

"Shutka Prison" – it is better to be a prisoner than detainee!

Skopje, April 22, 2018 (MIA) - Overcrowded prisons, lack of hygiene and substandard conditions, insufficient medical care, inefficiency of legal assistance, failure to implement resocialization programs were only some of the problems that pointed to inhumane and inappropriate treatment of convicts. These have also been the main criticisms of the international institutions continually given to all previous authorities on the situation in the Macedonian prisons.

The US State Department in the recently published human rights report for the Republic of Macedonia, as one of the most critical issues, noted torture in Macedonian prisons.

Very little is seen from what is happening behind closed doors of prisons. MIA's reporter and photo-reporter had the opportunity to visit the Skopje Prison, known as Shutka, with the largest detention unit in Macedonia and to get an insight in the situation in one of the prisons in the country.

According to the degree of security, the degree of restriction of freedom and the types of treatment applied to convicted persons, the Skopje Prison is a penitentiary-correctional facility of semi-open type in which the primary security is the physical one, exercised by the members of the security sector.

Men sentenced to imprisonment for up to three years, as well as recidivists sentenced for up to six months are jailed here.

The Skopje Prison hosts the largest and most secured detention unit, which exercises the detention measures imposed on male and female persons from the whole territory of the country, which are facing prison term of over ten years.

Shutka's main activity is the detention

Prison's director Gjoko Kotevski told MIA that the main activity in Shutka was the detention center, as about 80 percent of its work is related to the detention unit.

With the amnesty law, the number of convicts dropped drastically. The prison authorities said that in the last 15 years, the usual number of prisoners was between 150 and 200, while the capacity of the prison was 128 convicts in an open, semi-open and closed unit. After the amnesty, the number of convicts was reduced to 67, of which 17 were in the closed unit, 46 in the semi-open and open, and four persons in the admission unit.

There were about 200 people in custody and the capacity is over 300 beds. There were cases of up to 460 people to be held in custody.

- They will tell you there are new people for detention and you have to find place for them, the management said.

According to the conditions of the detention unit, Shutka was far from respecting the human rights in line with the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The humiliation of detainees in terms of their placement in that unit is equal as if they were convicted and sentenced.

The cells in that part have not been renovated since the prison was built, that is 1968, except for a few rooms that were painted and where massive damages were slightly repaired.

The most alarming is the situation in the notorious detention center "V", or more commonly known as "C" unit among prison police. The first layer of plaster in several places has fallen, and the cables around the power switches are bare and one can easily get an electric shock.

Inside is dark, a small window barely lets the light in, and so the witty detainees tied a plastic bottle of water to control the flow of air into the cell itself.

The walls in most cells are painted by creative detainees. In some of them you feel like you are in a monastery, not in detention cells, as icons are painted, with the signature of their authors.

The floor is ruined, as in an abandoned house; half covered with wooden boards, half bare. In a space of less than six to seven square meters, there are two to three, and somewhere even four beds, a small table and a squatting toilet. The detainees put a plastic bottle facing upside down to seal it up and to prevent the unpleasant odor into the room.

The food they receive during visits is usually left on the floor around the beds.

While MIA team was visiting the notorious detention unit "C", the detainees performed part of the daily routine, strolling around the prison yard for several hours, and then returning to their cells.

The detention unit can boast of "The Hague Rooms" which the prison has built at the request of the EU for the needs of the Court of The Hague. These rooms meet the standards of a modern European prison, but they are only a few.

We could not find out which prisoners were accommodated there, but it could be assumed these were rooms for VIPs.

Prison security is also strengthened with members of the Special Support Unit (SPE), because persons charged of acts of terrorism are also placed in the detention unit. There are persons from the "Divo naselje" case, the events of forceful entrance in the Parliament on April 27, the shooting in Tetovo.

They consider the work in the detention to be more difficult. A detained person, worth ten convicts, one literally serves all their needs, they require a lot of work, said the prison administration.

Prison stories

MIA team visited the closed ward of Shutka, where we had an opportunity to talk to some of the prisoners who were serving a prison sentence here.

