

# TREATY BODY MONITOR

International Service for Human Rights



Human Rights Monitor Series

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE 92<sup>ND</sup> SESSION THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, 2<sup>ND</sup> PERIODIC REPORT 26 MARCH 2008

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Information submitted to the Committee

### State party report

The second periodic report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ('Macedonia') was submitted to the Human Rights Committee (the Committee) on 12 February 2007, six years late.<sup>1</sup> Macedonia succeeded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on 18 January 1994, and submitted its initial periodic report in 1998.<sup>2</sup>

Macedonia's report addresses legislative measures designed to strengthen the implementation of the principles and standards embodied in the Covenant. The report, building on the State party's initial report, mainly illustrates Macedonia's commitment to the Covenant through an article by article analysis of legal reforms. The report references its obligations and commitments under a variety of international and regional

<sup>1</sup> The report (CCPR/C/MKD/2) is available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/hrcs92.htm>

<sup>2</sup> CCPR/C/74/Add.4 considered by the Committee on 22 and 23 July 1998.

instruments,<sup>3</sup> and devotes significant space to the following articles: Equality between Men and Women (article three), Deprivation of Liberty (articles nine-11), and Rights of the Child (article 24). It underscores judicial process as the key to the realization of human rights, highlighting short comings and the need for additional work in this area.

In presenting the report, the head of delegation Mr. Mihajalo Manevski, Macedonian Minister of Justice, highlighted the State's focus on implementation of laws. He highlighted progress made on such fronts as the prevention of family violence and the introduction of information technology into the justice system for more efficient electronic case management. Mr. Manevski also touched on issues that would remain themes throughout the session, notably corruption, for which the State party exercises a zero tolerance policy; the protection of non-majority populations; and detention centres and incidents of torture. On the latter issue, the Minister noted that the government had undertaken improvements to penal institutions, that it intended to build a training and education centre for new staff members, and that it had updated training programmes for staff and prisoners. The Minister also highlighted an Ombudsman Office programme to educate prisoners about their rights.

### **List of issues<sup>4</sup>**

The list of issues was distributed by the Committee on 14 August 2007. It inquired after many of the elements in the State party's second periodic report, requesting further information on all fronts. Of particular concern was the discrimination against women despite appropriate legal standards, conditions in detention with particular attention to the Mr. Khaled al-Masri case,<sup>5</sup> and the condition of minorities, primarily the Roma. On the latter issue, the Committee asked why so few discrimination cases were prosecuted under provisions of the Criminal Code.<sup>6</sup>

Macedonia's written responses to the list of issues was submitted late and was not translated in time for the interactive dialogue. The Chairman of the Committee commented on this development's negative impact on the State party's interaction with the delegation.

### **NGO parallel reports<sup>7</sup>**

A total of seven parallel reports were submitted to the Committee. The Committee's list of issues and Committee members questions to the delegation reflected many of the concerns raised by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their parallel reports.

1. Civil Society Research Center: highlighted the lack of effective legal remedy in an accelerated asylum procedure;<sup>8</sup>
2. European Roma Rights Center: assessed violations of the Covenant through the lens of Roma rights and made recommendations to address those violations;
3. Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children: submitted a half-page statement expressing concern over the legality of corporal punishment in the home. The brief highlights that parental corporal punishment is not prohibited by the Law on the Protection of Children (2000)

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<sup>3</sup> Examples include: the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Protocols, and the European Convention on Nationality. Frequent references are also made to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

<sup>4</sup> CCPR/C/MKD/Q/2 is available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/hrcs92.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Mr. al-Masri was allegedly kidnapped by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Macedonia and taken to secret detention centres where he suffered ill-treatment. A thorough news article on this case is available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/28/AR2006112801810.html>

<sup>6</sup> Issue 18, CCPR/C/MKD/Q/2, *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> All are available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/hrcs92.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Submission to the Human Rights Committee with reference to the report of the Republic of Macedonia under the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Civil Society Research Centre, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/hrcs92.htm>

banning corporal maltreatment, punishment and other inhuman treatment and abuse, in part due to interpretation of the law, and also because of a lack of definition of the relevant terms.

4. Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI): criticised the State party for falling short of international standards on conscientious objection in its 2001 Law of Defence, which was amended in 2003;
5. International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP): focused on paragraph seven on the Committee's list of issues concerning missing persons abducted during the armed conflict in 2001.<sup>9</sup> The report details the government's track record in investigating the fate of the "disappeared", and provides a set of recommendations to address the issue;
6. World Organization Against Torture (OMCT)<sup>10</sup>: surveyed women's rights in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia by considering State compliance with various articles of the Covenant;
7. Global Rights, European Region of the International Gay and Lesbian Organization (ILGA-Europe), and Macedonian Association for Free Sexual Orientation (MASSO): urged Macedonia to take further steps to uphold and protect the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.

During the first meeting of the session, when NGOs were invited to address the Committee, only Global Rights took the floor to comment on the situation of LGBT rights in Macedonia.

## Themes and issues

### **Macedonia's delegation**

In addition to Minister of Justice Mr Manevski, the delegation included the Permanent Representative of the Macedonian Permanent Mission to the United Nations, and two staff at the mission, two representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; another representative of the Ministry of Justice; two representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; and a representative each of the Ministry of Science and Education, and of the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

### **Corruption**

In the context of article two of the Covenant,<sup>11</sup> issue two of the Committee's list of issues considered alleged widespread corruption in all sectors of society in Macedonia. According to the delegation, the government had made efforts and delivered results in this area, including amending relevant laws, creating the State Programme on the Prevention of Corruption and implementing its associated action plan. Minister Manevski provided a few statistics to illustrate how the courts were moving forward with cases, including the prosecutions of high-level officials. The Committee recognized the laws that had been adopted and institution created, but queried their real impact.

In its concluding observations the Committee requested that the State party "should continue its efforts to combat corruption in order that the attitude in society changes and corruption is not perceived as unavoidable."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Paragraph seven on the list of issues asks the State party to report on the progress achieved in investigating the fate of the 13 ethnic Macedonians, six ethnic Albanians and one Bulgarian citizen who "disappeared" or were abducted during the armed conflict in 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women of the Republic of Macedonia (ESE) also contributed to this report.

<sup>11</sup> Article two pertains to the constitutional and legal framework within which the Covenant is implemented by State parties.

<sup>12</sup> P.8, CCPR/C/MKD/CO/2. The concluding observations are available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/CCPR.C.MKD.CO.2.doc>

## **Women**

The issue of discrimination against women was the topic of items three and four on the Committee's list of issues. In the dialogue, the Committee focused on two issues in particular, the image of women in the media, and legislation addressing the crime of rape.

On the level of representation of women in senior positions, the Committee and the delegation agreed that the level of women in management in government and the private sector was not yet high enough. The delegation cited its June 2007 national plan of action for strategic gender equality as integral to the process of improving the participation of women in these areas.

On the question of the image of women in society and how they are portrayed by the media, the Committee commented on the causal relationship between images showing women as inferior and/or victims and the impact of those images on the conduct within a community. When asked if the government had taken any steps to educate the public on the use/mis-use of such stereotypes, the delegation responded that the Ministry of Labour had held many trainings to provide editors, journalists, and local officials with information on gender issues. The delegation also noted that article ten of its law on equal opportunity is harmonized to incorporate gender in the education sector.

The Committee also asked for more details on a rape provision in the penal code that requires the victim to prove that she was resisting rape. The victim should not have to prove active resistance, which, one Committee member noted, was a common defense that an accused perpetrator uses against the victim. In response to this line of questioning, the delegation said the government was currently addressing the legal definition of rape in the criminal code, a change which had also been called for by domestic and international NGOs. Further, the delegation welcomed input on examples of the definition of rape. Mr. Amor asked for an additional written response from the delegation on this question.

In its concluding observations, the Committee addressed work for women in government and private sectors and calls upon the State party "to promote the participation and representation of women... and implement positive measures in accordance with article 6 of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women to this end." The Committee also addressed stereotyping, and asks the government to "further undertake educational campaigns to change the perception of women in stereotypical roles in the State party's society." Concerning the rape provision, the Committee urges the State party to "amend the law to ensure that no undue burden of proof is imposed on victims of rape and no environment of impunity is created for perpetrators of such crimes."<sup>13</sup>

## **Roma and other non-majority populations**

The rights of the Roma and other non-majority populations was a thread throughout many of the Committee's questions, including those on torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (articles two, six, and seven), refugees and internally displaced persons (articles 12 and 13), the right to fair trial (article 14) in respect to court translators and interpreters, representation in civil service (article 25), equality before the law (articles 2 and 6), and general minority rights (article 27).

