

2008 OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
Working Session 4: Rule of Law - Prevention of Torture

Statement of the United Macedonian Organisation "Ilinden" PIRIN

Thank you Mr Moderator.

This morning I would like to make the following statement on physiological torture and intimidation carried out by Bulgarian authorities against members of the United Macedonian Organisation "Ilinden" PIRIN.

As you heard yesterday, in 2005 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the banning of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN was a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. Following the judgment the party tried unsuccessfully to re-register the party in 2006 and 2007.

Following the first attempt to re-register the party, Bulgarian authorities embarked on a systematic campaign of harassment and intimidation against members of our party. All 5,800 members of our party, I repeat, all 5,800 members of our party were officially interrogated by the police!

Village by village, city by city, members of the party were visited at home or at their place of work and were summoned to the local police station to answer absurd questions on their involvement with OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN. Some of the questions included:

- 1) Why are you a member of OMO "Ilinden" PIRIN?
- 2) How much money were you paid for becoming a member of the party?
- 3) Do you think that this party is a separatist and illegal party?

Apparently Bulgarian authorities were looking for so-called evidence of manipulation of the population and irregularities in the registration process. After almost 5,800 interviews not a single person was charged with an offence. There was no evidence of the absurd allegations. After almost 2 years, officially the investigation is still continuing.

Of course the intention of the so-called “investigation” was not find irregularities. The intention was to intimidate, harass and discourage Bulgarian citizens from associating with OMO “Ilinden” PIRIN.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is psychological torture.

Out of more than 300 political parties in Bulgaria, OMO Ilinden PIRIN is the only party subject to such harassment. No other party has had their entire membership investigated by the police.

Yesterday we heard from the Bulgarian delegation that OMO “Ilinden” PIRIN is free to make a new application for re-registration under the current law. Well the current law requires a party to have 5,000 members.

Taking into consideration the campaign of intimidation and harassment conducted by the Bulgarian police, who will now want their name associated with OMO “Ilinden” PIRIN?

I ask the Bulgarian ambassador, would you become a member of such an organisation for fear of being visited by the Bulgarian police at their home or at work?

Thank you Mr Moderator.