

Summary of Case Report AJB-2419/2020

OPCAT Visit to the Sátoraljaújhely Strict and Medium Regime Prison

On April 15, 2020, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, who is responsible for performing the tasks of the OPCAT National Preventive Mechanism (hereinafter the "NPM") and his staff members paid a visit to the Sátoraljaújhely Strict and Medium Regime Prison (hereinafter the "institute").

The visit aimed to investigate the fulfilment of measures with regard to the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 cases. Due to the state of emergency declared by Government Decree No. 40/2020. (III.11.), the visit was previously announced to the institute.

The members of the visiting group, wearing protective equipment, examined the cell blocks and the workplaces of the institute and made interviews with two members of the staff, the nurse and 10 detainees.

The reception of new detainees takes place in Building H of the institute, in the family visiting room. The detainee and the members of the police guard entered the institute through another gate. During the reception process, the detainee was interviewed about whether he had been abroad, had any relatives who are affected by coronavirus, or whether he displayed any symptom of the infection. In this case, no COVID-19 test was performed but the detainee's temperature was checked. After such a medical check-up, the doctor of the institute examined the new detainee.

The staff members who entered the cell block were wearing masks and gloves, and used hand sanitizer gel. The detainees returning to the cell block soaked their hands in disinfected water. Those detainees who work can take a daily shower, but those who do not work use the bathroom only four times a week.

The floor of the cell-block was cleaned with antiseptic cleaning supplies three times a day. The detainees received scouring powder and washing-up liquid for cleaning their cell units.

The NPM made recommendations on that disposable hand sanitizers be used instead of soaking the detainees' hands into water and that the detainees receive sanitizers for cleaning their cell units. Also, it was advised that it should be ensured that all detainees have a daily bath.

Out of 425 detainees, 295 persons participated in producing protective clothes and masks within the institute. Work opportunities outside the institute were not available at the time of the visit. Some courses and training sessions were held in the form of distance education.

The detainees made use of the possibility to make longer phone calls and communicate via Internet (Skype) as compensation for the visits that were prohibited due to the outbreak of the pandemic. Also, postal letters were allowed and detainees regularly received web packets from their relatives.

The prohibition of visits due to the COVID-19 outbreak restricted the right of the detainees to personal and family life, which was compensated for by other means of communication. The visit did not establish any irregularities in this regard.