

Review Conference 2010, Warsaw, 30 September - 08 October 2010
Working Session 2: Fundamental freedoms I

**STATEMENT OF MUSLIM COMMUNITY (CHIEF MUFTI'S OFFICE) IN THE
REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

**STATE OF AFFAIRS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS IN BULGARIA
IN RELATION TO THE MUSLIM MINORITY**

**-INFRINGEMENTS ON THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM OF THE MUSLIM
COMMUNITY-UNCERTAINTY ON THE STATUS OF THE OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF MUFTI**

Office of the Chief Mufti, which is the legitimate and legal representative of the 1 million strong Muslim community in Bulgaria, has been beset by a legal struggle in the last 20 years. The Law On Denominations enacted in 2002 stipulates that decisions of the conferences by which Chief Mufti and members of the Supreme Holy Council are elected by the delegates representing the Muslim community, be registered at the Sofia City Court. This requirement paved the way for the legal and political manipulation of the official authorities. For, in total disregard of the will of the Muslim community, court rulings imposed the annulment of the Office of the Chief Mufti by the judiciary and registration of another religious administration which purports to represent the Muslim community. Thus, free will of the Muslim community in Bulgaria to elect their legitimate representatives was compromised by political considerations under the pretext of "legal action". This amounted to denial of basic human rights the norms and principles of which have been cherished and upheld by various international institutions, chief among them is the OSCE.

Besides, these acts constitute a manifest violation of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) jurisprudence in an EU member country (judgment delivered by the ECHR on 26 October 2000, on the case of "Hasan and Chaush versus Bulgaria", application no : 30985/96 and judgment delivered by the ECHR on 16 December 2004, final on 16 March 2005, on the case of "Supreme Holy Council of the Muslim Community versus Bulgaria", Application no: 39023/97 whereby ECHR has found Bulgaria in violation of Article 9 governing the freedom of religion of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms due to the fact that it has interfered with the internal organization of the Muslim religious community) and contravene the commitments of Bulgaria which has undertaken to protect human rights and minority rights as well as religious freedom.

The situation described above renders the revocation of the discriminatory provisions of the Law On Religious Denominations a necessity.

The latest judicial dispositions arising from the discriminatory clauses of the Law On Religious Denominations have put the Muslim community under dire strait. Bulgarian Higher Court of Administration declared in its ruling of 12 May 2010 null and void the Conference of the Bulgarian Muslims held on 19 April 2008 by which Mustafa Alish Hadzi was elected as Chief Mufti. Thus the status of the Office of the Chief Mufti was once again descended into imbroglio. Then Sofia City Court nullified on 31 May 2010 the decisions of the National Conference held on 31 October 2009 and declared Nedim Genchev, in his capacity as the Chairman of the so called Supreme Muslim Council, as the leader of the Muslim Community. Judicial decisions taken in total disregard of the will of the Muslim community and in contravention to the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) are being utilized as a cover to introduce the mufti of the “Revival Process” as the religious leader of the Muslims under the guise of the “independent judiciary” rhetoric. In fact, the legal process initiated by the state imposed leader, former Chief Mufti of the Revival Process, Nedim Genchev, is tantamount to another form of pressure exercised on the Office of the Chief Mufti. For, Genchev has been the appointed Chief Mufti of the communist regime of Bulgaria from 1988 to 1992. As the incumbent Chief Mufti he collaborated with the communist regime which imposed the assimilation policy against the Muslim minority between 1984-1989. Instead of resisting the forcible name changing campaign carried out against the Muslims during the “Renewal Process”, he has given his consent to the atrocities committed by the communist regime. Therefore, Genchev has been associated with the repressive policies of the communist regime against the Muslim minority in Bulgaria. Having regard to the above, he does not have the moral authority to stand for the Office of the Chief Mufti and he has no legitimacy whatsoever among the Muslim minority in Bulgaria. In sum, having been a functionary of the communist regime in the past, Genchev at present assumed a mission to prevent the will of the Muslim community from being manifested. In an attempt to divide the Muslim community, he challenged the decisions of the conferences held by the Office of the Chief Mufti in 2005, 2008 and 2009.