The accommodation conditions are solid, but certainly far from the European standards, but prisoners who were previously detained say they feel in these cells like in a hotel. Total of 17 convicts serve there. The rooms can accommodate three to four prisoners, and they are responsible for its maintenance.

One of the convicts in Shutka, serving a prison sentence for participating in a crowd, at a protest held on May 5, 2015 before the government for the murder of Martin Neshkovski, is not satisfied with the new prison administration.

In a conversation with MIA, he said they have been visited by NGOs, but conditions in the prison have not improved.

He complained of unfair verdict, as he claimed he was not guilty but was trapped by the then government structures to serve a prison sentence.

Regarding the prison conditions, he complained of the medical assistance. He said he asked for it several times, but it was never provided. Food, he said, is bad, but there is an improvement compared to the earlier. It is very disturbing, he said, that in the closed ward there was no telephone booth to call the family and ask about their health condition.

He complained about the treatment of the educators. He talked only to the resocialization head, but did not want to talk to others.

He said he had no contact with the outside world. The door was unlocked only for therapy and food, and according to him, it was never like this.

The second person we talked to, who had another 60 days before the expiry of the sentence, and who was convicted of abduction, complained about the selectivity of the prison administration in respect of the pardon.

He believed he should have been out by now, but they did not release him, because according to them, an illegal substance was found in his urine. He asked for a blood test, but he was not allowed. He told us that the same thing happened to his roommate, but the day MIA's team visited the prison, he was allowed to go home, although he was supposed to serve longer. Other inmates complained of this as well.

Prison Corruption

The prison authorities said they successfully dealt with corruption among prison officers, as they responded promptly to any suspicious case. There have been instances of corruption, but as they explained, they received guidelines on how to take measures in order to minimize this phenomenon.

- The issue of corruption in prisons is highly exploited in the public, but for us it is relevant if there is evidence. When there are indications we take all the legal measures that are at our disposal to prevent this, said the prison administrators.

Currently, one of the Idrizovo prison employees charged for corruption, served at Shutka.

The possibility for prisoners to bribe prison employees to gain certain benefits, according to the prison administration, was reduced to a minimum, because the food was good, the rooms were appropriately heated when the weather was cold, the standards for seven hours of free movement at the weekend were respected, the annual holiday, etc.

However, the prisoners we talked to, told us that if one wanted to get a cell phone in the prison, had to pay 200 euros. Cells phones are forbidden, as in all prisons.

According to the Prison Administration, there was one case of a corrupt member of the prison police. He was detained, but was acquitted.

There are 103 uniformed police officers in the prison, who take care of security.

Shutka is preparing for a new resocialization program

Shutka was getting ready for a new program for resocialization, which is already being implemented by the new Administration, and it included visits to cultural and art events for the best-behaved convicts, increasing the books in the libraries, organizing workshops and cultural events in the institution itself by the convicts and guest artists.

The day when the MIA team visited the prison, it was announced that 10 prisoners would be allowed to go to a cinema. This measure announced by the director of the prison, Koteski, together with the Minister of Culture, Robert Alagjovzovski, would be an opportunity for better resocialization and creating a better atmosphere in the prison.

The prisoners work in the café, the kitchen, the car repair workshop, the carpentry and metalworking workshop, but the latter two do not work, but, as they said, they were working to put these projects back into operation.

The prison also announced the construction of some sort of stray dogs station, where each prisoner would take care after one, and after serving of the sentence, he could even adopt the dog. The prison authorities announced new employment in the prison, which will be focused on economy, and this has already been requested by the Ministry of Finance.

The prison officials said that not all prisoners were the same and that was the reason why their treatment was different. They explained that all inmates received appropriate treatment, but access to some benefits was on individual merit, based on their behavior.

- Not all convicted persons are the same; someone may use the legally prescribed benefits, such as weekends, for a maximum of 15 days, but some will not use them and should not use them. How shall we motivate the convicted person to participate in the activities and work, if they are granted the benefits without participation in any activity, Marjan Joshevski, head of the sector for resocialization, explained.

