

UN Censures France for Abuse of Children's Rights



United Nations, February 5 (RHC)-- The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has censured France for failing to stop the corporal punishment of children and ill-treatment of Roma and asylum-seeking minors. The CRC issued non-binding recommendations on Thursday, calling on the government in Paris to work more effectively to halt violence against children.

"No violence against children is justifiable," said the CRC after a review of the state of child rights in France, urging the government in Paris "to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings, including in the family, in schools, day cares and in alternative care."

The UN body also said it was "concerned by cases of ill-treatment of children with disabilities in institutions," specifically urging France to ban 'packing,' a technique in which children with autistic spectrum disorders are wrapped in cold, wet sheets. The CRC said packing amounted to "ill treatment."

The situation of asylum seeking minors was also of high concern for UN officials, with CRC member Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi particularly raising the plight of those living in squalor refugee camps in the northern port city of Calais. Idrissi said what was happening on the ground in the camps was far distant from the policies of the French Interior Ministry.

"More and more children are being placed in administrative waiting zones, in hotels which don't comply with the minimum child protection standards," she said in at a press conference, adding that those children "had difficulty in exercising their right to access health care services."

The CRC report came a day after French authorities evacuated 400 people from the Roma community from their camps on a disused railway line in northern Paris. The move prompted the Council of Europe to express concern over France's "mass expulsion policy."

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