Although the Office of the Chief Mufti has appealed against the ruling of the Sofia City Court regarding its refusal to register the 2009 conference, Nedim Genchev embarked on a vicious thrust to seize the Office of the Chief Mufti’s Office. He attempted to replace the local Muslim Board of Trustees and regional muftis with his own supporters. (To that end, he has forwarded to the respective municipalities, entrusted with registering those officials, petitions wherein he utilized forged signatures of the members of the so called Higher Muslim Denomination Council). Upon the requests of the municipalities, Directorate General For Religious Affairs, which reports directly to the Prime Minister, gave instructions to the municipalities that they should proceed with the request for cancelling the regional muftis and Muslim Board of Trustees and registering new ones. Moreover, Genchev’s henchmen went as far as to use physical force against the imam of the Djumaya Mosque in Plovdiv to extort the keys of the Mosque as well as offices of the Regional Mufti and local Muslim Board located in the annex therein on 6 August 2010. The police, the judiciary and local administrators have turned a blind eye during the seizure of the Djumaya Mosque by the supporters of Nedim Genchev. Currently supporters of Genchev have exclusive access to the Mosque and the premises. This blatant act of usurpation contradicts with the rhetoric of those who claim to be the

genuine representative of the Muslim confession in Bulgaria and lay bare their lack of legitimacy among the Muslims. Supporters of Genchev also attempted to break in offices of the regional muftis in Razgrad and Dobrich.

Despite being afflicted with legal hurdles and political pressures, Office of the Chief Mufti has the unequivocal legitimacy emanating from the strong will of the Muslims of Bulgaria. Muslims in Bulgaria chose their lawful representatives at the conference held on 31 October 2009. More than 1000 delegates who attended the conference indicated their collective choice with one voice. Whereas, Genchev, who purports to be the leader of the Muslim community could not dare to participate in any conference organized by the Muslims in Bulgaria. At a time when Bulgaria is trying to shed all traces of the past, which are associated with the communist period, it is anachronistic that the ominous figure Nedim Genchev is insistently imposed as the leader of the Muslim community irrespective of categorical disapproval and disavowal of the latter.

We believe that convocation of a transparent conference within the shortest time period to be held under the supervision of the observers from the respective international organizations by which Muslims in Bulgaria will exercise their free will to elect their religious leaders constitute the most democratic and reasonable course to solve the problem.

Having regard to the above, we call upon the member states of the OSCE to take note of the legitimate concerns of the Muslim community voiced by the Office of the Chief Mufti and that to act on their commitments to ensure that long cherished democratic values and human rights norms enshrined in the founding documents of OSCE are fully observed in Bulgaria.

GROWING ACTS OF HATE CRIMES AGAINST THE MUSLIMS

Notwithstanding the progress made since the advent of democracy in Bulgaria 1990, discrimination, ethnic hatred and prejudice against the Turkish-Muslim minority persists in the country. Ethnically and religiously motivated offensive acts against the Turkish-Muslim minority and its institutions continue unabatedly. Unfettered dissemination of negative stereotypes about the Muslim community is reflected on the increasing trend of desecration and vandalization of mosques. The cases of encroachment on mosques in the form of desecration and vandalization of mosques over 20 years exceed 100. Acts of torching mosques, smashing windows, inscribing offensive and vulgar words and drawing swastikas on the walls and injuring worshippers have been taking place not as an exception, but as a norm of conduct with impunity. The fact that none of the perpetrators and culprits was brought to justice renders the situation more alarming for the Muslim community. In many cases Muslim community was unable to receive consideration and professional commitment from the authorities of the Ministry of Interior whose investigations proved inconclusive since all the files are closed file by invoking the cliché expression "offender unknown and unrevealed". Instead of pursuing the culprits, Bulgarian authorities dilute the severity of the the events describing them as "not an organized expression of xenophobic sentiment or religious intolerance, rather an act of

