



12 November 2020

## **MACEDONIA'S ACCESSION TO THE EU CANNOT BE HELD HOSTAGE TO BULGARIA'S DENIAL OF MACEDONIA AND MACEDONIANS.**

In August 2017 Macedonia and Bulgaria concluded the Agreement on Friendship and Good Neighbourliness. While we express our in-principle support for good neighbourly relations, advancement of relations and international cooperation, we cannot at the same time not condemn the contents of this agreement which, despite all the fine rhetoric, is in fact contrary to the abovementioned values and is being used by Bulgaria to not only deny the ethnic identity of the Macedonians, but to impose a version of history on Macedonia which postulates that Macedonians are nothing more than “wayward Bulgarians”.

The Agreement on Friendship and Good Neighbourliness between Macedonia and Bulgaria is inequitable and satisfies Bulgarian nationalist aspirations to the near total exclusion of 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. By means of this agreement Macedonia, under the illegal, quisling regime led by Zoran Zaev 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 29 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.

In addition, it creates a mechanism through which Bulgaria can place certain conditions on and blackmail Macedonia during the process relating to its integration into European and Atlantic structures. It creates the possibility for Bulgaria to intervene in independent academic historical 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.

Given Bulgaria's membership of the EU and the right to veto which it possesses, these conditions represent nothing less than an attempt to erase Macedonia and Macedonians from history and the present by in essence coercing Macedonia's current quisling government to admit that Macedonians are Bulgarians and that Macedonians are a creation of Yugoslavia's Tito regime. In insisting on these conditions which it claims spring from obligations assumed by Macedonia under the Treaty on Friendship and Good Neighbourliness, Bulgaria mirrors and supports the Greek tactic of abusing its right of veto in order to advance the myth that the territory of the Republic of Macedonia is a historically Bulgarian region inhabited predominantly by ethnic Bulgarians. These demands, at their core, are designed to justify its annexation of Pirin Macedonia in 1913, its decades-long denationalisation of its large ethnic Macedonian minority and to perpetuate the nationally unifying dream of the March 1878 Treaty of San Stefano which incorporated the whole of Macedonia in a new Bulgarian state against the wishes of the Macedonians.

The statements of certain officials in Bulgaria of late, as Macedonia attempts to negotiate a date for the opening of EU accession talks, bear witness to the fact that this is indeed Bulgaria's intention, despite patently futile attempts by the regime in Macedonia to deny that this is the case. Such recent statements by both Bulgarian Deputy PM Karakachanov and Foreign Minister Zakhariyeva, not only peddle historical mistruths, but constitute direct threats that if Macedonia does not accept all Bulgarian demands Bulgaria will continue to veto the beginning of EU accession talks for Macedonia.

Taking its cue from fellow EU member-state Greece, which forced Macedonia to change its name, renounce the Macedonian minority in Greece and its historical links to Antiquity, Bulgaria has been aggressively and specifically demanding that Macedonia and Macedonians relinquish their history, officially state that they were 'Bulgarians before Tito transformed them into Macedonians', that the Macedonian language is a "south-western Bulgarian dialect" and formally repudiate the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. Moreover, and in an immoral attempt to whitewash its brutal occupation of Macedonia from 1941-44, it has demanded that Macedonia formally accept Bulgaria's fanciful historical claim that Bulgaria, an ally of Hitler, was "not responsible for the deportation of over 7,000 Macedonian Jews to the Treblinka death camp". Given that even the quisling regime in Macedonia could not accept all these demands (due to opposition by Macedonians), last week Bulgaria vetoed the opening of EU accession negotiations for Macedonia. The Bulgarian veto was shamefully supported by the EU in the form of the following statement on 9 November by German Foreign Minister Heiko Mass whose country holds the rotating presidency of the European Council until the end of this year:

*"The EU cannot interfere in bilateral issues. The EU has 27 members and Bulgaria is one of them and therefore the interests of Bulgaria must be respected, that is unfortunately the case. These issues must be resolved by the two countries, that is a precondition for holding an intergovernmental conference.*

Rather than stand up for its own frequently proclaimed values of respect for human rights, national self-determination and democracy and bring pressure to bear on Bulgaria to cease its racist crusade against Macedonia and Macedonians, the EU has shown by this statement that it is once again prepared to sacrifice Macedonia in order to defend the interests of a member state which has engaged in egregious bullying of a small country like Macedonia.

The MCCA cannot accept that Bulgaria's demands that Macedonians effectively erase themselves as a distinct nation and ethnic group as a precondition for the opening of EU accession negotiations be allowed to stand. Accordingly, it roundly condemns this campaign of chauvinist bullying of Macedonia and the EU's acquiescence in such a campaign. While we do not expect the current, subservient regime to put up any more than token resistance to Bulgaria's shameless demands, we call upon the Macedonian people to organise themselves and defy these Bulgarian attacks on their most basic human rights and freedoms.

The MCCA also condemns the appointment by the regime of Mr Slobodan Bliznakovski, who adopts the position that Macedonians are Bulgarians in line with official Bulgarian propaganda, as Director of the Agency for Macedonian Emigrants and Mr Izmit Nura, a cadre of the ethnic Albanian party DUI which was formed by terrorists who waged an armed insurrection against Macedonia in 2001 and consider Macedonians to be invaders who inhabit "Albanian lands", as his deputy. This Agency, whose primary task is to cater to the interests of the Macedonians abroad, assist them in maintaining their links with Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia and to preserve Macedonian culture, traditions and language cannot be led by persons who deny the existence of Macedonians and do not defend their fundamental rights. The MCCA and its member organisations, in line with their refusal to engage in any way whatsoever with the official representatives of the illegal, unconstitutional regime in Macedonia, will therefore boycott any visits to Australia made by persons who represent the abovenamed persons and the Agency they lead.

The MCCA once again condemns Bulgaria and Greece for their continuing campaign to eradicate the centuries-long existence of Macedonians and to deny them their basic human rights of self-determination and self-identification, as well as the EU for the support it has provided to these countries in pursuit of their anti-Macedonian goals.

Bulgaria's campaign against Macedonia represents an attempt at cultural genocide in the 21st century and cannot be allowed to stand. This is not an "obscure bilateral dispute" as the Western press quaintly puts it, but a concerted attempt to erase an old and proud people by denying them their most fundamental human rights of self-determination and self-identification; those which the countries of the EU and NATO which are supporting this campaign would not dream of denying to their own citizens. Democratic and progressive forces throughout the world cannot sit by idly and allow this to happen.

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