

Macedonian Human Rights Organizations Condemn the So-Called Macedonia/Bulgaria "Friendship Agreement"

The Agreement between Macedonia and Bulgaria is inequitable, satisfies Bulgarian nationalistic aspirations and calls into question the sovereignty of Macedonia.

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Human Rights Organizations Condemn
the So-Called [Macedonia/Bulgaria](#) "Good
Neighbourliness" Agreement



Macedonian Human Rights Movement International

(July 31, 2017) - While we express our in-principle support for good neighbourly relations, advancement of relations and the integration of Macedonia into European and Atlantic structures, we cannot at the same time not condemn the contents of this agreement which, despite all the fine phrases, is in fact contrary to the abovementioned values.

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We therefore consider the Agreement unacceptable, insulting to Macedonia and the Macedonian people, unprincipled and shameful for both signatory countries.”

*Stojko Stojkov, OMO Ilinden
PIRIN*

The Agreement on Good Neighbourliness between Macedonia and Bulgaria is inequitable and satisfies Bulgarian nationalist aspirations more than it does Macedonian national interests. It calls into question the sovereignty of the Republic of Macedonia and the freedoms of certain parts of its citizenry and violates its authority as an independent state possessing the same rights and entitlements as other states. Good neighbourliness can only be constructed on the basis of equality and good will and not by means of blackmail, humiliation and abuse of one's position of power.

By means of this agreement Macedonia has taken a further step towards its abandonment of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. The earlier declarative abandonment has now become part of the Agreement on "Good Neighbourliness". That is a logical and shameful next step which comes after 25 years of violation of the Constitution by the governments of the Republic of Macedonia which have completely and consistently ignored their constitutional obligation to care for and protect the rights of the Macedonian minorities in the neighbouring countries and especially in Bulgaria and Greece. The agreement is anti-constitutional precisely for this reason!

Macedonia, via this agreement, in accordance with the views of Bulgaria, undertakes that not only will it not make representations on behalf of the Macedonian minority and support its organisations in Bulgaria (Article 11.5), something which it has not done up until now anyway, but also will not allow any activities by such organisations to occur on its territory or allow activities by its own citizens on

Macedonian territory which support such organisations (Article 11.2). Nor will it allow media coverage of the activities and problems experienced by Macedonian organisations and the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria (Article 11.6)

In addition, it creates a mechanism thorough which Bulgaria can place certain conditions on and blackmail Macedonia during the process relating to its integration into European and Atlantic structures. (Articles 8 and 12). It creates the possibility for Bulgaria to intervene in independent academic research and media freedoms and imposes a redefinition of concepts such as hate speech in relation to each and every opinion which supports the notion that Macedonians are a separate and distinct national and ethnic group. The statements of certain officials in Bulgaria bear witness to the fact that this is indeed Bulgaria's intention and that the agreement is but a first step and not a final solution, despite attempts by certain naive politicians in Skopje to portray it as such.

The terminology used: "two states and their peoples", "the Macedonian language, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia", "joint history" relativises the Macedonian nation. Joint celebrations of whatever type in a situation where the Macedonian nation and identity are openly denied by Bulgaria will only serve to satisfy such negation and will not contribute to overcoming any misunderstandings which may exist.

This agreement represents an unprecedented interference of politics in the study of history-it prescribes the formation of political bodies which will interpret history and report back to their respective governments. We wish to remind that history is a science and any kind of interference by politicians in its study is inadmissible. This represents but another tool for blackmail through which Bulgaria will insist on the acceptance of the Bulgarian view of the history of Macedonia becoming a condition for the gaining of membership of European institutions under the guise of "good neighbourliness".

We therefore consider the Agreement unacceptable, insulting to Macedonia and the Macedonian people, unprincipled and shameful for both signatory countries. In addition, contrary to the expectations of the signatories, it will not contribute to good neighbourliness, but will only increase mistrust and create genuine hate of Bulgaria, instead of the imaginary hate that Sofia now complains of.

Neither the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria, the Macedonian Diaspora, and we are convinced, the Macedonian nation in general feel bound in any way by the unequal clauses of this agreement. They will oppose every attempt to limit their human freedoms, will continue their struggle for dignity, rights and justice and oppose every attempt to prevent that struggle from continuing, irrespective of whether it emanates from Sofia or Skopje.

OMO "Ilinden" - PIRIN

Macedonian Human Rights Movement International

Australian-Macedonian Human Rights Committee

Macedonian Alliance for European Integration – Albania

--- 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: 1-416-850-7125, info@mhrmi.org, www.mhrmi.org, twitter.com/mhrmi, facebook.com/mhrmi, mhrmi.org/OurNamelsMacedonia

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