hooliganism committed by young people”. This further provokes distrust and apathy in the Muslim community. The list of the hate motivated crimes committed against the Muslim minority in Bulgaria in the recent past is enclosed for your perusal. I would appreciate it very much if hate motivated crimes perpetrated against the Muslims in Bulgaria are duly reflected in the OSCE documents.

In addition to desecration of mosques, Muslim community of Bulgaria is subjected to the discriminatory acts of the extreme segments of the Bulgarian public and indifference of the state officials. Discriminatory and prejudicial behavioral patterns prevail against the Muslim community in the Bulgarian public opinion. Political parties and formations in Bulgaria explicitly display hostility against the Turkish and the Muslim community in the country. The letter and spirit of these statements intend to usurp fundamental freedoms accorded to the Muslim community during the transition period after 1990. Racist/xenophobic ATAKA party continues to openly incite hatred against Turks-Muslims in Bulgaria by a persistent defamation campaign through its newspaper and television channel which it owned until recently. SKAT TV, owned by a former ATAKA member still continues to use inflammatory rhetoric against Turks-Muslims. Unfortunately, Council For Electronic Media, entrusted with the task of controlling the content of TV broadcasts and internet coverage, is ineffective in combating with this explicit form of racism committed through media and internet. Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner For Human Rights of the Council of Europe, has cited in his report, released on 9 February 2010, based on his observations made during his visit to Bulgaria in November 2009, the apathy of the Council For Electronic Media in addressing the problems arising from circulation of racist rhetoric through media and internet. Having noted with concern a tendency of Islamophobia in Bulgaria, Mr. Hammarberg also recommended in his report that serious acts of intolerance should be publicly condemned and promptly investigated to ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted.

European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has diagnosed the following in its previous reports: “Provisions of the Bulgarian Penal Code regarding crimes with racist motivation have been implemented rarely. In accordance with the Penal Code racist crimes should be punished in due manner. Measures should be taken against those political personalities whose remarks incite racism and xenophobia. Media members who stoke racist hatred should be punished. In order to combat racist discrimination Bulgaria should ratify immediately the Protocol no:12 to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms which was devised as a mechanism for protection from racial discrimination. A phrase should be inserted into the Penal Code to the effect that in case a crime is committed with a racial motivation it will be considered as an aggravating factor.

Having regard to the above, Bulgaria is expected to combat with racist and religious intolerance with all its manifestations. Hence, it should streamline its legislation so that attempts and actions of this nature will not be treated as “hooligan activities”, but will be considered as acts “threatening ethnic and religious peace” in the country and be punished strictly and uncompromisingly, regardless of ethnic and religious affiliation of the perpetrator and to whom they are directed.

LIST OF HATE CRIMES COMMITTED AGAINST THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

