

## Serbia Action Alert: What Do We Do Next?

Washington, DC - November 21, 2007

Human Rights Supporters,

Since the release of *Torment Not Treatment: Serbia's Segregation and Abuse of Children and Adults with Disabilities*, we have received an outpouring of worldwide support from people, like you, who want to help the work of MDRI. Many of you you have given financial gifts and we are so grateful for your support. In addition to your monetary support, we hope you will **join our worldwide campaign to demand immediate action in Serbia**. The situation in Serbia has clearly caught the world's attention and we need your help moving forward.

Below, please find answers to the most common questions we've received regarding how you can help:

### WHAT CAN I DO?

- **Write to the government** of Serbia demanding an end to the abuses. The following is a sample e-mail you can send to the Prime Minister of Serbia. Your letter will be even stronger if you add your own ideas and concerns. Please copy all e-mails to [mdri@mdri.org](mailto:mdri@mdri.org) so we can track the international response.

**To: Vojislav Kostunica, Prime Minister of Serbia**  
**Email: [omr@srbija.sr.gov.yu](mailto:omr@srbija.sr.gov.yu)**

*Dear Prime Minister Kostunica:*

*I am writing to urge your government to take immediate action to end human rights abuses against children and adults in Serbian orphanages and other institutions. The human rights violations described by Mental Disability Rights International (MDRI) should not be tolerated in any country. Every child or adult with a disability is important. They deserve proper medical care and a chance to lead a good and normal life outside of an institution.*

*I am asking that you please fulfill the promise of your policies by protecting the human rights of the thousands in institutions in Serbia.*

*Sincerely,*

*[your name here]*

In addition to [mdri@mdri.org](mailto:mdri@mdri.org), please copy your email to:

**Mrs. Dragica Vlaovic - Vasiljevic**

Department of Family Care and Social Protection Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

E-mail: [socijalna\\_zastita@minrzs.sr.gov.yu](mailto:socijalna_zastita@minrzs.sr.gov.yu)

- **Make a donation to MDRI** to make sure we have the resources to keep holding Serbia and other nations around the world accountable for human rights violations. MDRI is a small organization fighting a worldwide problem, and your support is urgently needed. Please visit [www.mdri.org](http://www.mdri.org) to donate.
- **Spread the word online or in person** - we need as broad a network of supporters as possible. If you think you can arrange a major public event or fundraiser for us, please contact us to let us know.
- **Volunteer your time or professional knowledge** - We recommend that you contact advocacy or service organizations working in Serbia to offer your assistance if you are interested in volunteering in a service capacity. A list of excellent organizations can be found in the appendix of our report on Serbia (found at our website).
  - If you have *specific* ideas for ways to promote or fundraise for this cause, please contact James at [jhowell@mdri.org](mailto:jhowell@mdri.org).
  - If you have fluency in Eastern European languages or have medical and/or related professional experience, please email your information to [mdri@mdri.org](mailto:mdri@mdri.org).

### **HOW CAN I HELP A CHILD OR ADULT WITH A DISABILITY IN SERBIA?**

- There are many excellent non-governmental agencies to help people with disabilities in Serbia. We encourage you to support them (please visit the appendix of our report on Serbia). One group you may choose to support is **VelikiMali (Great Little People)**, a Serbian disability organization creating supported foster care programs for children with disabilities. As of present, there are almost no other community support programs to help people with disabilities in Serbia.

#### **Veliki Mali (Great Little People)**

Maksima Gorkog 8

26000 Pancevo

Srbija

Email: [office@velikimali.org](mailto:office@velikimali.org)

Telephone: +381 13 303 922

### **CAN I ADOPT A CHILD FROM SERBIA?**

**It is extremely hard to do so.** The Serbian government permits very few international adoptions for non-Serbian citizens. It is necessary to apply directly to the government of Serbia for any individual adoptions. For more details, you can visit the [US State Department's information page](#) about inter-country adoptions.

Adoption Authority in Serbia:

Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Policy  
Family and Children Security Department (Sektor za zastitu porodice i dece)  
Nemanjina 22-26  
11000 Belgrade  
Telephone: 011-381-11-3631-448  
Website: [www.minrzs.sr.gov.yu](http://www.minrzs.sr.gov.yu)

**Disclaimer:** MDRI is a human rights organization and takes no position on the subject of international adoption. We are not directly involved in adoption in any way.

### **CAN I SEND IN-KIND DONATIONS TO THE SERBIAN INSTITUTIONS?**

Unfortunately, MDRI is not able to accept in-kind donations for children in the institutions.

### **WHAT ARE MDRI'S NEXT STEPS IN SERBIA?**

MDRI is working closely with activists and local organizations in Serbia to monitor conditions and to keep pressure on the Serbian government to end abuses. We are bringing our report to the United Nations, the European Union, and to Council of Europe human rights authorities. We will also be contacting international donor agencies to see increased international funding for alternatives to abusive institutions.

Since the release of the report, 61 local organizations in Serbia have joined together to request the Serbian government's immediate action in protecting the human rights of persons currently detained in institutions. MDRI will be providing assistance to these groups as they pressure the government to create change.

As always, we will post updates on our website and use this email forum to communicate the status of the situation in Serbia as well as ways you can become involved. **We will need your help!**

Again, thank you for your kind words of support, offers of assistance, and financial generosity.

Warmest regards,

MDRI Staff