

AMHRC REVIEW



spring 2009

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Greetings from the editor

Welcome to the new quarterly AMHRC review.

As you know, we have been producing an annual review for many years now. However, due to member requests, we have decided to release a seasonal quarterly review. Each season's issue will contain both already released media as well as original pieces, such as a regular column by Tom Dimitrov.

As you will be able to see, this quarter has been a busy one for us and our partner organisations across the world, including the Macedonian Human Rights Movement International in Canada (MHRMI), European Free Alliance – Rainbow in Greece, and OMO "Ilinden" Pirin in Bulgaria.

In November, the AMHRC participated in the reception of Macedonian Prime Minister Gruevski, who delivered a rousing speech to the Macedonian community. We also took the opportunity to spend an afternoon with a Macedonian

Parliamentary delegation of MPs and discuss means of further co-operation between AMHRC and the Macedonian Parliament in the future. In other news during this quarter, the European Free Alliance - Rainbow opened up a new office on the main street of Voden/Edessa, erecting a bilingual (Macedonian/Greek) sign. This was a momentous occasion for the Macedonian community in Greece, and a great way to once again urge the Greek government to finally end its denial of the existence of a Macedonian minority in Greece.

With the support of AMHRC and MHRMI, OMO "Ilinden" Pirin, in September of this year, held a protest in Strasbourg in front of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe in an attempt to raise awareness of the organisation's inability to re-register as a political party, as well as to foster a general recognition of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria.

This is just a brief overview of recent activities of AMHRC and our partner organisations. We have many more events planned for the future. For updates on those activities, stay tuned for the next quarter's review and keep an eye on the AMHRC website at www.macedonianhr.org.au.

Finally, if you have already become a member of the AMHRC or have donated in the past, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your support. If you are not yet a member, I urge you to become one and extend your support to the AMHRC and the other bodies which we back financially, such as EFA Rainbow and OMO "Ilinden" Pirin.

On behalf of all the members of the AMHRC, I thank you once again for your support and hope you find this issue informative and interesting. Also, I would like to wish you a happy holiday season.

Ljubica Durlovska
Editor

Strav i Sram, or Fear and Shame

A Macedonian drama researched and written by Dushan Risteovski and funded by the LOTE section of the Literature Board of Australia

Last year a pioneering play titled *Strav i Sram (Fear and Shame)* was performed in the Macedonian language by the Australian-Macedonian Theatre of Sydney. Over 1,600 people saw the play at Rockdale, Woolongong and Hurstville in NSW. It was a huge success and the Macedonian community deserves congratulations for its input into the project with workshops and strong support.

The drama is set in contemporary Rockdale, a Sydney suburb with a large Macedonian population. The author, Dushan Risteovski is particularly well placed as a bilingual counsellor and literary writer to explore the tensions of the Petkovski family, as they struggle in their complex urban hell of mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment, and domestic violence.

The play has been highly acclaimed and by Community Health Services (NSW) for its excellence for innovation in health education. The play is

has been praised by mental health workers as a model for other ethnic groups as a unique way to raise consciousness on highly sensitive social issues and problems.

The original text in Macedonian as well as the English translation is available in separate volumes. A DVD of the performance by the Australian Macedonian Theatre of Sydney is also available. For more details and/or copies, contact: Dushan.Risteovski@SESIAHS.HEALTH.NSW.GOV.AU

Jim Thomev

OMO "ILINDEN" PIRIN PROTESTS IN STRASBOURG



Waving the Macedonian flag in front of the European Parliament

"...the aims of the protests are to raise awareness in the European Parliament of the plight of the unrecognised Macedonian minority of Bulgaria"



A group of protesters hold up a banner in an attempt to raise awareness of the plight of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria

AMHRC and MHRMI Express Full Support for OMO "Ilinden" Pirin Protests in Strasbourg

Melbourne, Australia and Toronto, Canada • 14 September 2009

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) and Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) wish to express their full support for the protests of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN beginning today in Strasbourg.

The protests which are being held in front of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe represent an important contribution to the long battle of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN for re-registration as a political party and for the Macedonian minority of Bulgaria in general.

As OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN has indicated, the aims of the protests are to raise awareness

in the European Parliament of the plight of the unrecognised Macedonian minority of Bulgaria and to oppose the proposed closing of the monitoring of the execution of the 2005 judgement of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the case of *UMO Ilinden PIRIN vs Bulgaria*.

OMO Ilinden PIRIN and indeed the AMHRC and MHRMI demand that the party be re-registered as a political party by the Bulgarian authorities and call for the immediate recognition of the Macedonian minority of Bulgaria. The party also calls upon the Council of Europe and the European Union to use all the mechanisms at their disposal to en-

sure that Bulgaria upholds its obligations regarding freedom of assembly and minority rights.

The AMHRC and MHRMI were pleased to lend logistical and other support to the protest and will continue to support OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN in their struggle for registration and recognition.

David Vitkov

Formed in 1984 the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee is a non-governmental organisation that informs and advocates to governments, international institutions and broader communities about combating discrimination and promoting human rights. Our aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities and other excluded groups in Australia and throughout the world are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment.

Macedonian Human Rights Movement International (MHRMI) has been active on human and national rights issues for Macedonians and other oppressed peoples since 1986. For more information, please visit www.mhrmi.org, or contact MHRMI at 416-850-7125, or info@mhrmi.org.

UMO "ILINDEN" PIRIN BEGINS TWO DAYS OF PROTESTS IN STRASBOURG

OMO "Ilinden" Pirin • 14 September 2009

The United Macedonian Organisation "Ilinden" PIRIN, a political party defending the rights of the Macedonian minority of Bulgaria, will today begin two days of protests in Strasbourg. Today's demonstration will begin at 2:00pm in front

of the European Parliament and will resume on Tuesday 15 September 2009 at 9:00am at the Council of Europe. The aims of the protests are to raise awareness in the European Parliament of the plight of the unrecognised Macedonian minority of Bul-

garia and to oppose the proposed closing of the monitoring of the execution of the 2005 judgement of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the case of *UMO Ilinden PIRIN vs Bulgaria*.

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It has been mooted that during the upcoming Human Rights Meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Tuesday 15 September 2009 and Wednesday 16 September 2009, the Committee will close the monitoring of the execution of the case. UMO "Ilinden" PIRIN strongly opposes the closure given the fact that UMO "Ilinden" PIRIN has not yet been re-registered and in light of the fact that there are currently two pending applications before the ECtHR in relation to recent refusals to re-register the party.

UMO "Ilinden" PIRIN demands that it be re-registered as a political party by the Bulgarian authorities and calls for the immediate recognition of the Macedonian minority of Bulgaria. The party also calls upon the Council of Europe and the European Union use all the mechanisms at its disposal to ensure that Bulgaria upholds its obligations regarding freedom of assembly and minority rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The United Macedonian Organisation "Ilinden" PIRIN is a political party initially registered in 1999 in Bulgaria. The party operates mainly in the south-western region of the country and is a democratic party striving to protect the rights of minorities.

On February 29, 2000, the Constitutional Court in Bulgaria declared UMO "Ilinden" - PIRIN unconstitutional. However in 2005 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the ban on the party was a violation of Article 11 (Freedom of Assembly) of the European Convention on Human Rights. See *UMO Ilinden - PIRIN and others v. Bulgaria, judgment of 20 October 2005*.

Following the judgment, the party took steps to have their rights to freedom of association fully restored and have their party re-registered. However three applications for re-registration have been rejected by the Bulgarian courts in 2007, 2008 and 2009.

UMO "Ilinden" PIRIN is the only party in Bulgaria which openly defends the rights of the ethnic Macedonians in the country. The Macedonian minority of Bulgaria is largely concentrated in the south-west of the country, in the District of Blagoevgrad. The exact size of the Macedonian minority of Bulgaria is unknown due to the manipulation of census figures by Bulgarian authorities. At the most recent census in 2001, there were widespread reports of manipulation in the District of Blagoevgrad. Two typical examples of manipulation included persons declaring their ethnicity to be "Macedonian" however the census official would note

"Bulgarian" on the census forms, while others were not even asked to declare their ethnicity, as the census official 'assumed' that the person had Bulgarian ethnicity. According to Bulgarian authorities, at the 2001 census there were 5,071 persons which declared Macedonian ethnicity.

Macedonians are the only unrecognised ethnic minority in Bulgaria. Other ethnic groups enjoy recognition and protection under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, to which Bulgaria is a party. Bulgaria has limited the scope of the Convention to exclude the Macedonian minority, claiming that although 5,071 persons declared an ethnic Macedonian identity at the 2001 census, such persons do not meet "subjective criteria" required for recognition as a distinct minority (i.e. they are not culturally different to ethnic Bulgarians).