- In 1990-1991 a hand made incendiary bomb was thrown into the mosque in Yakoruda.
- In 1991 “Charshi Camiya” in Haskovo was set on fire.
- In 1992 the mosque in Tsar Kaloyan was set on fire.
- In 1993 a stone was thrown into the mosque in Aydos in the holy month of Ramadan.
- In 1993 the mosque in Jeglartzi village of Razgrad province was set on fire.
- In 1996 an explosive bomb was thrown into the mosque in Kazanlık causing extensive damage.
- In 1997 a group of citizens threw a home made bomb in the mosque in Hisarya causing serious damage.
- In 1999 windows of the mosque in Smolyan were broken.
- In 2000 a combastible cocktail was thrown into the mosque in Kazanlık causing extensive damage.
- In 2001 the door of the mosque in Krumovgrad was broken and some objects in the mosque were stolen.
- In 2002 the entrance door of the mosque in Kazanlık was set on fire.
- In 2002 the wall of the “Tombul Djamiya” in Shumen was covered with expressions and inscriptions offending Muslims.
- In 2003 the windows of the mosque in Kazanlık were broken.
- In 2004 the windows of the mosque in Kazanlık were broken.
- In 2004 the windows of “Kalak Djamiya” in Shumen were broken and its walls were covered with inscriptions.
- In 2004 the door of the mosque in Krumovgrad was broken and the windows of the mosque were broken.
- In 2005 19 windows of the mosque in Kazanlık were broken.
- In 2005 during the parliamentary elections the mosque in Aydos suffered damage. The walls were spilled with black and red paints, unpleasant inscriptions were written on the walls, windows were broken.
- In 2005 the doors and windows of the mosque in Targovishte were broken, the walls were covered with insulting descriptions.
- In June 2006 in 3 successive weeks representatives of the extreme right political party ATAKA gathered in front of the “Banya Bashi Djamiya” in Sofia and played tape recording through loudspeaker so that it would suppress the sound of ezan (call for prayer) during prayer. They also called on bystanders to affix their signatures in a subscription list with a view to forbidding ezan from the mosque.
- 19 July 2006 a window of the Banyabashi Mosque was broken.
- On 19 July 2006 the door and walls of the mosque in Aytos were painted with red color.
- In 2006, the walls of the mosque in Yambol were inscribed with offensive signs and the windows were broken.
- On 3 December 2006 offending grafitti were inscribed on the walls of the Higher Islamic Institute in Sofia.
- On 23 July 2006 offensive phrases were inscribed on the walls of the mosque in Varna.
- On 26 July 2006 the mosque in the town of Kazanlık was torched once again. Panelworks, woodworks and carpets were burned down.
- On 19 July 2006 a window of the Central Sofia Mosque Banyabashi was broken.

- On 1 January 2007 the sound system of Tekke Mosque in Dobrich and the equipment of the Office of the District Mufti were stolen.
- In 2007, the windows of the District Mufti's Office in Gotse Delchev were broken.
- On 27 January 2007 Hanife Musa, a student at the Higher Islamic Institute was subjected to verbal attack in Sofia. The perpetrator used the expressions such as "a dirty Turkish girl", "we will kill all of you here", "I am Petko Voyvoda (Bulgarian rebel leader fought against the Ottoman rule), "take off your headscarf", "why did you put on it". He also uttered threats about the Higher Islamic Institute. The perpetrator took away the headscarf of the girl at issue with the explicit aim of humiliating her
- On 3 March 2007 offensive signs were inscribed on the walls of the mosque in Varna.
- On 11 May 2007 the mosque in Silistra was desecrated by hanging pig heads on its walls
- In June 2007 the windows of the mosque in Aytos were broken.
- On 24 October 2007 a window of the Higher Islamic Institute was smashed by a stone thrown from outside.
- On 24 December 2007 offensive signs were drawn on the walls of the mosque in Varna.
- On 31 December 2007 the windows of the mosque in Varna were broken.
- In 2007, offensive signs were inscribed on the walls of the mosque in the town of Pazardzhik.
- On 3 March 2008 the windows of the mosque in Silistra were broken.
- In April 2008 the windows of the Higher Islamic Institute in Sofia were smashed.
- On 24 May 2008 offensive signs were inscribed on the walls of the mosque in Varna.
- In the beginning of 2008 the walls of the mosque in Karnobat were painted and the windows were smashed.
- In July 2008 the doors and the window-glasses of the mosque in Blagoevgrad were broken.
- Every month the windows are broken and the walls of the mosque in the city of Pleven are inscribed.
- On the night of 15-16 February 2008 the main entrance of the Chief Mufti's Office was inscribed with the threatening remarks "Turks die".
- In August 2008 insulting remarks were inscribed on the walls of the Spiritual High School and of the mosque in Ruse.
- On 8 September 2008 a cross was drawn on the walls of the mosque in Lovech.
- On 11 September 2008 a Muslim worshipper, who was walking for the Morning Prayer to the "Cumaja (Muradiye) Mosque in Plovdiv, was attacked and cruelly beaten. Two days later, a group of children and women who were having iftar dinner, were attacked and pelted with stones, as a result a four-year child received injuries in the head. The same morning swastika was painted on the walls of the Cumaja Mosque.
- On 15 October 2008 the windows of the mosque in Krichim were smashed.
- On 19 October 2008 offensive signs were inscribed at the front door of the mosque in Pleven.
- On 28 October 2008 Fikriye Tevfik and Hanife Chauseva, students of the Higher Islamic Institute were subjected to verbal attack. Accordingly, while they were waiting for bus no :78, a 30 year old man threatened to take off their headscarf. Later the same person spotted wearing a uniform of a security guard.
- On 7 January 2009 the windows of the recently restored and renovated Central Dzhumaya Mosque in the city of Plovdiv were smashed.