The educators keep record about the prisoners, but notes are kept even if prisoners avoid any communication with the employees.

Open and semi-open unit, a step to home

In the open and semi-open ward there are 46 convicts. These units are outside the walls of the closed unit of Shutka.

In the prison, the open and semi-open part are one next to another, and the prisoners walk together in the same circle, which is separated from the closed unit and the detention center.

Three to four persons prisoners are in one room, and each room has a TV set.

In the open unit, prisoners can use sports ground, library, while a mechanical workshop is also nearby, in which some of the minor defects of vehicles owned by the prison are serviced.

The detainees in the open section were willing to be photographed, and some of them were also willing to tell us some of their stories about the crimes they were accused of.

There is currently no money for the renovation of the prison. Director Gjoko Kotevski said, but they were currently attempting to reconstruct something with the funding at their disposal.

- Currently, we are trying to reconstruct something, there is no investment, at least not this year, we expect in the future, he added.

He told us, that a new detention unit would be built in Idrizovo, in which the detention center would be relocated, and then the renovation of Shutka was expected. It should become an institution of a completely semi-open type. However, there were no deadlines for these plans yet.

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Prison Corruption - Mobile with Internet for 600, without Internet for up to 200 euros

Skopje, May 1, 2018 (MIA) - Few years old mobile phone with Internet costs 600-700 euros, mobile without the Internet, just for phone calls, costs about 200 euros, 32-inch TV set around 500-600 euros, second-hand mattress 1.000 denars, a small freezer 200 euros ... These are some of the prices at the Idrizovo Prison for the prohibited things that prisoners can get to.

The insufficient staffing of prison officers, their lack of training and low economic and financial status, the unprofessionalism expressed through excessive use of force and the occurrence of corruption are part of the reasons for inhuman and inappropriate treatment of convicted persons, according to the Shadow Report for Chapter 23 for the period May 2016 - January 2018, prepared by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia and the Institute for European Policy.

The US Department of State in its report on human rights for the country, among other things, has also noted as most critical the use of torture by prison guards.

Experts said that Macedonian laws did not rule in the prisons of Macedonia, but prison laws, and corruption was not only unlawful, but also violated the human rights of prisoners in the penitentiary and correctional facilities in the country.

In an attempt to find out more about the corruption in prisons, MIA's journalist team in the second story dedicated to the conditions in which the Macedonian prisons work, talked with the prison police and prisoners in Idrizovo and Sutka, where we received almost identical statements.

From what we could observe the low economic standard, old and worn uniforms, lack of staff, failure to appropriately assess the risk faced by police officers in the prison were some of the reasons for the corruption that ruled the penitentiary institutions. Certainly the criminogenic structure of the prisoners themselves played its role too, but in order to change it the most important aspect is their resocialization.

The business with mobiles is the most profitable in the Idrizovo Penitentiary

Mobile phones, a visit to the prison doctor and dentist, a refrigerator were some of the services that prisoners from Shutka and Idrizovo told us they could receive in the prison at certain price.

In a conversation with MIA, they said corruption in the past months has been reduced, but not completely eradicated. Still some benefits could be obtained for a certain price from prison staff.

The situation with corruption in the past was much worse, they estimated. Now the situation was somehow under more control, but still certain things could be bought in the prison, some of which were illegal for prisoners to own.

One of the prisoners with whom the MIA team spoke in Idrizovo was there for four months. He spent three months in custody. He was serving a sentence for financial fraud and grand theft.

He claimed he performed "services" for employees of the Ministry of Interior, some of whom were senior officials during the rule of VMRO-DPMNE. He opened fictional companies, which he run as director and only put his signature on the activities of the companies that were legally opened, but the way in which they worked was unlawful.

He was sentenced to 15 years in prison in absentia for financial misdemeanors and to five and a half years for severe theft. Together with the detention he has been behind bars for seven months. Now he has to spend seven years in jail. The sentence expires in 2025.

He was in the admission unit of the prison, which he said, was currently the best.