Protesting in front of the European Parliament

**"UMO
"Ilinden"
PIRIN is the
only party
in Bulgaria
which openly
defends the
rights of
the ethnic
Macedonians
in the
country."**



Macedonians from Bulgaria protesting for the recognition of their culture

A BRIEF REVIEW OF ECRI'S FOURTH REPORT ON GREECE

Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee
17 September 2009

"In its latest report, ECRI has noted that Greece continues to discriminate against its ethnic minorities and to severely limit the rights to freedom of association and expression of its Macedonian and Turkish minorities"

On 15 September 2009, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) released its fourth monitoring report on Greece. The report is dated as covering the situation in Greece up to 2 April 2009. The findings of the report cannot be ignored or dismissed as insignificant for ECRI was established by the Council of Europe and is an "independent human rights monitoring body specialised in questions relating to racism and intolerance." Moreover it is "composed of independent and impartial members, who are appointed on the basis of their moral authority and recognised expertise in dealing with racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance." The Council of Europe is increasingly becoming an authoritative and persuasive institution within Europe, especially given its ability to stigmatise member states. As in ECRI's previous report on Greece, the current one strongly recommends that the Greek authorities ratify as soon as possible the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, as well as the revised European Social Charter, the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers and the European Convention on Nationality. It also recommends that Greece sign and ratify the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

In its latest report, ECRI has noted that Greece continues to discriminate against its ethnic minorities and to severely limit the rights to freedom of association and expression of its Macedonian and Turkish minorities. In particular, the ECRI report makes the following findings and recommendations in relation to Greece's mistreatment of its Macedonian and Turkish minorities:

Macedonians and other minority groups

111. In its third report, ECRI encouraged the Greek authorities to take further steps toward the recognition of the freedom of association and expression of members of the Macedonian and Turkish communities living in Greece. It welcomed the gesture of reconciliation made by the Greek authorities towards the ethnic Macedonian refugees from the civil war, and strongly encouraged them to proceed further in this direction in a non-discriminatory way. ECRI also recommended that the Greek authorities closely examine allegations of discrimination and intolerant acts against Macedonians, Turks and others, and, if appropriate, take measures to punish such acts.

112. The situation of the recognition of the right to freedom of association as concerns certain groups living in Greece (Macedonians⁷⁵ and Turks⁷⁶) remains. In this regard, since ECRI's third report, the European Court of Human Rights has rendered three judgements against Greece for violating Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (freedom of assembly and association) as concerns members of the ethnic Turk community. Concerning ethnic Macedonians and the judgement of *Sidiropoulos and Others v. Greece* mentioned in its third report, ECRI was informed that the issue of the registration of the organisation in question (the *Home of the Macedonian Culture*) is pending before the Supreme Court as it has not yet been registered. It further appears that the ethnic Turkish organisations which were the subject of the abovementioned judgments have not been registered either. ECRI wishes in this regard to bring to the Greek authorities' attention the European Court of Human Rights' finding that associations seeking an ethnic identity were also important to the proper functioning of democracy. It considered that pluralism was also built on the genuine recognition of, and respect for, diversity and the

dynamics of, inter alia, cultural traditions, ethnic and cultural identities and religious beliefs.

113. ECRI notes that progress still has to be made on the recognition of the right of members of minority groups to freedom of association and also freedom of expression.

114. Civil society actors and representatives of the Macedonian community have indicated to ECRI that the implementation of 80 measures of reconciliation taken for those who fled the Greek civil war as concerns the reinstatement of their citizenship and the return of their confiscated property continues to apply only to ethnic Greeks. Representatives of the Macedonian community have further expressed their feelings of discrimination, inter alia, as concerns the use of their names in their own language and failure to bring cases of hate speech in the media against Macedonians to court⁸¹. Representatives of the Turkish community in Western Thrace have also stated that recognition of their identity is among the most important problems they face along with education and the right to religious freedom, which have been discussed in other parts of this report.

115. ECRI strongly recommends that the Greek authorities take measures to recognize the rights of the members of the different groups living in Greece, including to freedom of association, in full compliance with the relevant judgements of the European Court of Human Rights.

116. ECRI recommends again that the Greek authorities take steps to apply, in a non-discriminatory manner, the measures of reconciliation taken for all those who fled the civil war.

117. ECRI recommends that the Greek authorities investigate allegations of discrimination against

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members of the Macedonian and Turkish communities and take adequate measures to address them, including by ensuring the implementation of the relevant legislation where necessary. ECRI also strongly recommends that the Greek authorities take steps to recognize the right to self identification of these groups.

118. In its third report, ECRI strongly recommended that the Greek authorities open a dialogue with Macedonians representatives to find a solution to the tensions between this group and the authorities, as well as between it and the population at large, so that co-existence with mutual respect may be achieved in everyone's interests.

119. Representatives of the Macedonian community have indicated that their attempts to engage in a dialogue with the Greek authorities, on issues such as language and the use of the Macedonian language on television have not been fruitful. ECRI thus hopes that the authorities will engage in an open and constructive dialogue with representatives of the Macedonian community on issues of concern to members of this group.

120. ECRI recommends again that the Greek authorities establish a dialogue with Macedonian representatives in order to find a solution to the issues affecting members of this group.

Unfortunately, the Greek government's response to ECRI's criticisms of Greece's mistreatment of its Macedonian, Turkish and other ethnic and religious minorities which is appended at the end of the report, indicates once again that Greece does not take its human rights obligations seriously and it remains mired in an anachronistic ethno-chauvinism which does not allow it to even admit to the existence of a distinct Macedonian ethnicity and identity in Greece.

Greece's response on this issue, which is cited below, confirms once again that it is determined to continue to ignore the rights of its Macedonian minority in pursuit of a doctrine of national security predicated upon forced assimilation and spurious claims of ethnic homogeneity:

With respect to the references to 'Macedonian' community and language (paras. 111-120), we would like to stress that a small number of people in Greek Macedonia, mainly in the prefecture of Florina, apart from Greek, speak a Slavic dialect, which is confined to family or colloquial use. This dialect has similarities with the language spoken by the Slav-Macedonians in the neighbouring Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Cross-border contacts, such as tourism and trade, keep this dialect alive, as is the case with the Greek language spoken in the southern part of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. All people in Greece speaking this dialect are bilingual (Slavic/Greek).

Subjective claims or perceptions of some of the above-mentioned individuals, which are not based on objective facts and criteria, that they are ethnically "Macedonians" do not establish by themselves a corresponding obligation of Greece to officially recognize this group as a «minority» and to guarantee to its members specific minority rights, additional to those guaranteed by human rights treaties. Moreover, the use on their behalf of the term "Macedonian" in order to define a distinct ethnicity creates confusion with the 2,5 million Greeks who identify themselves as Macedonians in the regional/cultural sense.

In any case, in Greece, even if a group is not recognised as a minority enjoying specific minority rights, individuals are free to declare that they belong to a distinct

ethnic or cultural group, without any negative consequences resulting from such a statement. In addition, these persons enjoy fully all their civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, which are recognized by the provisions of national and international law. Both the judiciary and the administration are obliged to implement these provisions. Persons who consider that their rights are being violated can bring their case before the Greek courts and also have the possibility to appeal to the competent international bodies, as provided for by the relevant treaties binding Greece.

A couple of examples prove the above mentioned affirmations:

- There is a political party in Greece, which claims to represent the "Macedonian minority". This party operates freely and participates without any impediments in the elections. One of the leading figures of the party is a civil servant, working for the Greek State, regardless of his political activities and views.

- There are regular cultural events and festivities organised by the Slav-speaking persons in the region of Florina, where everyone is free to participate, including nationals of the neighbouring Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In conclusion, all persons residing in Greece, regardless of their nationality, ethnic origin, language, religious or political affiliation enjoy full protection of their human rights and liberties. Everyone is free to declare his/her origin, speak his/her language, exercise his/her religion and observe his/her particular customs and traditions.

Finally, with regard to the implementation of measures of reconciliation, the Greek State, in order to definitely heal the wounds of the

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"Greece's response on this issue, which is cited below, confirms once again that it is determined to continue to ignore the rights of its Macedonian minority in pursuit of a doctrine of national security predicated upon forced assimilation and spurious claims of ethnic homogeneity"

A BRIEF REVIEW OF ECRI'S FOURTH REPORT ON GREECE

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Civil War, proceeded to the reinstatement of the citizenship and the return of confiscated property of persons of Greek origin who had fled the country after this traumatic historical experience. However, all individuals, irrespective of their ethnic origin, have the possibility to bring before Greek courts any claims regarding property or other issues, under the general provisions of law.

The Greek response is disingenuous to say the least and a flagrant example of its determination to continue its policies of denial and discrimination vis-a-vis its Macedonian and other minorities.