- 12 July 2009 windows of the mosque in Haskovo were smashed.
- In October 2009 the mayor of Draganovo Village of Gorna Oryahovitza Municipality prevented the imam a few times from reading ezan (call for prayer) through loud speakers.
- The only mosque in Blagoevgrad was set on fire on 5 October 2009. The ceiling of the mosque was destroyed.
- On October 6 2009, the mosque in Nicopol was subjected to an arson attack which left the mosque completely destroyed.
- The mosque in Karlovo was burned down completely on 10 April 2010. ?
- Racist and derogatory signs and words with a view to insulting Muslims were inscribed on the walls of the Tombul Mosque in Shumen in June 2010. Similar words are inscribed on the walls of the Clock Tower in Shumen.

FAILURE TO RETURN THE WAKF (MUSLIM FOUNDATION) PROPERTY CONFISCATED DURING THE COMMUNIST REGIME

Systemic hindrance applies to the restoration of expropriated property as well. Dozens of buildings and lots owned by the members of the Turkish minority or in possession of the foundations established by the Muslim community, were confiscated unlawfully during the communist era. In the aftermath of the regime change, Muslim community began to challenge the legality of the aforementioned actions and resorted to legal means to restore the ownership of these confiscated properties. However, the litigations lodged by the Office of the Chief Mufti gave modest results at best. The fact that the relevant law stipulates advance payment of % 4 of the value of the land or the building for the return of which a petition will be lodged at the court constitutes an unmistakable deterrent factor for remuneration demands. Lawyers involved in these lawsuits are often discouraged and intimidated at times by unknown circles. Lengthy trials abound deterring prospective applications. There are about 290 non-reinstated wakf properties of the Muslim community. Non reinstated farmlands amount to 17.000 decares. Below is the short list of wakf properties which were not returned to its rightful owners:

-Turkish Primary School (TPS) “Medrese” in Kardzhali. It was built on a land owned by the Muslim community of Kardzhali from 1921 to 1933 to provide religious education for the Muslims. The school was built entirely by means of the Muslim community and with the support of the Office of the Chief Mufti. Records which date back 1947 show “Medrese” among the assets of Kardzhali Muslim denomination. “Medrese” was declared as state property in 1950 in accordance with article 1 and 2 of the Law on State Property of 1949. In 1977, National Institute for Monuments of Culture, the building was declared a cultural monument. On that basis, the second Act of state property was issued in 1994.

Muslim community lodged restitution claims for the “Medrese” since 1992. However, with the ruling of the Supreme Administrative Court in 1993 the request was rejected. Office of the Chief Mufti sent a letter to the Regional Governor of Kardzhali in 2001 requesting the restoration of the ownership of “Medrese”. Regional Governor also responded in negative citing numerous groundless allegations for his decision. The Office

Of the Chief Mufti urges justice be meted out and the “Medrese” be returned as wakf property to the Muslim community which has expressed its willingness for the use of the building as a museum on the basis of a contract to be signed with the due state institution.