"People here are least likely to reach out for unpleasant things, do not get into plotting, you have more opportunities to resocialize and find a job when you leave," said our interlocutor.

At the admission department in Idrizovo, there are currently 68 convicts who are waiting for treatment and accommodation in some of the prison wings.

He said that good behavior was not truly appreciated. The higher prison officials appreciated it, but the prison guards did not.

- They will not take your cell phone, but in return you need to give them your breakfast, lunch, dinner, coffee, juice. God forbid if they ask you for a lemon, banana, kiwi, and you do not have one, our interlocutor said.

For the prisoner to receive treatment, one must stay for 30 days in the admission unit. It is luck to be in the admission and get some engagement.

- In the closed unit it is very difficult. Some of the prisoners are not allowed visits, until they give something to prison employees. A sum of 500, 1,000 denars, he explained.

In an earlier conversation with people who had already served a prison sentence, MIA team learned that for any service in prison, the police officers would hit their hands on the chest and would say "I told you five hundred times..." or "I told you thousand times ..." .

Our source from Idrizovo said that now this was no longer happening.

- This man "I told you two hundred times, five hundred times" is gone. He was transferred to the detention unit, he added, emphasizing that current commanders were much more honorable than the previous ones.

- Those who demanded huge sums are no longer here; there are still some who seek something, but they are not like the previous ones, putting you in the worst conditions to make you bribe them, he added.

He said in the closed ward if your teeth hurt, you had to give something to a commander to take you to a dentist. The price is five hundred to one thousand denars to take you from door to door.

Money is sent to the prisoners by their family. Our interlocutor said that you could receive twice a month an amount of five thousand denars and they were kept in the treasury of the prison.

One of the largest businesses in the prison were mobile phones. A prisoner was not allowed to own a cell, but most have.

- It is something you cannot hide. If the prison administration wants, the guards can immediately find out your phone. Surely they have a man who benefits from it. An ordinary phone that can

serve exclusively for a telephone conversation costs at least eight thousand denars, he said, adding that the price could reach up to 200 euros.

When the phones arrived, they were given away, but they could be confiscated from the prison guards, and could be resold again, he told us.

He had a key to the shower once a week, like other prisoners. However, he said if you had connections, you could get the key more often.

Two times a month, his family sent him home-made food parcels. He cooked himself, because he said he was not satisfied with prison food. The menu included fish, mashed potatoes, beans, rice - food, which is commonly eaten even outside, but he said the problem was in the delivery.

-The food is left on the street, from the kitchen until it gets to the units, it is left in cardboard boxes on the ground and someone needs to take them. While those who carry the food come, the food is left alone for 20 minutes, and there are a lot of cats in the prison, and sometimes they try the food before it gets to the prisoners. Perhaps food is not as bad as poor delivery and unhygienic conditions, he explained.

That is why he cooked himself. He has a small stove and a refrigerator. He paid ten thousand denars for the refrigerator. He said they could take his fridge and sell it into another prison wing.

Prison services do not deny corruption, but take everything to eradicate it

The deputy commander of the Idrizovo jail, Aluk Sali, who is employed in the prison for about 11 years, said there were corrupt police officers and these cases were resolved by imprisoning these officers.

There were colleagues, he said, which were in prison, colleagues who were under investigation and who were suspected of committing a crime.

- There are cases of corruption, but these cases are resolved. There are colleagues who are in prison because of such cases, colleagues under investigation, suspected of committing a crime. We monitor the situation, and if we find out, and if the prisoners point them to us, we will definitely take action, he said.

He emphasized that corruption was not at the level at which the public would think. "Huge corruption is just an excuse of convicted people who are not satisfied with some conditions in the prison," Sali said.

He said there were cases when he worked on two floors with about 400 convicts. - You cannot ask for money from a convict, because you know you are in a confined space, here every word is heard and spread in a short time. I do not say that the prison is one hundred percent corruption free, but we act immediately if we observe such a case, Sali emphasized.

Although prisoners have been banned from using mobile phones, the prison authorities do not deny that they own cell phones.

