



Provisional edition

Tuesday 26 April 2022, afternoon

Official report of debates

Free debate

Mr Aleksandar NIKOLOSKI (North Macedonia, EPP/CD): Thank you.

Respected members of PACE,

The strongest European institution for the protection of human rights is under the jurisdiction of the Council of Europe: the European Court on Human Rights.

In the European Court, tens of thousands of citizens from all over Europe are seeking justice that they cannot find in their domestic courts when their basic human rights, the right of freedom of speech, the right of association, the right of national self-identification, and right to use their mother language, have been violated.

Macedonians from Bulgaria have been fighting for these rights for decades. They have always lived there, and they want to exercise their national linguistic and cultural life. But unfortunately, Bulgaria refuses to do so. Refuses to register their associations throughout which they want to exercise their rights.

You will agree this is an undemocratic act by a member state of the European Union.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are 14 judgments of the European Court of Human Rights that referred to Macedonians in Bulgaria. So far, none of them has been implemented by Bulgaria, none.

This has a strong undermining of the courts credibility and that is why the Council of Europe must act.

In the conditions of war in Ukraine, when human rights are not respected, bad examples are not needed in Europe.

I would like to highlight two of the 14 judgments of the European Court, which for me, in a very symbolic way, show where Bulgaria is in this process.

The first, is for the refusal to register a Macedonian club for ethnic tolerance in Bulgaria. What is disputable if a Macedonian club for ethnic tolerance is registered, when ethnic tolerance is the highest goal of the Council of Europe?

The second verdict also refers to the society of the repressed Macedonians in Bulgaria, victims of communist terror. Communism has reigned in Bulgaria for 45 years, and I see no reason for Bulgaria not to face its past and to admit that there are victims of communist terror, who among other things, suffered also because they were Macedonians.

In this report:

1. Speeches in English, French, German and Italian are reported in full in English.
2. Speeches in other languages are summarised from the interpretation and indicated by an asterisk (*).
3. Speeches in German and Italian are available in full on the Assembly's website.
4. The text of the amendments is available at the document centre and on the Assembly's website. Only oral amendments or oral sub-amendments are reproduced in the report of debates.
5. Corrections should be handed in at Room 1081 not later than 24 hours after the report has been published.

This is no coincidence that the analysis of the Secretariat for Enforcement of the Judgments expressed its deep concerns that in the latest registration procedures initiated by the Macedonian applicant associations in Bulgaria, the courts have again disregarded the principles set out in the European Court's judgments and interim resolution of the Committee of Ministers.

Ladies and gentlemen, Bulgaria is constantly blocking Macedonia in the European path.

Macedonia cannot start accession talks with the EU because Bulgaria constantly vetoes it.

At the same time, Bulgaria does not respect the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights.

This is the hypocritical policy I seek to end. Macedonia to start EU membership negotiations because the citizens of Macedonia deserve it, and Bulgaria to allow basic human and linguistic rights of Macedonians in Bulgaria. Only such an approach can lead to good neighbourly relations and friendly relations between the Macedonian and Bulgarian people.

Thank you very much.