-Tash Kopru Mosque in Plovdiv. The title of deed dated 1939 indicates the ownership of the building by the Muslim community. Its yard was sold the same year. Heirs of the yard acquired the ownership of the mosque proper in 1992. Currently the mosque is used as a restaurant.

The Bedesten in Yambol,

-Ibrahim Pasha Mosque in Razgrad, state property since 1996.

-Fetih Mehmed Mosque in Kiustendil, state property since 1996.

-Bayrakli Mosque in Samakov, declared a cultural monument in 1928. It functions as a museum since 1964 museum. No act of state property, but the mosque is not used by the denomination.

-Eski Mosque in Stara Zagora, declared a cultural monument in 1954. No act of state property, but it is not used by the denomination. The Ministry of Culture embarked on a project in a bid to transform the mosque into museum of religions in total disregard of the will of the Muslim community.

-Kurshunlu Mosque, Karlovo, museum since 1964. No act of state property, but it is not used by the denomination.

-Eski Mosque in Vratsa, cultural monument since 1972. No act of state property enacted, however it is not used by the denomination.

-Buyuk Mosque in Sofia, currently used as National Archeological Museum.

-Kara Mosque (Black Mosque), which is currently used as an Orthodox Church.

-Mosque in Dupnitsa

-Kurshunlu Mosque, Silistra

-Karadzha Pasha Mosque in Gotse Delchev

-The Mosque in İhtiman

-Ahmet Bey Mosque in Kiustendil

-Historical Turkish Bath in Plovdiv

-Bedesten (vaulted bazaar) in Shumen

ANTI-MUSLIM PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Unfettered dissemination of negative stereotypes about the Muslim community has repercussions in the Bulgarian society. A case in point for this trend is the recent uproar

of negative reactions in the Bulgarian media about the proposed facility, consisting of Higher Islamic Institute, dormitories, recreation center and a small mosque for the theology students therein, to be built in Sofia by the Office of the Chief Mufti. The nationalist media has already engaged in a brutal campaign of misinformation against the construction of this facility by presenting it as merely a mosque. (Currently there exists only 1 mosque open to worshipping in Sofia and it is not enough to accommodate the 30.000 strong Muslim population residing in Sofia is another matter of discussion) The Project of the complex submitted by the Office of the Chief Mufti to the Municipality of Sofia in November 2008 was returned with the request that it be devised so as not to include a mosque. Once the Office of the Chief Mufti handed over another project which did not include the mosque, Office of the Chief Prosecutor launched an investigation to determine the financial source with which the lot was purchased in the first place. Whereas no tangible result was achieved at the end of the investigation, it was decided that the lot was not fit to build an Islamic Center thereupon.

In the same vein, Bourgas Municipality revoked in March 2009 the permission it has given for the construction of a mosque in the city citing incomprehensible technical arguments for its decision. Bourgas Municipality has also retaken the lot it has granted to the Muslim dwellers of the city with a view to constructing a mosque on the grounds that it was necessary to stem the surging nationalist wave in the city.

While the Bulgarian authorities create artificial impediments to deter the Muslim community to claim expropriated wakf property, they embarked upon changing the status of wakf properties. "Hamzabey Mosque" in Stara Zagora is a case in point. Minister of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Vecdi Raşidov and Deputy Regional Development and Public Works Minister, Ms. Lilyana Pavlova, in her capacity as head of the "EU Operational Programme Regional Development" Managing Authority", signed a contract on 12 November 2009. The contract stipulates that a total of 2.368.381 Leva be granted from the "Operational Programme Regional Development" for the restoration and transformation of "Hamzabey Mosque" into a "museum of religions".