-The inmates have cell phones, they hide them, and if they are caught, they do not say they are theirs. Every day we do searches and every day we find a cell phone, we have convicts who cooperate with us, he added.

More than dozen security guards have been expelled from work due to corruption, the deputy director of Idrizovo, Femi Jonuzi told MIA.

He explained that last year, 12 employees of the prison police left the institution for various reasons, and this year additional 12 to 13 people should leave, some of them related to cases of corruption. Some of them were expelled because they were caught trying to bring cell phones in the prison.

Four to five of them were serving a prison sentence for corruption, and one, as MIA learned during a visit to the Shutka prison, served the sentence in that penitentiary institution.

They denied that drug dealing went through prison staff and said it entered the prison through packages sent to prisoners. Sometimes the drug was thrown over the prison wall.

There was a case when a person was caught throwing certain things through a wall in the prison, including mobile phones, which were then resold in the prison. The investigation for such cases was conducted by the Ministry of Interior, prison officials said.

Shutka's prison administration said they successfully tackled corruption among prison officers, highlighting the timely reaction to any suspicious case. There were reports of certain cases of corruption, but as they explained, they received guidelines, how to take action in order to minimize this phenomenon.

The possibility for detainees to bribe employees in the Shutka Prison to obtain certain benefits, according to the prison administration, was reduced to a minimum, because as they explained the food was good, the rooms were appropriately heated when the weather was cold, the standards for seven hours of free movement at the weekend were respected, the annual holiday, etc.

According to the Shutka Prison Administration, there was one case of a corrupt member of the prison police. He was taken into custody and received an acquittal.

There are 103 uniformed police officers in the prison who take care of security.

The economic status of prison police officers, an additional reason for prison corruption

One cannot guarantee that there are no corrupt police officers, said Sali in a conversation with MIA, but also pointed out the poor conditions in which the prison guards worked.

The prison employs 254 people, and 184 of them are uniformed police officers. This means one police officer to 200 prisoners, and the smallest number according to the law is one prison officer to eight prisoners.

Until January 31, 2018, the Idrizovo Penitentiary, the largest prison in the country, accommodated 1,786 convicted persons, and after the amnesty, this number dropped to 1,357, as of April 11. Total of 102 are on the run.

In conversation with police officers, we learned that the average salary is about 13,500 denars and with overtime hours they could get an amount of 18,000 to 22,000 thousand denars depending on the working experience.

They complained they were not treated as all police officers in the Ministry of Interior, although

they have the same powers and high-risk job. In average, they are tasked with securing around 40 people sentenced to life sentences and convicts for other crimes.

They said an outside policeman worked with a convict two to three hours, from court to custody, and then the person came to jail.

- We are 12 hours around them. I do not condemn the prisoners, they are condemned by the court, but these are persons whose behavior is different from the behavior of a stable man who did not commit a crime. The first day I came here, I thought I would not work here anymore, that I would not go back, but I stayed, said Sali, who is a graduated detective.

Because of this alarming situation with the prison guards, Idrizovo asked for at least 35 new policemen, and according to the deputy director, Jonuzi, they already sent a request to the Ministry of Finance.

He added that there were lawsuits for unpaid overtime work by prison police officers. They received about 25 million denars in court, and there was also a second group that was currently suing, and Jonuzi said they would also receive about 25 million denars.

They believed that the previous prison leadership was responsible for the conditions in which the prison police worked, but they hoped that if the new employments were approved, they would be able to commit themselves more efficiently to providing secure environment for convicted persons and prevention of prison corruption.

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Prison Resocialization: One educator for about a hundred prisoners

Skopje, May 6, 2018 (MIA) - One educator to around 100 prisoners, convicts who say they have never seen their educators, rooms intended for resocialization occupied by beds on which inmates sleep. This is how resocialization of people sentenced to prison terms looks like.

Unofficially, according to data from the NGO sector, about 60 percent of prisoners relapsed and returned to prisons. Instead of resocializing, most of them got into deeper criminal activities in the penitentiary institutions in the country.

MIA in order to gain better insight into this process visited the largest prison in the country Idrizovo Penitentiary and the Skopje Prison, known as Shutka.