It is simply false to state that there is no ethnic Macedonian minority in Greece. This minority has been studied by Western and Greek anthropologists and their plight has been reported on by various other institutions, apart from ECRI—e.g. Helsinki Watch, the OSCE, The UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 2009) and even NGOs within Greece itself such as the Greek Helsinki Monitor. Most of all however, the ethnic Macedonian minority in Greece, has its own political party, the European Free Alliance - Rainbow (Vinozito in Macedonian) - which contests elections in Greece despite the fact that it is subjected to frequent harassment, media boycotts and highly tendentious reporting of its policies and leadership. Its offices in the town of Florina/Lerin were firebombed by extreme nationalist Greeks in September 1995. It must also be added that this party was only registered in 1995 after heavy pressure from within the EU. It is also rather ridiculous for the Greek authorities to claim that the use of the “Slavic Dialect,” that is of Macedonian, is “kept alive” by “tourism and trade” if, as the Greek response also explains, it is used within the family! Of course if Greece fulfilled its

obligations, then it would also be used on television, radio and the print media etc.

The statement “*Subjective claims or perceptions of some of the above-mentioned individuals, which are not based on objective facts and criteria, that they are ethnically “Macedonians” do not establish by themselves a corresponding obligation of Greece to officially recognize this group as a «minority» and to guarantee to its members specific minority rights, additional to those guaranteed by human rights treaties*” is a direct admission by the Greek authorities that it does not respect the principle of self-identification as one of the cornerstones of ethnic identity and that it is prepared to continue violating the criteria adopted at the Copenhagen CSCE Conference on the Human Dimension in June 1990 which states at article 32, Part 4 of the Final Document which was signed by Greece that “*to belong to a national minority is a matter of a person's individual choice and no disadvantage may arise from the exercise of such choice*”. When the Greek state speaks of “objective facts and criteria” in determining when a group of people constitute a minority, it is obvious that the objective facts and criteria used in such an assessment are those dictated by its obscurantist and nationalistic views. Identity is a matter of choice and this is the only relevant “objective” criteria.

The fact that Greece is still refusing to face up to its responsibilities in regard to the Macedonian minority is made clear in the following statement contained in its response: “*Moreover, the use on their behalf of the term “Macedonian” in order to define a distinct ethnicity creates confusion with the 2.5 million Greeks who identify themselves as Macedonians in the regional/cultural sense.*” One needs to here ask, that if the identity “Macedonian” is so important to

the “*2.5million Greeks who identify themselves as “Macedonians” in the regional/ cultural sense*”, why did the Greek state never prior to 1988 choose to refer officially at ministerial level to this region as Macedonia? In fact the preceding official name had been “Northern Greece”. The fact is, there is much evidence to suggest that this “Greek Macedonian” identity ‘emerged’ in the late 1980s (in conjunction with the re-naming of “Northern Greece”) and 1990s, precisely so that it could be used in the manner in which it is being here used. That is as a way of confusing the issue in regards to the rights of the ethnic Macedonian minority in Greece and as a way of blocking the recognition of the newly independent Republic of Macedonia. Moreover prior to the late 1980s the use of the term Macedonian as an identifier was a taboo that got one labelled a ‘communist’, ‘traitor’, and ‘secessionist’ etc... And as we noted in our discussion of the last ECRI report on Greece, no one is preventing Greeks from using the term “Greek Macedonian”, it is only ethnic Macedonians who are being suppressed. And since all Greeks are ethnic Greeks, there can be no confusion, for adding the word Macedonian to their Greek ethnicity can only be considered a further regional-cultural corrective. On the other hand, for ethnic Macedonians, the word Macedonian is the essential basis of their identity – they are Greeks only in the citizenship sense, not ethno-culturally.

The statement “*In conclusion, all persons residing in Greece, regardless of their nationality, ethnic origin, language, religious or political affiliation enjoy full protection of their human rights and liberties. Everyone is free to declare his/her origin, speak his/her language, exercise his/her religion and observe his/her particular*

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“The Greek response is disingenuous to say the least and a flagrant example of its determination to continue its policies of denial and discrimination vis-a-vis its Macedonian and other minorities.”

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customs and traditions.” is patently untrue. The basic human, social, cultural and economic rights of ethnic Macedonians are clearly not respected. Macedonians’ self-identification as ethnic Macedonians is not respected at any level of Greek society. Macedonians are prohibited from forming associations or cultural groups which contain the word Macedonian (for example the Home of Macedonian Culture), there is no education at any level in the Macedonian language, no radio or television programs in Macedonian and those Macedonians who openly manifest their Macedonian identity encounter discrimination in employment and education. Macedonian personal and surnames - which have been Hellenized in order to facilitate assimilation - cannot be used officially by Macedonians. There is no support at all from the Greek state for Macedonian cultural and artistic activities.

The Greek response relating to the restitution of the property and citizenship rights of those who

fled the country during the Civil War from 1946-49 conveniently omits to mention that the relevant laws regulating these matters (December 1982 Citizenship Law and Law 1540/85) are highly discriminatory and extend these rights only to those who are “Greek by genus” (ethnic Greeks) or who are willing to declare themselves ethnic Greeks. As indicated by Human Rights Watch in its report on the ethnic Macedonians of Greece in 1994: *“Human Rights Watch has been unable to obtain accurate figures on the number of people ‘of Greek origin’ who availed themselves of the 1982 law, but the number is in the thousands. Those who considered themselves Macedonians, although born in Greece, or children of parents born in Greece, were not permitted to return, even, for the most part, to visit. ... To this day, ethnic Macedonian families are divided...”* by the Greek authorities (Human Rights Watch, 1994: 9-10). At present, such individuals are preparing a legal challenge to have their Greek citizenship restored and property returned.

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee welcomes this latest ECRI report on Greece, however we remain seriously concerned that Greece continues to deny ethnic Macedonians and other minorities their most basic rights. It is highly indicative of the Greek state’s attitude that despite ECRI’s clear recommendations that it address discrimination against Macedonians and enter into dialogue with Macedonians in order to ensure that their basic rights are respected, Greece continues to thumb its nose at the Council of Europe and has declared its preparedness to continue its policies of denial of ethnic Macedonians. The question for European institutions is how long are they prepared to permit Greece to continue ignoring basic human rights requirements?

Dr Chris Popov
Vasko Nasteovski
David Vitkov
George Vlahov

“we remain seriously concerned that Greece continues to deny ethnic Macedonians and other minorities their most basic rights.”

YET ANOTHER UN BODY RECOMMENDS THAT GREECE RECOGNISE THE RIGHTS OF ITS MACEDONIAN MINORITY AMHRC & MHRMI • 23 September 2009

On 28 August 2009, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) released its “Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination” in relation to the 16th – 19th periodical reports of Greece. The Committee is a United Nations body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by its State parties. All States parties are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights are being implemented. The Committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of “concluding observations”.

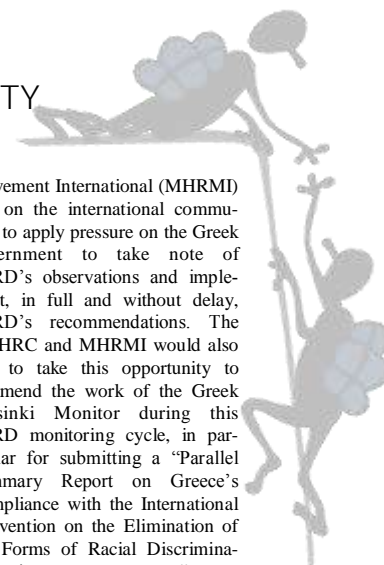
The Committee made a number of important observations and has a number of significant recommendations in relation to the ethnic Macedonian minority of Greece. In particular, the Committee was “concerned about reports on the propagation by certain organizations and media outlets of racist stereotypes and hate comments against persons belonging to different ethnic and racial groups”. As a result, the “Committee recommends that the State party [Greece] take effective measures to penalize organizations and media outlets that are guilty of such acts. It further recommends that the State party concretely ban Neo-Nazi groups from its territory and take more effective measures to promote tolerance towards persons of different ethnic origins”.

Moreover, the Committee was “concerned about the obstacles encountered by some ethnic groups in exercising the freedom of association, and in this regard takes note of information on the forced dissolution and refusal to register some associations including words such as “minority”, “Turkish” or “Macedonian”, as well as of the explanation for such refusal”. Thus, the Committee recommended “the State party [Greece] adopt measures to ensure the effective enjoyment by persons belonging to every community or group of their right to freedom of association and of their cultural rights, including the use of mother language”.

The Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) and Macedonian Human Rights

Movement International (MHRMI) call on the international community to apply pressure on the Greek government to take note of CERD’s observations and implement, in full and without delay, CERD’s recommendations. The AMHRC and MHRMI would also like to take this opportunity to commend the work of the Greek Helsinki Monitor during this CERD monitoring cycle, in particular for submitting a “Parallel Summary Report on Greece’s Compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination”.

Both the Greek Helsinki Monitor’s report and the full text of CERD’s observations and conclusions can be found at: www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/cerds75.htm



Greece: Supreme Court Upholds Non-Recognition of "HOME OF MACEDONIAN CIVILISATION"

AMHRC & MHRMI • 30 September 2009

"It is deeply regretful that, in 2005, neither the Prosecutor of the Supreme Court, nor the Plenum of the Supreme Court suspected that our country is a part of Europe."

The cooperating NGOs *Greek Helsinki Monitor* (GHM) and *Minority Rights Group-Greece* (MRG-G) consider that Judgment 1448/2009 of the Fourth Political Division of the Supreme Court (Areios Pagos - published on 11 June 2009), rejecting the request for cassation by the "Home of Macedonian Civilization" against Decision 243/2005 of the Court of Appeal of Western Macedonia, is contrary to international law. The Court of Appeal had rejected an appeal by that Macedonian minority association against Judgment 243/2003 of the Florina Single-Member Court of First Instance. The Court of First Instance had rejected the initial application for recognition of the "Home of Macedonian Civilization" filed on 24 July 2003.

MRG-G and GHM consider

that this confirms, once again, Professor Nikos Alivizatos' comment on some similar Supreme Court judgments on the non recognition and/or dissolution of certain Turkish minority associations, which had led three unanimous convictions of Greece by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR): *"It is deeply regretful that, in 2005, neither the Prosecutor of the Supreme Court, nor the Plenum of the Supreme Court suspected that our country is a part of Europe."* («Ta Nea» daily, 28 March 2008 www.tanea.gr/article.aspx?d=20080328&nid=7991549).

MRG-G and GHM reckon that, once more, the Supreme Court issued a - quite literally - "historical" judgment, as its reasoning was in fact a history essay. The Supreme Court blatantly disregarded the damning ECtHR *Sidiropoulos* judgment of 10 July 1998 con-

victing Greece for the previous non-recognition of the same association by the Greek courts (*Sidiropoulos and Others v Greece*). Moreover, the Supreme Court used a 'suitably censored' excerpt of another ECtHR decision (on a request for the granting of voting privileges in favor of a minority association that could be attained via its recognition)!

**GREEK HELSINKI
MONITOR (GHM)
MINORITY RIGHTS
GROUP - GREECE
(MRG-G)**

Address: P.O. Box 60820,
GR-15304 Glyka Nera
Telephone: (+30)
2103472259 **Fax:** (+30)
2106018760

E-mail: office@greekhelsinki.gr **Web-
site:** [http://
cm.greekhelsinki.gr](http://cm.greekhelsinki.gr)

MHRMI Condemns Latest Greek Tactic in Name Dispute with Macedonia

Toronto, Canada • 24 November 2009

Greece has dragged Iceland, and its potential European Union membership, into the nonsensical name dispute that it initiated with the Republic of Macedonia.

In its latest transparent display of xenophobia, Greece has threatened Iceland's EU bid because its ambassador to the US planned to screen a documentary about Macedonia's pursuit of recognition under its constitutional name. The film, [Name is a Name](#), is directed by Icelandic filmmaker Sigurjon Einarsson.

In a statement to MHRMI, Producer Jason Miko said, *"Why are the Greeks so afraid of a film they have not even seen? It is ironic that the self-proclaimed 'birthplace of democracy' is so frightened of a film that they want it banned even before seeing it. But this is typical Greek behavior. It is worth remembering that their veto of Macedonia at the NATO Bucharest Summit*

in 2008 was not the first. In 2003, Greece blackmailed the entire EU with a threatened veto over the then-candidate countries (including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Malta, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic) unless they included Cyprus. The EU acquiesced to Greece's demands. While I hope they do not put a veto on Macedonia's and Iceland's EU aspirations, I would not be surprised. I suspect Greece will continue to threaten and blackmail the EU and NATO until someone, somewhere, someday stands up to them and deals with them. Their behavior is typical of a neighborhood bully."

Greece refuses to accept the existence of ethnic Macedonians and the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia. In addition to vetoing Macedonia's entry into NATO, Greece persecutes its Macedonian minority despite worldwide condemnation, including a recent United Nations report and several Euro-

pean Court of Human Rights (ECHR) judgments against it.

MHRMI has repeatedly asked the following question:

Will the European Union finally take concrete steps to reprimand Greece or will it continue to turn a blind eye and allow its member-states to be handcuffed by Greece's xenophobic policies?

MHRMI calls on the rest of the international community, and EU in particular, to finally put an end to the irrational "name dispute" and immediately recognize Macedonia under its constitutional name. 130 countries have already done so, including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Russia and China.

MHRMI also reiterates its call for Macedonia to cease all negotiations with Greece over its name.

FORMATION OF THE "KRSTE PETKOV MISIRKOV FOUNDATION" IN GREECE

The Press office • EFA – Rainbow • 18 November 2009

In commemoration of the 135 anniversary of the birth of the great Macedonian intellectual, Krste Petkov Misirkov, the Edessa/Voden office of the European Free Alliance – Rainbow, the political party of the Macedonian minority of Greece, is pleased to announce the formation of a foundation in his name.

The main aims and goals of the "Krste Petkov Misirkov Foundation" will be to:

- Raise awareness among the ethnic Macedonian population in Greece about the life and writings of Misirkov.
- Organise lectures, seminars and conferences on

the life and works of Misirkov.

- Translate into Greek and publish all his writings.
- Establish a museum and educational centre in Misirkov's honour.
- Support associations in Greece which promote Macedonian culture.
- Support efforts to preserve and promote the Macedonian language in Greece.

The forming of the "Krste Petkov Misirkov Foundation", just days after the opening of the Edessa/Voden office of the EFA – Rainbow, shows the strong will of the large ethnic Macedonian population in Edessa/Voden

and in the Region of Central Macedonia, to struggle for their ethnic, cultural and political rights in Greece.

Krste Petkov Misirkov was born 18 November 1874 in the village of Pella/Postol, Ottoman Empire (located today in the Region of Central Macedonia, Greece). He was a philologist, reformer of the standard Macedonian language, historian, ethnographer, publicist, author of the first book and magazine on standard Macedonian language. Misirkov's most famous piece of work was the book "On Macedonian Matters" published in 1903.

POLITICAL PARTY OF THE MACEDONIAN MINORITY IN GREECE

Member of the European Free Alliance – European Political Party (EFA- EPP)
Member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)

ST. DRAGOUMI 11 TK.
53100 P.O 51 TEL/FAX:
+30 23850 46548

Website: www.vinozito.gr
E-mail: rainbow@florina.org

ОСНОВАЊЕ НА ФОНДАЦИЈА „КРСТЕ ПЕТКОВ МИСИРКОВ“ ВО ГРЦИЈА

Kancelarija za pe-at • EFA – Vi nozi to • 18 Noemvri 2009

По повод 135 години од раѓањето на Крсте Петков Мисирков, Канцеларијата на Воденскиот комитет на Европска слободна алијанса - Виножито, политичка партија на македонското малцинство во Грција, има чест да информира за основањето на Фондација која ќе го носи името на овој великан.

Целите на Фондацијата „Крсте Петков Мисирков“ ќе бидат следните:

- Поттикнување на свесноста на Македонците во Грција за животот и делото на Мисирков.
- Организирање на дискусии, семинари и трибини во врска со животот и делото на Мисирков.
- Преведување на грчки јазик и издавање на сите негови дела.
- Отворање на музеј и

образовен центар во чест на името на Мисирков, во регионите на Централна и Западна Македонија.

- Поддржување на асоцијации во Грција, кои ја развиваат македонската култура.
- Поддржување на напорите за одржување и развој на македонскиот јазик во Република Грција.

Основањето на „Фондацијата Крсте Петков Мисирков“ во Воден, на само неколку дена од отворањето на Воденската канцеларија на ЕСА – Виножито, е израз на силната волја и посветеност на Македонците од градот Воден и регионот на Централна Македонија, да се борат за своите етнички, културни и политички права во Грција. Во градот Воден живее огромен број на Македонци и луѓе кои го говорат македонскиот јазик, а тој претставува и природен

економски и културен центар на повеќе градови во регионот Централна Македонија, во кои е сконцентриран голем број на македонското население. ЕСА -Виножито смета дека овој актуелен развој во градот Воден и поширокиот регион на Централна Македонија е само почеток на еден поширок процес на покревање на културната, јазичната и политичката еманципација на Македонците во овој регион.

