

The incident with the Jehovah Witnesses in Bourgas on 17 April 2011

- We categorically condemn such acts of vandalism, as they completely contradict the religious rights and freedoms provided for by the Bulgarian legislation. We consider such acts as inadmissible in a democratic society.
- The Religious Denomination Directorate with the Council of Ministers has immediately informed about the incident the County Prosecutor's Office in Bourgas, as this act clearly constitutes *a corpus delicti* under the Penal Code of Bulgaria.
- The Regional Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior in Bourgas has initiated the necessary pre-trial proceedings, and has identified 7 persons implicated by enough evidence as perpetrators of the crime. Six of them are already charged under the Penal Code - with hooliganism and participation in a mob gathered to perpetrate attack on religious grounds against other citizens. The seventh person is charged also for having caused light physical injuries to citizens because of their religious affiliation.
- As the incident is linked to followers of the Political Party VMRO who had previously made statements derogatory to the reputation of the Jehovah Witnesses, the organization referred the matter to the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, which initiated respective proceedings. This was done also upon advice of the Religious Denomination Directorate with the Council of Ministers.
- Administrative proceedings are pending against followers of the Political Party VMRO in Bourgas to establish their violation of *the Law on Assemblies, Meetings and Manifestations*.
- The police in Bourgas had undertaken the necessary measures and ensured the presence of its officers at the "Jehovah Witnesses" meeting at the time pointed out by the organizers. The incident, however, started long before this hour. It lasted ten minutes. The police reacted immediately after being informed, thus preventing worsening of the situation.