The situation is far from enviable; efforts are being made to improve the conditions, but the whole process has not yet been revived.

The problems are numerous. Facilities for prison accommodation, lack of staff to be involved in the process, non-existence of continuous programs that would be implemented in that direction.

There is foreign assistance: USAID, the Council of Europe, the EU provide funding for training of educators for resocialization and for the convicts to be able to make living after prison and to rectify their behavior. However, soon after these projects end and foreign money stops, the state has no funds to continue.

Prime Minister Zoran Zaev visited the Idrizovo Prison in September last year. In this occasion, he said: "I am ashamed to be the prime minister of a country where prisons do not meet any standards of humanity and the social aspect of the lives of those who are convicted and serve their sentence in the Idrizovo Penitentiary."

Overcrowded capacities - A key problem

The Shadow Report for Chapter 23, drafted by the Helsinki Committee and the European Policy Institute, said that overcrowded prisons were still an alarming issue, but the most critical was the situation in Idrizovo prison. Officially, there was an accommodation capacity for 1,094 people, and according to the Committee for the Prevention of Torture, that number is 900. Before the amnesty, the prison accommodated 1,786 people, which was 163.25 percent over its capacity.

Nearly 60 percent of prisoners in the country are accommodated in this prison, which is about 80 years old. After the amnesty law was passed in January, 620 people left.

Snezana Neshoska, deputy head of the Resocialization Sector in the penitentiary institution Idrizovo, said in a conversation with MIA that due to the overcrowded capacities in Idrizovo until January 31, 2018, it was very difficult to work with this number of inmates.

There are 25 educators in the prison, and four are in the admission unit. The number of resocialization staff is insufficient to serve such a number of convicts, which, as Neshoska said, dropped to 1.357 with the amnesty, as of April 11. Total of 102 prisoners are on the run.

The prison has a total of 254 employees, of which 70 are in the administration, including the educators, and the others are uniformed. There is one psychologist, but Neshoska said more psychologists were needed, as one cannot make it.

- One educator, Neshovska said, worked with over 120 prisoners before the amnesty, and even now the situation has not improved.

The prison sentence here is served by males sentenced to over three years, as well as male recidivists, sentenced to prison for over six months

Only the Idrizovo Penitentiary has a special department for women, who have been convicted to imprisonment or juvenile imprisonment regardless of the severity of sentence. This jail also accommodates people sentenced for life, both men and women, as well as foreign nationals and stateless persons.

The capacity of the Skopje Prison is 128 people, and after the amnesty, 68 prisoners serve their sentence there, 17 of which are in closed ward, 46 in semi-open and open, and four in admission. In the detention unit, there are about 200 people, and the capacity is over 300 beds.

In a conversation with MIA, the head of the Resocialization Department, Marijan Joshevski, said there were six educators, including pedagogues, social workers, but prisoners did not have a psychologist. In Shutka, the sentence is served by male persons - primary perpetrators, convicted to up to three years imprisonment, as well as male repeat offenders, convicted with to up to six months imprisonment.

In Shutka, one educator works with over 20 prisoners. According to the European rules, one educator should work with 10 to 15 prisoners. However, this number in Shutka is due to the amnesty because previously one educator worked with 100 prisoners.

The prison in Idrizovo awaits in late May, a ceremony marking the completion of building of new facilities, which would mark the end to the first stage of reconstruction, first announced in 2013 from the previous government of Gruevski.

Deputy director of the prison Femi Jonuzi in a conversation with MIA said that the new facilities have the capacity to accommodate about 567 convicts. Now all convicts, regardless of the treatment, are housed in one facility.

The current number is 260 convicts with half-open treatment, and 90 people in the open unit, the rest are in the closed ward. The remaining 567 beds in the new facilities will be filled with convicts who will receive reduced prison sentences with the amnesty.

- The amnesty law reduces the expiration of the sentence to certain individuals, which now have closed treatment and it is possible for some of them to go from less liberal to more liberal treatment and thus to fill the capacity in new facilities, Neshoska explained.