On the issue of police violence against Roma, the delegation vaguely replied that under law, all citizens are equal so when police officers deviate from the law, they face sanctions. The delegation described efforts to combat selective treatment, and noted an open door day for NGOs working with Roma to engage with the government, to be held the following week.

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<sup>13</sup>P.9 & 11, CCPR/C/MKD/CO/2. The concluding observations are available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/CCPR.C.MKD.CO.2.doc>

The dearth of statistics and further details on Roma and other minorities in the report was a concern of the Committee, as was the small percentage of representation of them in government ministries. In response, the delegation called the Committee's attention to an initiative called Roma Decade, a regional action plan for Roma that is currently undergoing implementation, which addresses their access to education, health, and jobs. The delegation noted that the Roma population is one with particular needs, which requires more attention by the government.

The burden of proof of citizenship for Roma also interested the Committee. The delegation said that government efforts to provide information on registration simply failed to reach the nomadic Roma population, who have no television or newspaper. It encouraged NGOs to assist the government in reaching them. Ms. Wedgewood redirected the responsibility to address the issue back to the government, and urged the State party to be creative and innovative in services to this minority community.<sup>14</sup>

Mr. O'Flaherty took up the issue of minority languages and their interrelation with the preservation of minority culture, expressing concern about the minimal native language instruction that Roma receive. He also noted the high statistics of bullying of Roma children by peers and teachers in school, and enquired about the likelihood of the government adopting of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law. Mr. O'Flaherty also suggested translation of treaty bodies reports into at least one minority language. In response, the delegation described a recently established task force of governmental and NGO officials to analyse extant instruments dealing with discrimination which will produce a report no later than September 2008. It also acknowledged conflicts based on ethnicity in universities and said it was working on overcoming the problem.

The Committee, in its concluding observations, called upon the State party to "continue to sensitize the police forces regarding the special vulnerabilities of minority groups, such as Roma." In addition it calls upon the State party to provide "adequate opportunities" for children of minorities "to receive education in their own language", and to "undertake all possible measures to prevent segregation of Roma children in schools and build an environment of mutual respect."<sup>15</sup>

### **Amnesty law**

Issue eight on the Committee's list of issues for Macedonia requests "detailed information on the scope of application and the effects of any amnesty laws covering crimes committed during the armed conflict in 2001." Macedonia simply responded that it had adopted an amnesty law and 898 people had been granted pardon.

The Committee was concerned about whether the amnesty law excluded crimes that are international in nature (crimes against humanity and war crimes),<sup>16</sup> and also expressed concern about its compatibility with the standards of the European Union (EU), where Macedonia is seeking membership. The Committee was also interested if victims participated in the process of drafting and enacting the law. In response to these inquiries, the delegation listed ongoing efforts to strengthen its justice system, including a year-long training course for judges run by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and assured the Committee that the amnesty law is limited in scope and does not comprise four cases returned to national jurisdiction from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

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<sup>14</sup> She cautioned the Government on leaning too much on NGOs and instead suggested that the government "think like an NGO" As an example, she described the mobile vans that go neighbourhood to neighbourhood doing administrative processing of homeless in New York instead of waiting for them to come to distant centres where they don't understand what awaits them.

<sup>15</sup> P.11 & 19, CCPR/C/MKD/CO/2. The concluding observations are available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/CCPR.C.MKD.CO.2.doc>

<sup>16</sup> Violations of these laws are prosecutable in international courts or under universal jurisdiction in another country. In this context, Ms. Wedgewood asked specifically after the former Minister of the Interior who is held in Croatia for the murder of foreign nationals and the four cases sent back by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

The Committee, in its concluding observations, calls upon the State party to “ensure that the Law on Amnesty is not applied to the most serious human rights violations or violations that amount to crimes against humanity or war crimes.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Refugees and internally displaced persons**

The list of issues raised two questions regarding articles 12 and 13 of the Covenant- freedom of movement and protection from expulsion.

