



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on November 28, 2023

## Slovenia Refunds Covid-19 Lockdown and Mask Fines, Expunges Records

The central-European country of Slovenia is refunding all fines issued under its former Covid-19 “mitigation” policies and expunging the records of offenders.

According to the [Slovenia Times](#):

Between March 2020 and the end of May 2022 more than 62,000 infraction proceedings were launched under legislation that was subsequently ruled unconstitutional and the fines issued totaled €5.7 million, Justice Minister Dominika Švarc Pipan said...

About 30% or just over €1.7 million in fines had been paid before enforcement was paused soon after the new government took office in June 2022.



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Now, under legislation passed by the National Assembly in September, all those fines will be dropped, and any that have been paid will be refunded. In addition, any existing proceedings against Covid offenders will be dropped, and all police records of Covid infractions will be deleted.

The previous government, led by former Prime Minister Janez Janša of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), “had imposed tight restrictions on freedom of movement and assembly,” reported the [BBC](#). “At various points, Slovenians were not allowed to travel beyond their local areas — and a night-time curfew was in place.” Masks were required both indoors and outdoors, “and doing anything without a Covid certificate became nigh-on impossible.”

In a famous incident, a food-delivery driver was fined 400 euros (about \$439 at the current exchange rate) after cops spotted him removing his mask to have a snack outside a church. “The scene was caught on camera,” wrote the BBC. “And the photo of police surrounding a worker who was taking food to others — for the crime of slipping of [*sic*] his mask and having a quick bite of his own — quickly became a cause célèbre.”

Slovenia’s Constitutional Court later declared most of the Covid measures unconstitutional; but the Janša government, which was considered right-wing and friendly to then-U.S. President Donald Trump, wasn’t about to admit the error of its ways. Even as its successor, the center-left government of Prime Minister Robert Golob’s Freedom Movement party, fulfilled one of Golob’s prime campaign promises by passing the refund bill, “the SDS proposed scratching out the provision to stop enforcement of fines, arguing that if anything was indeed wrong, it should be remedied within the framework of the existing legislation,” noted the *Times*.



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The news site added that Pipan “dismissed this solution, saying it would lead to overburdened courts and legal costs. Of some 62,000 infringement proceedings 95% were initiated by the police, which means the force would be overwhelmed too, she said.”

Despite all the evidence to the contrary that has since emerged, the SDS persisted in portraying its Covid policies as science-based health measures. “Opposition parties ... argued the pandemic-related measures adopted under their government had been taken to protect people’s health and lives and had been coordinated at the level of the EU and the World Health Organization,” penned the *Times*. According to the BBC, “One MP from Mr. Janša’s SDS party said repaying the fines ‘spits in the face of all those health workers who fought tirelessly for the lives of our fellow citizens.’”

Such willingness to ignore facts also permeated other SDS responses. SDS members “believe the law will only create new injustices under the guise of readdressing [*sic*] injustice,” reported the *Times*. “Their MP Branko Grims said it would atone those who had unconstitutionally incited violence and fueled intolerance.”

Besides the fact that the Covid dictates had nothing to do with preventing violence — and, in fact, inflicted violence and intolerance on perfectly innocent people — the refund law, according to Pipan, provides for “no amnesty for fines for offenses with elements of violence. And neither does the bill include offenses such as stopping traffic or honking,” the *Times* wrote.

Pipan was kinder to the SDS than it was to her. In May, she said the Janša government “faced great uncertainty at the start of the pandemic and had to act quickly to adopt temporary measures that encroached on the freedom of movement and the right to assembly,” reported [Euractiv](#).

“However — and this is crucial — such measures must be consistent with the fundamental tenets of the constitutional order and the rule of law... A crisis cannot and must not be an excuse to undermine them,” she added.

Indeed, she explained later that one of the main reasons for passing the refund act was to restore Slovenians’ faith in the rule of law.

“I am confident that by adopting the law, the state will in some way take moral responsibility and redress the injustices that were committed against citizens through the abuse of criminal law and unconstitutional and excessive encroachment on human rights,” she said.

In comments to the BBC, Rok Rozman, an environmentalist who was fined multiple times for participating in protests under the lockdown regime, echoed Pipan’s sentiments.

“The decrees they used to impose the fines were not based in law,” Rozman said. “The government knew that — and if this means they now have to give the money back, that’s how it goes. If you live in a country with the rule of law, that should apply to everyone.”

Now that Slovenia has led the way, will other governments that imposed similarly tyrannical, unscientific Covid policies follow suit? They will never be able to restore all the lives and livelihoods lost to these edicts, but any redress — and accompanying admissions of error — would be welcome.



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