

**SPEECH OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN BULGARIA  
(Hayri Emin) in Review Conference 2010, Warsaw, 30 September - 08 October 2010  
October 1, 2010  
Working Session 2**

**Honorable Delegates,  
Distinguished Guests,**

I would like to bring to your attention the problems encountered by the Muslim community in Bulgaria. Muslims in Bulgaria are subjected to discriminatory practices of the administrative and judicial authorities which amount to denial of basic human rights.

For the sake of brevity, I will dwell upon the most urgent issue facing the Muslims in Bulgaria. The statement which I have submitted to the Secretariat contains detailed information on the problems of the Muslim community in Bulgaria.

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Violation of the basic human rights to which Muslims in Bulgaria are exposed can be summarized as follows:

**The Infringements on the Religious Freedom of the Muslim Community, the main problem recently, in short, there is uncertainty on the status of the Office of the Chief Mufti.** The loopholes in relation with the method of registration under the current Law on Denominations have been leading to long-standing juridical problems and disputes with the former chief mufti Nedim Gendzhev from the totalitarian communist rule before 1989. The free will of Muslim community to elect their legitimate representatives was compromised by political considerations under the pretext of "legal actions". The situation renders the revocation of the discriminatory provisions of the Law on Religious Denominations.

**Since 1999 after the Review Conference of OSCE in Istanbul the number of hate crimes is more than 50. Most of them** are desecration and vandalization of mosques, cemeteries and injuring worshippers. Only this year the number is at least 3. The Bulgarian authorities have not reported such a list to ODIHR. Its in contravention of the obligations

**Concerning the failure to return the wakf (muslim foundation) property confiscated during the communist regime, there is no any progress.** Aftermath of the regime change the Muslim community began to challenge the legality of the actions and restored to legal means to restore the ownership of these confiscated properties. But the litigations lodged by the Office of the Chief Mufti gave modest results.

As a conclusion, with the above stated situation, the Muslim community doesn't intend to revile the Bulgarian authorities and government, on the contrary, we express the willingness for dialogue and readiness to find solutions together.

I would like to express the great satisfaction of Muslim Denomination with the visit of the ODIHR experts to Bulgaria in March this year. The fact that ODIHR is very much concerned with the problems and hate crime in Bulgaria and gather together the representative of the different denominations and NGOs', is praiseworthy. Thank you again for this professional work.

I have a list of recommendations. Let me deliver only few of them.

**My recommendations to the Bulgarian authorities are:**

- 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.**

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**My recommendations to the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights are:**

- 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. During the assessment visit of ODIHR's experts to Bulgaria, 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.**

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## **ADDENDUM**

### **HATE CRIME LIST:**

1. -In 1999 windows of the mosque in Smolyan were broken.
2. -In 2000 a combastible cocktail was thrown into the mosque in Kazanlık causing extensive damage.
3. -In 2001 the door of the mosque in Krumovgrad was broken and some objects in the mosque were stolen.
4. -In 2002 the entrance door of the mosque in Kazanlık was set on fire.

5. -In 2002 the wall of the “Tombul Djamiya” in Shumen was covered with expressions and inscriptions offending Muslims.
6. -In 2003 the windows of the mosque in Kazanlık were broken.
7. -In 2004 the windows of the mosque in Kazanlık were broken.
8. -In 2004 the windows of “Kalak Djamiya” in Shumen were broken and its walls were covered with inscriptions.
9. -In 2004 the door of the mosque in Krumovgrad was broken and the windows of the mosque were broken.
10. -In 2005 19 windows of the mosque in Kazanlık were broken.
11. -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.
12. -In 2005 the doors and windows of the mosque in Targovishte were broken, the walls were covered with insulting descriptions.
13. -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.
14. -19 July 2006 a window of the Banyabashi Mosque was broken.
15. -On 19 July 2006 the door and walls of the mosque in Aytos were painted with red color.
16. -In 2006, the walls of the mosque in Yambol were inscribed with offensive signs and the windows were broken.
17. -On 3 December 2006 offending grafitti were inscribed on the walls of the Higher Islamic Institute in Sofia.
18. -On 23 July 2006 offensive phrases were inscribed on the walls of the mosque in Varna.
19. -On 26 July 2006 the mosque in the town of Kazanlık was torched once again. Panelworks, woodworks and carpets were burned down.
20. -On 19 July 2006 a window of the Central Sofia Mosque Banyabashi was broken.
21. -On 1 January 2007 the sound system of Tekke Mosque in Dobrich and the equipment of the Office of the District Mufti were stolen.
22. -In 2007, the windows of the District Mufti’s Office in Gotse Delchev were broken.
23. -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
24. -On 3 March 2007 offensive signs were inscribed on the walls of the mosque in Varna.
25. -On 11 May 2007 the mosque in Silistra was desecrated by hanging pig heads on its walls
26. -In June 2007 the windows of the mosque in Aytos were broken.
27. -On 24 October 2007 a window of the Higher Islamic Institute was smashed by a stone thrown from outside.
28. -On 24 December 2007 offensive signs were drawn on the walls of the mosque in Varna.
29. -On 31 December 2007 the windows of the mosque in Varna were broken.

30. -In 2007, offensive signs were inscribed on the walls of the mosque in the town of Pazardzhik.
31. -On 3 March 2008 the windows of the mosque in Silistra were broken.
32. -In April 2008 the windows of the Higher Islamic Institute in Sofia were smashed.
33. -On 24 May 2008 offensive signs were inscribed on the walls of the mosque in Varna.
34. -In the beginning of 2008 the walls of the mosque in Karnobat were painted and the windows were smashed.
35. -In July 2008 the doors and the window-glasses of the mosque in Blagoevgrad were broken.
36. -Every month the windows are broken and the walls of the mosque in the city of Pleven are inscribed.
37. -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".
38. -In August 2008 insulting remarks were inscribed on the walls of the Spiritual High School and of the mosque in Ruse.
39. -On 8 September 2008 a cross was drawn on the walls of the mosque in Lovech.
40. -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.
41. -On 15 October 2008 the windows of the mosque in Krichim were smashed.
42. -On 19 October 2008 offensive signs were inscribed at the front door of the mosque in Pleven.
43. -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.
44. -On 7 January 2009 the windows of the recently restored and renovated Central Dzhumaya Mosque in the city of Plovdiv were smashed.
45. -12 July 2009 windows of the mosque in Haskovo were smashed.
46. -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.
47. -The only mosque in Blagoevgrad was set on fire on 5 October 2009. The ceiling of the mosque was destroyed.
48. -On October 6 2009, the mosque in Nicopol was subjected to an arson attack which left the mosque completely destroyed.
49. -The mosque in Karlovo was burned down completely on 10 April 2010. ?
50. -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.
51. Desecration of the cemeteries in Levski city, Pleven region – September 2010.