

Niš, 23.01.2018.

### **Two Police Officers Convicted of Torture in Niš**

The Network of the Committees for Human Rights in Serbia-CHRIS has successfully ended the court proceedings conducted by its lawyers for torture over Igor Kragić (21) who was beaten up by two police officers from the Crveni Krst Police Station, Niš, on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The police officers have been sentenced to imprisonment of five and eight months, respectively, for the criminal offence of maltreatment and torture. The judgement has been issued after a nine-year long trial conducted before the Basic Court of Niš.

Police officers Milan Rajković and Dragan Radenković beat up Igor Kragić who was 21 at the time, at about 10 a.m. on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007. According to the verdict, the police officers beat him to punish him because he had smeared the name of their brother. They came to the Igor Kragić's house and invited him to go with them informing him that they needed to talk to him. They took him to the Crveni Krst Police Station, hit him alternately over his hands and head with their open hands over 20 times. Since Igor Kragić tried to protect his head with his hands, the police officers ordered him to hold a type writer in his hands and continued to hit him alternately over his head and hands. One of the police officers caught him by the head with his hands and hit him in the head with his knee. When they saw he was sick, they stopped the physical maltreatment and torture and forced him to admit the commission of any criminal offence to let him go home, afterwards they told him he had been beaten because of his brother.

In the course of the proceedings, the convicted police officers denied they had beaten up Igor Kragić, while the Internal Control Sector of the Ministry of Interiors did not establish that the police officers had committed a criminal offence, but the findings of experts, psychologists and psychiatrists clearly indicated that Igor Kragić was tortured and maltreated, and that was also confirmed by the statements of three witnesses. In the rationale of the verdict, the Basic Court of Niš stated in details that the criminal offence in question was maltreatment and torture. At the same time, the Court found that it was the gravest form of this criminal offence committed by the officials while exercising official duties.

The Network of the Committees for Human Rights in Serbia-CHRIS welcomes the convicting verdict of torture and expects the verdict be confirmed in the appellate procedure. In addition, it is particularly encouraging that the Court applied directly Article 3 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and called upon the practice of the European Court for Human Rights (case *Habimi and Others against Serbia*). This judgement contributes to decreasing the current climate of non-punishability in Serbia and proves the citizens that access to justice is possible despite many problems.