Крсте Петков Мисирков беше роден на 18 Ноември 1874, во селото Постол/Пела, Отоманска империја (днешна Грција). Беше филолог, реформатор на стандардниот македонски јазик, историчар, етнолог, публицист и автор на првата книга и списание на стандардниот македонски јазик. Најпознатото дело на Мисирков е книгата „За македонските работи“, која беше издадена на 1903 год.



ФОНДАЦИЈА „КРСТЕ ПЕТКОВ МИСИРКОВ“
ΙΔΡΥΜΑΤΟΣ ΚΡΣΤΕ ΠΕΤΚΟΒ ΜΙΣΙΡΚΟΒ

Macedonian Culture

THE DEVIL AND SPASE* THE SHEPHERD

Book 4, Story 233

We have reproduced here, a delightful story from the Tsepenkov collection, with the hope of encouraging a Macedonian author specialising in such matters, to contact the AMHRC and volunteer to make this cultural section a permanent part of the AMHRC Review.

In our view, the story represents a level of tenacity that Macedonians today, need more than ever.

“Good morning Spase”, said the devil.

“My mornings are never wont to be bad”, answered Spase, “so you’ve no need to make them good”.

As I was on my way here, I passed by your house, Spase”.

“The road brought you that way, so that’s why you passed my house”.

“But I saw your wife, Spase”.

“Blind—you’re not, so of course you saw her. That’s why God gave you eyes”.

“I heard when your wife bore a child, Spase”.

“Deaf—you’re not, so how could you not hear? My wife lay with a man, that’s why she bore a child”.

“Eh, and she bore two children, Spase, and both of them boys”.

“Brother followed brother, that’s why two were born.”
“But one of them, Spase, died”.

“The Lord giveth and he taketh away again”.

“But and the other, Spase, died”.

“Brother after brother came, brother after brother went”.

“But your wife too, Spase, died”.

“Even if she did, God rest her soul, life will still go on. I can find another wife”.

“Eh, and your dappled bull died, Spase”.

“He died, yes. Living creatures bear human burdens. They too nourish souls”.

“The head of the bull, Spase, they left for you to eat”.

“The head of the house will eat the head”.

“Indeed, but the head got eaten by the bitch, Spase”.

“Yes, she ate it, yes. Misfortune follows on the heels of poor house-keeping”.

“But then they killed the bitch, Spase”.

“What she gave—she got”.

“They threw her onto the dung heap, Spase”.

“Actually, that was where she always liked to lay”.

That was as far as the devil could think of to harass Spase. There was nothing more he could say! In frustration, the devil burst like a roasting chestnut out of its skin.

*SPAS means SALVATION in Macedonian. (Translator’s Note)

Translated from Macedonian by Fay Thomev in the book “19th Century Macedonian Folktales” by Marko Tsepenkov



**Marko Tsepenkov
(1829-1920)**

He was a major writer and collector of folk tales, songs, riddles, etc. from Macedonia.

Macedonian Matters in the 21st Century

About Tom Dimitrov

He has been active in the Macedonian community since the 1980s and is a noted author.

The AMHRC is proud to announce that Mr Dimitrov has joined the writing team and will regularly contribute exclusive pieces for the AMHRC Review.

I thank George Vlahov and the committee for giving me the opportunity to write for the organisation. Nowadays, we are all suffering from information-overload; worse still, we are constantly hearing the words of politicians more often than is good for us.

I have therefore decided to write this column in bite-size bits, brief flashes like light from a match struck in the dark.

1. What would make Macedonians everywhere in the world happy?

This question has a simple answer: they need to have their human rights respected. This means their choice to identify as Macedonians and the Republic of Macedonia should be given long overdue respect and recognition universally. The Macedonian identity, language and his-

tory should no longer be challenged.

In other words, the truth that the Macedonians have been severely violated as a people in recent history, that many lives have been destroyed, and much of their land dispossessed. Macedonian dignity is still insulted at the highest levels of the international community, the United Nations and the European Union still refer to the Republic of Macedonia by an obscene designation prescribed by Greece.

This injustice against the Macedonians is not of theoretical interest only – it is a question of real people and their suffering, as all human rights violations are, always threatening worse things to come. The Macedonian situation is another example of how the path toward a better world embodied in the UN Dec-

laration on Human Rights and two Covenants, is fraught with obstacles.

2. On serious dialogue:

A debate can only take place where there is mutual respect between two disputing parties. Obviously, such respect in the Macedonian/Greek “name” negotiation is out of the question by the very nature of the bone of contention: the idea that the Greeks have a right to demand a change of name of the Macedonians. The official Greek position sets up the “dialectic of the enemy” meaning the fault is all with the Macedonians. The Greek position arrogantly implies that the Macedonians only call themselves Macedonians to annoy the Greeks who are a “race” apart, a highly

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"exceptional" people and culture who can ignore modern institutions or only selectively respect democratic values.

Greece does not respect ethnic minority rights within its own borders which were last drawn up in 1913-19. Nor does it believe in the right of people or nations to self-identify. Modern Greeks, who believe in their own superiority or exceptional merits, clearly assume that the high-achieving classical peoples only came into existence to produce the "glorious Greeks" of today. I am sure, and I am not alone in my belief, that the ancients had their own agenda for being alive which had nothing to do with the generations to be born a couple of millennia or so later.

Anyway, I always turn off, whenever anyone uses "FYROM" or "Skopje" to refer to the Republic of Macedonia and it is laughable to talk of serious dialogue, or debate. The Macedonians can only be coerced and blackmailed (threats of embargos, or worse forms of aggression) to participate in such talks. Premised on a non-negotiable negotiation by the Greeks of the Macedonian right to self-identify, nothing but the wasteful trading of insults can be the outcome.

3. *On the attitude that would have been most appropriate at the time of the declaration of Independence by Macedonia in 1991.*

"Greece should accept the existence of the Republic of Macedonia and get rid of the policy that leads nowhere," declared Greek Helsinki Committee chairman Panayotis Dimitras.

Mr Dimitras went on to say that the problem was Greek public opinion, which had never been informed about what basic human rights are, or rights in line with the international law.

4. *On the uses of history*

Most interpretations of history when used for nation building or "reasons of state" are misinterpretations, lies, spin, distortions, myths, etc.

The official Greek position has totally avoided the crucial contemporary issues (especially human rights) with gossip about an ancient world. Thus Greek "scholars" like Nicolaos Martis won prizes in Athens (and nowhere else) with unreadable propaganda pieces titled *The*

Falsification of Macedonian History. Anyone able to read through such nonsense, will be impressed by the amazing irony of the title. The book is supposed to promote the Greek position, yet it inadvertently presents an excellent summary of all the falsification of Macedonian history that modern Greek chauvinism has given us.

As I believe that the Macedonians have every right to their name and identity, they can name any place or feature of their human and natural environment by whatever famous Macedonian figure or event they wish.

However, in terms of diplomatic strategy with the existing difficulties, the most effective rock-solid case for Macedonian affirmation, can be derived from modern institutions. The universal criterion for recognition of the modern Macedonians can be solidly grounded on the principle of justice and fair play - best encoded in the UN Declaration of 1948 and subsequent Covenants and Conventions.

The human rights story, which begins with 17th century British philosophers like John Locke, is still unfolding and is the biggest political development in politics. The idea of enforcing international law is a recent phenomenon: the International Criminal Court has only been born this century. The way ahead is clear but very thorny and full of perils.

We must not underestimate the boost the Republic of Macedonia has been given by the support and recognition from nearly 130 nations, including the most powerful.

5. *The Macedonian people and their struggle*

We are either for democratic values and freedom and human rights promised by the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948), or we remain the victims of other nation's choices, expectations, and obsolete nationalist agendas. Greece needs to recuperate from the psychic damage that it has not overcome from its own oppressed past.

The Macedonian task is to achieve rights, democracy and equality and eschew internalizing the values of the oppressor - nationalism and narrow-minded or parochial loyalties. Modern Balkan history with its wars, upheavals and dislocations has left scars that are yet to heal. Such traumas still impede

meaningful or effective communication between the Macedonians and Greeks as well as other Balkan nations and peoples. This is due to the fact that the understanding or perception of "the other" conditioned by these experiences is very difficult to change. That is why hate speech like "Skopjani" or all the ugly cognates of "FYROM" constantly being vomited by the Greek media only deepens the divide between two groups.

6. *Key moments in modern Macedonian history*

Let me quote something K P Misirkov wrote in 1903 in his book *"Za Makedonskite Raboti"* which could serve as an answer to the uses of "history" (I translate from the Macedonian original of 1903 contained in Odrani Stranitsi (Selected Works) 1991,) page 50: "...but that happens to be the politics of Bulgaria and I have no intention to adopt their political goals. I am a Macedonian and the interests of my fatherland concern me only as a Macedonian: Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire are not the enemies of Macedonia, but Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia. Only a vigorous struggle against those three nations will save our fatherland from total ruin." (Preface).