In doing so, Bulgarian authorities simply disregarded the historical background of the case. For, Hamzabey Mosque was built in 1409 and used as a mosque since then. It is the oldest Muslim shrine in Bulgaria. It was denominated as a "cultural monument of national and world significance" in 1954. It is one of the numerous mosques systematically appropriated by the Bulgarian authorities from the Muslim community in the country and at present is the only mosque intact in Stara Zagora. However, the Bulgarian state insistently refused the petitions filed by the local Muslim community to open the mosque for prayer.

As the authoritative representative of the Muslim community in Bulgaria, Office of the Chief Mufti vehemently opposed to the plan which will deprive the local Muslim community of only mosque and will distort its character by converting it into a museum without the consent of the Muslim community. Involvement of the EU in this project does not correspond to its objectives and priorities, the most leading of which is to keep alive diverse cultures, beliefs and traditions. It is evident that this contract has been a

result of an ill informed and ill advised process which will ultimately lead to the usurpation of the mosque from its rightful owners, i.e., 5.000, strong Muslim community living therein. Any unilateral action to change the status of the mosque would be a flagrant violation of a fundamental human right to exercise one's religious beliefs, which is enshrined in article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Office of the Chief Mufti has called on Bulgarian authorities to abort this unjustified and illegitimate initiative which is a flagrant violation of basic human rights. However, the appeal proved inconclusive.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BULGARIAN AUTHORITIES:

- 1. To create conditions for convocation of a transparent congress (elections) within the shortest time period to be held under the supervision of the observers from the respective international organisations by which Muslims in Bulgaria will exercise their free will to elect their religious leaders constitute the most democratic and reasonable course to solve the problems;**
- 2. Muslim Denomination to has the legal right to register its congresses (elections) in the Religious Affairs Directorate to the Council of Ministries as it was before 2002. As well as to be removed the discriminatory clauses from the Law on Religious Denominations according which the Muslim religion is to be recognized as a traditional religion in the country.**
- 3. The Criminal Code legislation to be streamlined so that attempts and actions of this nature against religious and ethnic objects will not be treated as "hooligan activities", but will be considered as acts "threatening ethnic and religious peace" in the country and be punished strictly and uncompromisingly, regardless of ethnic and religious affiliation of the perpetrator and to whom they are directed;**
- 4. To undertake measures, the Council for Electronic Media and the Law of Media to be effective in controlling and combating with the explicit form of racism and discrimination committed through media and internet.**
- 5. To be introduced amendments into the relevant law about the foundation properties of the Religious Denominations, which facilitate the restitution of the properties.**
- 6. Bulgarian authorities to submit periodically the annual hate crime list to ODIHR.**
- 7. To be suggested acceptable solutions regarding the issues and to be observed the fundamental human rights.**

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ODIHR/OSCE:

- 1. ODIHR's Panel of Advisers on Freedom of Religion or Belief to observe whether Bulgarian authorities are implementing the Religious rights of Muslims in the country, as well to recommend and advise Bulgarian government on the issue of Religious freedom and Fundamental rights;**
- 2. In March this year, by demand of Office of Chief Mufti in Bulgaria, experts from ODIHR made an assessment visit to Bulgaria. In a meeting during their visit, we stated our request to participate in the hate crime training courses for NGO's in Bulgaria, conducted by ODIHR experts. We expect the training courses to start very soon, in order to attend the representatives of the other denominations as Christians, Jews, and different NGOs' representatives like Roma organizations, organizations for disabled people, gender organizations and etc.**
- 3. Bulgaria ratified the International Convention for abolition of all kind of discriminations. Passed a special law for Protection from discrimination. In actual fact, discriminatory actions against religious and ethnical minorities happen very often. ODIHR should suggest specific measures of surmounting of the intolerance, xenophobia and hate crimes.**
- 4. ODIHR to observe closely the process of Freedom of Religion of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries.**

Thank you for your attention.