It is easier to contact a director than an educator

During the visit to the two prisons, MIA's team talked with convicts and their experiences with resocialization.

It is easier to get in touch with the director than with the educator, some said.

- It is most painful that there are no professionals which you can reach and tell your problem. The way educators work here must be changed urgently. The way they are treating us is equal to

zero, it is harder to get in touch with them than to get to the director, commander. The commanders, if not at the first, then at second or third request, will call you for a conversation to see what the problem is, said a convict from Idrizovo, serving seven years in prison for two crimes, financial fraud through establishing fictional companies and grand theft, for which he claimed he had not committed but he was set up.

He is now in the admission department, which is currently considered to be the best in Idrizovo, because, as he said people here were most well-behaved.

He added that no professional assessment was done after his admission. There are four educators in the admission unit, but he has not yet spoken to any of them.

- I have not seen a psychologist, there is one psychiatrist, who is crazier than us all, added our interlocutor, who is a recidivist.

In those seven months he was not yet involved in resocialization program; he started his own resocialization by planting seeds in the garden sent to him by his family.

Something that he would want to change is all inmates to be engaged in work, not just a few.

- You need to bribe someone to be engaged. One can work in a bakery, in an infirmary, as an electrician, carpenter, to do carving, or in the economic unit, but it was closed two months ago, said the convict from Idrozovo.

One of the convicts in Shutka, serving a prison sentence for participating in a crowd, in a protest on May 5, 2015 staged before the government for the murder of Martin Neshkovski, is not satisfied with the new prison administration.

In the conversation he said that he only talked with the head of resocialization in the prison, and he did not want to talk with others.

He had no contact with the outside world. The door was unlocked only for therapy and for food, and, according to him, it was never like this.

He complained he had asked several times to be examined by a doctor and that he did not receive adequate medical treatment.

There are programs, but there is no continuity, staffing, and working conditions

Neshoska emphasized that in Idrizovo there were specific programs for working with convicted persons, but so far they were not given the opportunity to work according to them.

- We have not been given the opportunity to do so since one educator came to about 120 convicted persons. It is very difficult to work in a group of 120 convicts who rotate, that is, change the treatment from closed, to semi-open or open. There is no continuity in the process, she explained.

The sentencing plan for each prisoner in the prisons is prepared in the admission unit by an expert team, comprised of a pedagogue, a psychologist, a criminologist. An assessment is made that is unified for all prisons covering criminological, sociological, psychological and medical history, and based on that assessment a plan and program is prepared on how the sentence will be

served. An individual sentence plan is developed and it is assessed whether labor work is required, moral and ethnic education, and according to the plan, a specific program is made.

Joshevski clarified that his team worked with all prisoners especially during the first days of admission.

With the assessment instrument, Joshevski added, the degree of recidivism risk is measured.

If the convict in Idrizovo is a drug-addict, he is given a methadone treatment, which has been used in the prison for ten years now. Before the amnesty, the number of methadone addicts serving prison sentences was 260, after the amnesty it dropped to 160, said Neshoska, but the question remained whether such ex-convicts would return because of a new crime.

Some of the prisoners said that they did not even see their educators at all and that they were dealing with administrative matters, rather than their resocialization.

Neshoska disagreed with the claims of some of the convicts that they have not seen their educators at all.

- I was inside, I had a group of 120 prisoners. I know when someone talks on the phone, when he was sick. But there is another side, if you do not meet someone's needs or do not fulfill any desire, then they say the educator does not pay me attention, Neshoska added.

The educators keep record about the prisoners, but notes are kept even if prisoners avoid any communication with the employees.

- There is no time frame for conversation with the convict, but once a week the educators talk to each prisoner, emphasized Joshevski.

So far, for example, specific programs have been implemented in Idrizovo for convicts for sexual offenses, for those who endure long and life-long prison sentences, for women. These are modules that, as part of a project, were implemented in several prisons in the country, including in Skopje Prison.

Joshevski expected that these programs would soon take effect and be included in the regular resocialization programs.