How many tenets of modern Greek (and Bulgarian) propaganda are exploded here? Misirkov's book depicts the brutal era of the struggle for Macedonian territory against the dying Ottoman Empire. It captures the climate of ideas in the Balkans at a time of nationalisms gone mad. It tells the well-worn story of how politics and diplomacy are not primarily matters of moral considerations or truth, but rather the assertion of the stronger that "might is right". This part of the story, of the tremendous odds that the Macedonians had to struggle against, was written in 1903. Misirkov calls himself a Macedonian and writes in a form of the Macedonian language that he proposed should become the literary standard for all Macedonians. The Macedonian literary language was codified in the late 1940's when the Macedonians experienced some freedom within the rigid framework of Communist Yugoslavia. I recommend to anyone interested in the Macedonian point of view to read Misirkov's short monograph.



"the Macedonians have every right to their name and identity, they can name any place or feature of their human and natural environment by whatever famous Macedonian figure or event they wish."

Tom Dimitrov
December 2009

AMHRC & MHRMI Condemn European Betrayal of OMO "ILINDEN" PIRIN

AMHRC & MHRMI • 6 December 2009



Council of Europe

"OMO has affirmed that it will not permit this setback to halt its work."

The **Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee** and **Macedonian Human Rights Movement International**, have written in protest to the Council of Europe after an appalling decision was taken by the Committee of Ministers (COM - 1/12/09) in Strasbourg, to end the monitoring of the execution of the 2005 judgement of the European Court of Human Rights involving Bulgaria and the de-registration of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN.

The COM decided to close the case without requiring the re-registration of the party. This was done without proper justification and it is astounding, when coupled with the fact that the **Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights**, Thomas Hammarberg, as recently as last November, criticised Bulgaria in regard to this very issue (see the report on the **AMHRC** website).

It is outrageous that this body of the Council of Europe has in effect colluded with the Bulgarian authorities to further suppress the already marginalised. Foucault's dictum, on the perma-

nent presence of power in the governance of all interactions, whether micro or macro, is proved once more. However, we find it shocking that it has been here exhibited so blatantly and crudely.

The spirit of modern Europe is supposed to be about enabling the excluded to frame their marginality in a manner that increases their liberty. The decision taken in Strasbourg by the Committee of Ministers charged with overseeing the full execution of judgements of the European Court of Human Rights, has in practice enabled Bulgarian discrimination to utilise the registration process for the purpose of accurately identifying its 'target' in order to further bully it. **Co-President of OMO, Stojko Stojkov**, has informed **AMHRC/MHRMI**, that this, among other things, was made clear to the COM in an official communication from **OMO** just days (27/11/09) prior to the COM's unjust decision. **Stojkov** pointed out that **OMO** has demonstrated on many occasions to the COM, "...irregularities in court proceedings, police

pressure and intimidation of the members of the party" in Bulgaria. The **OMO** communication to the COM, also prophetically explained that it would be discriminatory on the part of COM to decide to end **OMO's** registration process, as this would contradict earlier actions on the part of the COM, "...which has supervised the outcome of the proceedings initiated by the applicants [of other stifled minority parties] following the judgements of the court to have their parties registered anew." Embarrassingly for Europe, it was to no avail.

OMO has affirmed that it will not permit this setback to halt its work. **OMO** currently has two new applications pending before the European Court of Human Rights. Depending on the results of these cases, **OMO** may be able to avoid the tedious process of beginning registration once more. We, the representatives of the **AMHRC/MHRMI**, demand that European institutions cease this discriminatory 'raising of the bar' for Macedonians and take immediate action to reverse the inequity of the COM decision.

George Vlahov

Australian Government Bows to Greek Pressure and Threats and Refuses to Recognise the Republic of Macedonia by its Constitutional Name

AMHRC • 20 October 2009

The **Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC)** has been disappointed to learn that the Australian government has engaged in dialogue with Australian-Greek organisations on the issue of the Republic of Macedonia's identity and that it has acceded to some of their demands. These Greek organisations are underpinned by policies aimed at preventing the Macedonian nation-state from exercising its right to self-determination. This has all occurred barely two weeks in advance of Nikola Gruevski's

(Premier of the Republic of Macedonia) planned Australian visit.

A report in the online version of the Greek – Australian newspaper, "*Neos Kosmos*" (12/10/09) states that "...Greek-Australian organisations have already sent a letter to Kevin Rudd in the light of the Gruevski visit." The article continues to explain that the author of the letter, director of an Australian based Greek organisation, Paul Kyritsis, pleaded with the Australian Prime Minister to continue using the "FYROM" name in refer-

ence to the Republic of Macedonia – especially on the planned signing of a bi-lateral social security agreement between Australia and the Republic of Macedonia during Premier Gruevski's visit. In this letter to Prime Minister Rudd, Kyritsis concluded with a very thinly veiled threat: "*In closing...acknowledging this nation under its provisional name (FYROM)...will...stand as a gesture of both respect and goodwill towards the Greek government and its Hellenic Diaspora by pacifying their budding un-*"
(Continued on page 14)

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rest.”

The *Neos Kosmos* report moves on to reveal the extent of the bigotry involved by mentioning that the same Greek organisation had actually written a letter to the Australian Foreign Minister, Stephen Smith, protesting the Republic of Macedonia's usage of its constitutional name on its Australian based embassies and consulates. This outrageous protest was rejected in a response written on behalf of the Australian Foreign Minister by Mr. Sean Singh, Director of the Southern Europe Section in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). However, according to this and a more recent *Neos Kosmos* report (19/10/09) the Greek community received positive responses from both Mr. Singh of DFAT and from the Australian Foreign Minister, Stephen Smith on the

issue of the Republic of Macedonia's constitutional name. They both affirmed that Australia would continue not to utilise the Republic of Macedonia's constitutional name and that the offensive "FYROM" name would be applied by the Australian government in the signing of the social security agreement.

The AMHRC rejects this pandering to bigotry and appeasement of threats. Such a rejection has also been made by over 125 countries that have chosen to ignore Greece's discriminatory policy and recognise the Republic of Macedonia by its constitutional name – among the 125 are the USA, Britain, Canada, Russia and China. The AMHRC cannot understand how it could possibly be in Australia's interest to ignore what has become standard international practice and continue to support the indecent, discriminatory and

unlawful campaign being waged by Greece against the Republic of Macedonia. Moreover, we cannot understand why DFAT would reveal the terms of an international agreement to a set of individuals in no way connected to the matters dealt with in the agreement. This may obviously be construed as a slap in the face by both Australia's Macedonian Community and by the Republic of Macedonia's delegation, due to visit Australia next week. It also needs to be asked of the Australian government, if this is the appropriate way to treat an ally? It is not commonly known that the Republic of Macedonia and Australia have been and remain military allies in ground wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan since 2003. The AMHRC has written to Prime Minister Rudd and DFAT requesting clarification on these issues.

George Vlahov



Jason Kambovski meets foreign minister Antonio Miloshovski



From left: George Vlahov, David Koch MP, Jason Kambovski, Collin Brooks MP, Vasko Nastevski

“The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) has been disappointed to learn that the Australian government has engaged in dialogue with Australian-Greek organisations on the issue of the Republic of Macedonia's identity and that it has acceded to some of their demands.”

AMHRC Introduces Gruevski, Miloshoski and Macedonian Delegation to Victorian Parliamentarians

AMHRC • 27 October 2009

An estimated 2000 people were present at Hilton on the Park to hear Prime Minister Gruevski deliver a stirring speech, encouraging the Macedonian community to unite and ignore the diversity of their geographic origins. He also explained that the signing of the social security agreement between Australia

and the Republic of Macedonia will permit Australian citizens of Macedonian origin, to reside in the Republic of Macedonia and still receive their Australian pension payments.

The AMHRC ensured the presence of Victorian Parliamentary representatives from

both major political parties at the event. These included Mr. Colin Brooks MP Member for Bundoora and Mr. David Koch MP, Member of the Legislative Council for the Western Victoria Region.

AMHRC representatives Jason Kambovski, Sasha Nack-

(Continued on page 15)



PM Gruevski speaking to the Macedonian community while David Koch MP and Collin Brooks MP look on

AMHRC Introduces Gruevski, Miloshoski and Macedonian Delegation to Victorian Parliamentarians

AMHRC • 27 October 2009

“An estimated 2000 people were present at Hilton on the Park to hear Prime Minister Gruevski deliver a stirring speech”

(Continued from page 14)
ovski, Vasko Nasteovski, Chris Popov and George Vlahov were able to inform a Macedonian Parliamentary Delegation of the AMHRCs work and of its position on a

variety of issues.

