death, he was taking medication given to him by the prison doctor (European Roma Rights Centre, 2017).

In June 2017, a 45-year-old Roma woman from Strumica was found dead in "Idrizovo" prison in Skopje. The family of the deceased woman claims that her death was the result of torture and beating by the prison guards and, subsequently, inadequate treatment by the prison doctors. Prison authorities denied the family's claims, saying the woman had serious health problems (European Roma Rights Centre, 2017).

### ***3.2. Proposals and measures to improve the situation of Roma in North Macedonian prisons***

Considering the negative results obtained from the presented research, several directions may be proposed to improve the situation in the hope of better results in the future:

- ensure better training of prison guards for the use of appropriate and necessary force during their employment and during service;
- raise prisoners' awareness about how to file lawsuits, appeals and complaints about ill-treatment;
- establish and maintain appropriate protocols in order to reduce cases of abuse;

- draw up written guidelines for dealing with prisoners from vulnerable groups, including clear policies for housing people who are at greater risk of violence among the prison population;
- conduct further investigations, ideally at national level, into all cases of excessive use of force or ill-treatment to determine whether the penalties imposed in these cases are proportionate to the gravity of the alleged offences.

One of the defense attorneys explained that the reason for the overrepresentation of Roma in the justice system is the lack of rehabilitation and support measures for criminal offenders in the Criminal Procedure Act: “The main question is 'where are the key preventive measures?' That is the biggest problem. Greater commitment is needed to work with these people. Not on a short-term basis or on a case-by-case basis, but on a systematic basis, to provide quality support to these people and their families.” (interview with defense attorney #3) (European Roma Rights Centre, 2017).

In 2015, the UN Commission against Torture expressed serious concern about the overcrowding and inhumane treatment of prisoners and called for an immediate end to the unlawful use of force against them (UN Committee against torture, 2015). In 2021, the UN Committee against Torture reported that, during their visit regarding police violence, they again received “a large number of allegations of physical abuse of criminal suspects by police officers (slapping, boxing, kicking and hitting with batons or other objects) in the context of arrest after the specific person was overpowered or taken to the police station, in order to force a confession of the crime” (Council of Europe, 2021).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The issue of discrimination against Roma citizens, particularly antigypsyism, remains deeply embedded within various institutional structures in North Macedonia, and its effects are most acutely felt by the Roma community. This research has highlighted how systemic discrimination permeates not only public life but also the prison system, where Roma individuals face compounded marginalization. The analysis of institutional practices reveals persistent inequalities that hinder the fair treatment and reintegration of Roma prisoners. The concept of prison as a tool for resocialization is undermined when the experience is marked by neglect, violence, and unequal treatment. Moreover, the troubling number of deaths in custody further underscores the urgent need for structural reforms. Addressing these issues requires not only legal and policy interventions but also a shift in societal attitudes.

To address these challenges, this paper has proposed several targeted measures and reforms aimed at improving the conditions of Roma in prisons. These include increasing transparency and accountability within the prison system, implementing anti-discrimination training for prison staff, ensuring equal access to rehabilitation and educational programs, and enhancing supervision mechanisms to monitor the treatment of minority prisoners. Policy changes must be accompanied by a genuine commitment of state institutions to uphold human rights standards and to dismantle long-standing biases that contribute to institutionalized racism.

In conclusion, the plight of Roma in North Macedonian prisons is a reflection of wider social injustices that extend beyond the prison gates. Addressing these issues requires more than piecemeal reforms; it necessitates a comprehensive, intersectional approach that tackles both the symptoms and root causes of antigypsyism. Only through sustained political will, community engagement, and systemic reform can meaningful change be achieved. The Roma community, like all others, deserves dignity, equality, and full legal protection, both inside and outside prison walls.

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### **РОМИ И ИНСТИТУЦИОНАЛНА ДИСКРИМИНАЦИЈА: СТУДИЈА ЗАТВОРСКИХ КАЗНИ**

#### **Резиме**

Европски центар за права Рома известио је 5. априла 2018. године да су четири особе ромског порекла, А. Реџепов (21), И. Ердал (25), С. Мустафова (46) и Б. Демир (39) преминуле у македонским затворима 2017. године, због неадекватне медицинске неге и недостатка одговарајућег надзора затворског особља. Реџепов и Ердал преминули су услед предозирања метадоном и бензодиазепамом, иако нису били укључени у програм терапије метадоном. Демир је преминуо од тровања након што му је медицинско особље дало погрешну дозу таблета „Празин“. Мустафова је преминула након неоснованих сумњи да лажира своје здравствено стање, услед чега није добила неопходну и правовремену медицинску негу; током обдукације, у телу је установљен висок ниво бензодиазепама. Ови примери указују на забрињавајући третман и дискриминацију Рома у македонским затворима који, нажалост, често доводе до смртних исхода. Као једна од најмаргинализованијих друштвених група, Роми често живе у лошим социо-економским условима и изложени су бројним предрасудама и стереотипима. У настојању да се реалистично прикаже тренутна ситуација и извуку адекватни закључци, у раду се анализирају различити облици дискриминације Рома у казнено-поправним установама у Македонији и широм Европе. На основу резултата истраживања, указује се на неопходност подизања свести и доношења ефикаснијих решења у циљу унапређења третмана и права затвореника Рома, као и успостављања праведнијег затворског система.

**Кључне речи:** дискриминација, Роми, затвор, расизам, антициганизам, права затвореника.