- We were trained according to those programs, the project in the women's ward was completed. We have been trained for long and life sentences, but we do not have adequate facilities to implement them. It is a matter of working with a group of at least nine to ten people, keeping a diary about the activities being conducted; the program should promote a pleasant atmosphere to have an effect, and not to be conducted in a shed, added Neshoska.

The staff employed in Idrizovo do not have adequate education. Some of them have completed geography, history, physical education, and most of them are social workers.

Some of the educators were hired to educate the convicts who did not have elementary education, so instead of paying for their education, the staff was used for this purpose. Some of them held classes in the profession they had. But many of them did not want to write in their diplomas that it was issued by the Idrizovo Penitentiary, so they started working with the Kocho Racin Workers' University, which issued a diploma for completed elementary education.

- At the moment, however, the classroom, where the education of the prisoners was carried out, is occupied with convicts. We are waiting to get a new classroom any moment now, in order to continue the process of education, added Neshoska.

She said that they were doing everything they could in the conditions in which they worked.

- The conditions of the employees are no better than the conditions in which the convicts stay. At one time we were in one room, which was heated by wood stove, and if we did not have wood we were sitting together in cold. However, we worked with the prisoners, none of them was ever forgotten. Still, we never forget one about vacation, going home, giving packages, or any other benefits. These things go through the educator. Two visits and one package are guaranteed by the state, the remaining benefits go with the approval of the educator, she added.

The free time of the prisoners

One of the major problems, according to Neshoska, is the free time of the convicts.

-They have too much free time, someone should work with them to properly use their free time, she added.

The prison economy is interrupted. It is in a kind of bankruptcy.

- The economy unit is not working for eight years, within this sector there was a cow and sheep breeding, dairy company, pig farming. It all worked until 2007, and then slowly began to be abolished. The wood industry was also part of the economic unit, but nothing works there either. We have materials, benches, couches, but the furniture salon is empty, Neshoska told MIA team.

The convicts themselves, however, want to be hired, they seek for work in the prison, where the time does not pass unless they engage in some activities.

- We expect all this to work. No convict has refused a job, they themselves want something to work. They are not to be blamed, but overcrowding. There is no work to be done, no premises for education, says Neshoska.

In Skopje Prison, the open and semi-open unit are next to each other and the prisoners move together in the same circle, which is separated from the closed ward.

In the open unit, prisoners can use sports ground, library, while a mechanical workshop is also nearby, in which some of the minor defects of vehicles owned by the prison are serviced.

Three to four persons prisoners are in one room, and each room has a TV set. The inmates are responsible for housekeeping.

Ten prisoners were given the opportunity to visit the cinema, a measure announced by the director of the prison, Gjoko Koteski, together with the Minister of Culture, Robert Alagjovovski, which will be an opportunity for better resocialization and a better atmosphere in the prison in Shutka.

The measures included visits to cultural and art events for the best-behaved convicts, increasing the books in the libraries, organizing workshops and cultural events in the institution itself by the convicts and guest artists.

Director Koteski announced the reactivation of workshops in the prison, which will give prisoners

the opportunity to fulfill their free time.

The prison authorities announced new employment in the part of the prison that will perform economic activities, for which approval from the Ministry of Finance has already been requested.

Resocialization in Idrizovo is the most problematic, the best results in Shtip

The Directorate for Enforcement of Sanctions pointed as the most problematic resocialization in Idrizovo, and were mostly satisfied with the activities that were being carried out in the prison in Shtip.

They said that solving the problem of overcrowding in prisons would provide opportunity for solving other issues.

Director of the Agency for Execution of Sanctions Jovica Stojanovic told MIA he was satisfied with how situation in prisons in Macedonia improved. Regarding the unofficial number that 60 per cent of the prisoners relapse, he said there were such cases, and prison conditions were one of the reasons, but not the only one.

Other factors are also at play, the personality, the family, the way of life, the support system they have after leaving the prison. He said the exact number of relapses is not known because there is no system to monitor this.

The Administration pointed out that in the past years several projects for training of employees for the process of resocializations have been implemented, as well as projects for convicts themselves.

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