

2008 OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
Working Session 3: Freedom of Media and Freedom of Expression

Statement of the United Macedonian Organisation "Ilinden" PIRIN

Thank you Mr Moderator.

My name is Stoyan Georgiev and I am representing the United Macedonian Organisation "Ilinden" PIRIN. Today I wish to present a statement on the lack of freedom of expression in Bulgaria for the Macedonian minority.

As many of you here you today might be aware, the Bulgarian state does not recognise the existence of a Macedonian minority within its borders. Government and opposition parties frequently slander Macedonian minority activists calling them names such as "traitors", "separatists" and "anti-Bulgarian elements".

Unfortunately, this propaganda is also reflected in the media. Negative articles on OMO Ilinden PIRIN frequently appear in the media, including attacks against members of the executive of the party.

Bulgarian media seem to follow a simple formula of "misinforming or not informing at all" in relation to the Macedonian minority. The source of this misinformation campaign is the Bulgarian state. State security agents frequently mastermind such campaigns the media. Therefore in relation to the issue of the Macedonian minority, the independence of the media must be questioned.

Mr Moderator, OMO Ilinden PIRIN has a few suggestions in relation to freedom of expression in Bulgaria:

Firstly, we strongly encourage the Bulgarian state to end the campaign of misinformation against the Macedonian minority.

Secondly, without delay, we ask that the Bulgarian government facilitate a training and awareness raising campaign for public and private media in

Bulgaria, in order to educate journalists on issues relating to the Macedonian minority.

And finally, we encourage Bulgaria to implement its OSCE commitments in relation to freedom of expression, including the High Commissioner's Guidelines on the use of Minority Languages in the Broadcast Media.

I thank you for your attention.