This advanced party Delegation included Vladimir Gjorcev, Ilija Dimovski, and Marija Andonovska. The AMHRC spent a very pro-

ductive afternoon with these vibrant young Macedonian MPs and prepared the ground for co-operative efforts in the future.

Ljubica Durlovska



George Vlahov meets Prime Minister Gruevski. Courtesy of INFORMATOR

From left: Vladimir Gjorcev, George Vlahov, Marija Andonovska, Sasha Nasteovski, and Ilija Dimovski



AMHRC COMMENTS ON HAMMARBERG'S VISIT TO BULGARIA

AMHRC • 17 November 2009

“Bulgaria has consistently failed to afford its ethnic Macedonian minority a proper opportunity to express itself through participation in the political process...”

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) notes that on 5 November 2009, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hamarberg, concluded a three-day visit to Sofia, Bulgaria, during which, amongst other matters he assessed progress on the protection of the rights of minorities in Bulgaria. It is understood that Mr Hammarberg discussed the protection of ethnic groups, including that of the Macedonian minority, with various Bulgarian authorities.

The Commissioner for Human Rights is an independent institution within the Council of Europe, who is mandated to promote education in, awareness of and respect for human rights in member states, as embodied in the human rights instruments of the Council of Europe. The major human rights instrument is the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention). Bulgaria ratified the

European Convention on 7 September 1992.

Article 1 of the European Convention begins by asserting that the member states shall *secure to everyone* within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms defined in the Convention. One of the human rights enunciated in the European Convention is that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others (Article 11). By Article 14 of the European Convention the enjoyment of this right shall be secured *without discrimination on any ground*, whether it be race, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority or other status.

Notably, in the case of *OMO Ilinden Pirin v. Bulgaria* decided in 2005, Bulgaria was found wanting in this regard when it was judged to be in breach of Article 11 of the European Convention by the European Court of Human Rights. The Court firstly stated

that:

In a democratic society based on the rule of law, political ideas which challenge the existing order without putting into question the tenets of democracy, and whose realisation is advocated by peaceful means must be afforded a proper opportunity of expression through, *inter alia*, participation in the political process.

Bulgaria has consistently failed to afford its ethnic Macedonian minority a proper opportunity to express itself through participation in the political process, as it consistently rejects all attempts at registering a political party representing the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. Given the regular rhetoric originating from the Bulgarian authorities denigrating the existence of a separate ethnic Macedonian minority, Bulgaria's conduct in thwarting
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the Macedonian minority's enjoyment of the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association can only be described as being based on 'race, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority or other status'. Therefore, it is a direct violation of the human rights of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. Poignantly, in the 2005 case, the European Court also concluded the following:

The fact that ... [OMO Ilinden Pirin's] ... political programme was considered incompatible with the current principles and structures of the Bulgarian State does not make it incompatible with the rules and principles of democracy.

Ironically, the European Court here, seemingly inferring that it is in fact Bulgaria's attitude that is necessarily incompatible with the rules and principles of democracy. Given Bulgaria's history of human rights violations against its ethnic minorities, and in particular its sizeable Macedonian minority, the AMHRC views Hammarberg's visit to Bulgaria as both important and necessary.

Mr Hammarberg's own findings would suggest the same. A statement summarising his preliminary views was issued on 6 November 2009. Perhaps somewhat inauspiciously, the statement is entitled 'Commissioner Hammarberg encourages Bulgaria to make more efforts to protect the rights of minorities'. The statement makes reference to the Council of Europe human rights standards, which it is suggested Mr Hammarberg recommended 'a renewed, systematic dialogue with these communities in order to ad-

dress and solve all pending issues'. Clearly, Mr Hammarberg believes that there are 'pending issues' to be addressed by the Bulgarian authorities when it comes to the human rights of its minorities. In a direct quote, Mr Hammarberg stated that:

Hate speech against minority groups must be countered with preventive and prosecutorial actions. Leading politicians should lead as example of tolerance and mutual respect.

One can only speculate that the reference to 'leading politicians' seems to be a direct rebuke of the Bulgarian authorities by Mr Hammarberg. If so, the Commissioner should do his best to ensure that such Bulgarian authorities are not allowed to escape proper scrutiny of their human rights record. Whilst respect for the rule of law and human rights of its citizens may be a novel concept for some Bulgarian authorities, they cannot be allowed to be absolved of their responsibilities in this regard. The Commissioner also indicated that independent human rights structures, such as the Ombudsman and the Commission for the Protection against Discrimination, remain as crucial institutions for reinforcing the protection of individuals against any possible abuse. It is to be expected that these institutions will perform their roles objectively and impartially and encourage accountability when human rights violations are identified.

Importantly, the Commissioner will publish early next year a more detailed report with his recommendations on the issues raised during this visit.

The AMHRC not only reiterates the suggestion in the title to Mr Hammarberg's statement

that Bulgaria make more efforts to protect the rights of its Macedonian minority, but asserts that this is a fundamental responsibility that it cannot avoid. It is incumbent on the Council of Europe, through the Commissioner for Human Rights, to expose any breaches of this responsibility and demand that Bulgaria begins acting like the 'European' state that it purports to be. Bulgarian authorities should understand that 'the essence of human rights is empowerment through the affirmation that *every* individual is entitled *as of right* and merely by virtue of being human' to enjoy those norms and standards that have been proclaimed by the international community as essential to the 'foundation of justice and peace in the world'. The Bulgarian authorities should understand this, because they have supposedly already affirmed 'their profound belief in such fundamental freedoms' by acceding to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Anyone interested in supporting the human rights struggle of OMO Ilinden Pirin, may do so by making a contribution to the AMHRC, per the means offered on our website.

Vasko Nastevski



Thomas Hammarberg.
Photo courtesy of Kiev Ukraine News Blog

“The AMHRC not only reiterates the suggestion in the title to Mr Hammarberg’s statement that Bulgaria make more efforts to protect the rights of its Macedonian minority, but asserts that this is a fundamental responsibility that it cannot avoid.”

AMHRC & MHRMI Congratulate EFA—Rainbow/Vinozito On the Opening of Voden Office

AMHRC & MHRMI • 15 November 2009

"The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee and Macedonian Human Rights Movement International, congratulate the European Free Alliance – Rainbow/Vinozito on the opening of an office today on the main street of the town of Voden/Edessa in Northern Greece."

The **Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee** and **Macedonian Human Rights Movement International**, congratulate the **European Free Alliance – Rainbow/Vinozito** - a political party fighting for the human rights of ethnic Macedonians in Greece - on the opening of an office today on the main street of the town of Voden/Edessa in Northern Greece.

The opening ceremony was attended by the leaders of Vinozito's Voden branch. A bilingual sign (in Greek and Macedonian) with the words "**EFA – Rainbow Voden Committee**" was displayed on the balcony of the office.

The decision to open an office in Edessa/Voden came about as a result of an increasing demand for a central support base from **Vinozito's** local branch members. There is also a hope within **Vinozito's Central Council** that this action will induce the Greek government to finally end its denial of the existence of a Macedonian minority in Greece and begin a process of reconciliation.

The Voden/Edessa office is EFA-Rainbow's second office in Northern Greece. The **AMHRC** and **MHRMI** trust that there will not be a repeat of events resembling those around the opening of **Vinozito's** first office. The first office was opened on 6 September 1995 in the town of Florina/Lerin. During the evening, the office was broken into and ransacked, and the bilingual sign "**Rainbow Party, Florina Committee**" was stolen.

The sign was replaced, however on 12 September 1995, priests from the Florina/Lerin region called on people to join a "*demonstration to protest against the enemies of Greece who arbitrarily display signs with anti-Hellenic inscriptions.*" The statement also called for the "*deportation*" of those responsible. The very next day, the Lerin office was attacked by a number of people, including the mayor of Florina/Lerin.

Upon breaking into the office, these individuals assaulted those inside and confiscated the **Vinozito** sign. During the course of the night equipment and furniture on the premises were

tossed through the window and set alight. Soon after, four members of **Vinozito** were charged with "*causing and inciting mutual hatred among the citizens*" under Article 192 of the Greek Penal Code. It was only after international pressure that the charges were dropped.

This display of intolerance found closure in 2005, when the European Court of Human Rights found the Greek government to be in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights by restricting party members' freedom of assembly (Article 11) and failing to provide due process within reasonable time (Article 6). The Greek government was ordered to pay €35,000 in compensation to EFA Rainbow. This was a great victory for democratic diversity and **Vinozito's** multi-lingual sign is steadily becoming an accepted part of life in Lerin/Florina.

For those interested in contributing support towards **Vinozito's** courageous efforts to defeat ethnocentric bigotry, please contact the **AMHRC** or **MHRMI** per the means offered below.

David Vitkov

Dimitri Ioanou (on right) and others put up a Greek-Macedonian sign to celebrate the opening of the Voden Rainbow



AMHRC Spring Review 2009

AMHRC condemns Neos Kosmos for its coverage of the visit of the Macedonian Prime Minister to Australia

AMHRC • 27 October 2009

The Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee (AMHRC) was both shocked and disappointed to read the article entitled "Gruevski makes claims in Sydney Speech" that appeared in the English language online version of Neos Kosmos on Tuesday 27th October 2009.

A cornerstone of Australian democracy has been freedom of the press, and the AMHRC has been a keen supporter of this important principle. However, both the tone and content of this recent Neos Kosmos article was such that it leaves one with no other option but to call for its censorship.

To claim that "Gruevski has made irredentist claims against Greece and Bulgaria" was both misleading and highly inflammatory. To

construe in such a way, Prime Minister Gruevski's reference to the unique opportunity possessed by members of the Macedonian Community in Australia to unite regardless of their region of origin, is scandalously deceptive. Neos Kosmos has responsibilities, like any other media outlet, to ensure that its content does not misinform its readership. Moreover, when such gross inaccuracies are identified, this responsibility extends to making appropriate corrections. We anticipate that Neos Kosmos will do just that.

What was of greatest concern to the AMHRC was the reference to the Australian Macedonian Community as the "Skopjan Community." It is common knowledge that this is a pejorative term devised by racist elements within

the Greek world. It, among other things, signifies a claim that ethnic Macedonians are a culturally inferior group of people. This is clearly unacceptable.

The AMHRC intends to raise the matter with the Editor of Neos Kosmos, and if a suitable apology and retraction is not forthcoming, a complaint will be lodged with the appropriate media regulatory bodies. Additionally, the AMHRC is also currently in discussions with its legal counsel and has sought advice as to the options available to it, to redress the hurt and insult caused to the Australian Macedonian Community by the above named article published by Neos Kosmos.

Jason Kambovski



Donate to the Macedonian Minorities Support Fund - Become a member

Why Become a Member?

This fund, apart from serving to maintain our advocacy work in Australia and Europe in general, provides regular financial assistance to the European Free Alliance - Rainbow (Vinozito), the political party of the Macedonian minority of Greece and to OMO "Ilinden" Pirin, a political party in Bulgaria defending the rights of the Macedonian minority. The financial aid allows the parties to staff their offices, conduct their domestic activities and lobby internationally for the recognition of the Macedonian minority in their respective countries.

As a member of the Macedonian Minorities' Support Fund you are automatically a member of the Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee.

How to make a donation or become a member:

CHEQUES/MONEY ORDERS:

Please make out cheques or money orders to *Macedonian Human Rights Committee of Melbourne and Victoria*

DIRECT DEPOSIT/BANK TRANSFER

If you intend on making a direct deposit or a bank transfer, here are the details:

Account Name: Macedonian Human Rights Committee of Melbourne and Victoria
BSB: 033365
Account No: 189484

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Don't Forget, you can also donate online at macedonianhr.org.au by using PayPal

BY CREDIT CARD

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**AUSTRALIAN MACEDONIAN
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE**

Mailing Address:
 Level 1, Suite 106
 55 Flemington Rd
 North Melbourne VIC 3051
 Australia

Phone: 03 9329 8960
 E-mail: macedonian_rights@hotmail.com
 Website: www.macedonianhr.org.au

AMHRC Team Members

Steve Christov	Business Manager
Ljubica Durlovska	Media Liaison Officer/ Editor of AMHRC Review
Andy Filipov	Treasurer
Charles Galileos	Deputy Treasurer
Jason Kambovski	Vice President
Sasha Nackovski	Political Liaison Officer
Vasko Nastevski	Secretary
Chris Popov	Macedonian Media Liaison Officer
Peter Sarbinov	Deputy Secretary
Chris Terpos	Marketing Manager
Tom Dimitrov	Columnist for AMHRC Review
John Tsiglev	Members' Representative
David Vitkov	International Co-ordinator (Skopje office)
George Vlahov	President

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Contacts & Team Members



Contacts

The AMHRC is part of a major international Macedonian human rights network, that spans Australasia, North America and Europe.

Australian Macedonian Human Rights Inc.

Address Suite 106, Level 1
55 Flemington Rd,
North Melbourne, 3051
Victoria, Australia
+61 3 9329 8960
macedonian_rights@hotmail.com
www.macedonianhr.org.au

Telephone
E-mail
Website

European Free Alliance – Rainbow

Address Stephanou Dragoumi 11
PO Box 51
53100 Florina / Lerin
Greece
Telephone +30 23850 46548
E-mail vinozito@otenet.gr or
rainbow@vinozito.gr
Website www.vinozito.gr

OMO "Ilinden" Pirin

Address Bulgaria
Blagoevgrad 2700
zk 'Elenovo' bl 6 v. B ap. 6
p.k. Mechkarovi
omo_ilinden_pirin@yahoo.com
Website www.omoilindenpirin.org

Email
Website

Macedonian Human Rights Movement International

Address 157 Adelaide St. West, Suite 434
Toronto, Canada M5H 4E7
Telephone 1-416-850-7125
Email info@mhrmi.org
Website www.mhrmi.org

About The AmHRC

Established in 1984 the Australian Macedonian Human Rights Committee is a non-governmental organization that informs and advocates to governments, international institutions and broader communities about combating discrimination and promoting human rights. Our aspiration is to ensure that Macedonian communities and other excluded groups throughout the world are recognised, respected and afforded equitable treatment.

Volunteer with the AMHRC – Positions Vacant

Membership Manager (Any Location)

The Role: The key objective of this role is to Manage and administer the Membership database including Membership acquisition and retention campaigns. It will require communication with members by email, phone, mail and face-to-face as required.

The primary responsibility of this role will be to service and retain the current membership base and recapture past members. The key duties include processing membership applications and updating the membership database to ensure that our database is fully populated with key contact information.

Over time you will be expected to implement strategies to assist the committee in demonstrating to our valued membership base the outstanding work the AMHRC continues to do.

You will also be integrally involved in the development and implementation of activities to grow the membership base and transform the current management process and assist in AMHRC events.

The Person/s: As this is a voluntary position, it would be expected that at least three hours a week could be donated to the tasks listed above. We will consider more than one person for this role. Accordingly we encourage applications from all people irrespective of their existing skill sets. In our eyes the most important attribute is a willingness to contribute and learn.

Age is no limit and we encourage younger people wishing to gain experience and use the AMHRC for the purpose of building their own CV's and getting a foot in the door in the paid workforce to apply. The committee would consider helping and supporting the right person/s to obtain new skills through short courses. We also encourage anyone who may be highly competent or skilled in this type of work to contribute in a supervisory capacity.

To Apply: To express interest for the position please send your current CV and an application letter outlining your interest and qualifications to macedonian_rights@hotmail.com to the attention of the Business Manager.

Online Manager and/or Copywriter (Any Location)

The Role: This is a diverse role, which will see you assisting in the development, production and posting of web content whilst also expanding the presence of the AMHRC in social networking forums. Importantly you will lead the transformation of the way the AMHRC communicates with its constituency and you will be responsible for maintaining a focus on quality and keep in mind our users' experience.

You will also be involved in a range of other tasks as are required to assist the other AMHRC committee members to evolve and build AMHRCs' web presence and traffic.

Tasks include:

- Research & development and production of web content. You will assist with formulating marketing/public relations materials and other copywriting as required
- Significant copyediting of web content and other text as required such as our quarterly magazine
- Maintain our presence on social networking sites
- Assess the feasibility of implementing new initiatives
- Sourcing of images from photo library suppliers and other tasks as required from time to time.

The Person/s: As this is a voluntary position, it would be expected that at least three hours a week could be donated to the tasks listed above. We will consider more than one person for this role. We encourage applications from all people irrespective of their existing skill sets. The most important attribute is a willingness to contribute and/or learn.

We also encourage anyone who may be highly competent or skilled in this area to contribute in a supervisory capacity.

Role Requirements:

- Ability to write, develop and edit content – to meet deadlines and to reflect the committee's highest quality standards
- Ability to develop/follow in-house style guide and to make changes and additions to the style guide as required
- Ability to generate ideas and to think creatively about online content and other aspects of the AMHRC's business
- Ability to work cooperatively within a team environment and take ownership of projects and deliverables as required
- MS Office experience.

To Apply: To express interest for the position please send your current CV and an application letter outlining your interest and qualifications to macedonian_rights@hotmail.com to the attention of the Business Manager.

AMHRC REVIEW



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