The Committee was particularly interested in the status and return of more than 2,000 Kosovar refugees, and the conditions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Macedonia. In its response, the delegation said some of the Kosovars had not been given refugee status, but could appeal as a result of changes to the State’s asylum law. The delegation also described measures taken to address the needs of the IDPs (which are housed at collective facilities), including its offer to rebuild homes demolished during the violence in 2001. The offer was rejected by the IDPs since court procedures looking at pecuniary measures were ongoing. Ms. Wedgewood asserted that homes and money for the displaced should not be conditioned on one another. The delegation denied it was trading off the two issues, stressing that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will continue to provide the population with stipends until satisfactory conditions are met.

The Committee, in its concluding observations, calls upon the State party to “find, without further delay, durable solutions for all IDPs in consultation with the remaining displaced persons and in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UN Doc. E/CN.4/1998/53/Add. 2 of 11 February 1998).” It also calls upon the State Party “to ensure that return of Kosovar refugees is always fully voluntary and not enforced where return in safety and dignity cannot be assured.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Al-Masri case**

Issue 11 on the Committee’s list of issues for Macedonia deals with the case of Mr. Khaled al-Masri, a German national of Lebanese origin who was allegedly kidnapped by the United States’ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Macedonia, and transported to a secret detention site where he claimed ill-treatment. The Committee focused on whether the government had carried out an independent investigation into these allegations. Macedonia, in an uncharacteristically defense tone, stated that its Ministry of Interior had not been involved in any illicit activity, and has been extremely cooperative with the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, and the ad hoc committee established by the European Parliament in their investigations of this case. It had, in addition, conducted an internal investigation, and all findings were consistent.

Mr. Flaherty took issue with this “insufficient” response, and noted that some of the inquiries mentioned by the delegation did confirm Mr. Al-Masri’s story of abuse, and that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination also pointed to Macedonian responsibility in its concluding observations.<sup>19</sup> Mr. O’Flaherty pushed for further information of the process of the investigation by the Ministry of the Interior,<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> P.12, CCPR/C/MKD/CO/2. The concluding observations are available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/CCPR.C.MKD.CO.2.doc>

<sup>18</sup> P.15 & 16, CCPR/C/MKD/CO/2. The concluding observations are available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/CCPR.C.MKD.CO.2.doc>

<sup>19</sup> CERD/C/MKD/CO/7, available

[http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:8VcbHbAhj\\_AJ:www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/CERD.C.MKD.CO.7.doc+CERD,+concluding+observations,+macedonia,+masri&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us&client=firefox-a](http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:8VcbHbAhj_AJ:www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/CERD.C.MKD.CO.7.doc+CERD,+concluding+observations,+macedonia,+masri&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us&client=firefox-a)

<sup>20</sup> These questions included: In the view of Macedonia, was the investigation of Ministry of the Interior too narrow? Did it fail to take into account other aspects of state party action or actors? Was it too narrow to take into account possible complicity of other states? Did it take account of the above-mentioned evidentiary statements, from the press, or meet with Mr. al-Masri himself? Taking into account of the allegations, what will the state party do to ensure that no such story could occur in the future?

and bought up the possibility of initiating a new investigation, as well as requested an additional written explanation of Macedonia's investigation into the case, as it involves so many issues addressed in the Covenant.

The Committee, in its concluding observations, calls upon the State party "to consider undertaking a new and comprehensive investigation of the allegations made by Mr. Khaled al-Masri."<sup>21</sup>

### **Other issues**

Other issues addressed included the status of Office of the National Ombudsman (which Ms Motoc noted was not in full compliance of the Paris Principles), and police training in human rights. The delegation argued that the funding mechanism for the Office was the only mechanism not in compliance with the Principles, and highlighted efforts to improve police knowledge of human rights, including an OSCE-funded project in which experts are analysing external oversight of the police, and which aims to produce a new model for such monitoring when completed. Ms. Motoc also followed up on some NGOs' allegations of unfair local elections in 2005, who claimed, for example, that the disabled couldn't vote. The delegation assured the Committee that it had since undertaken substantial reforms.

The Committee, in its concluding observations, calls upon the State party "to ensure that the Office of the National Ombudsman is fully in accordance with the Paris Principles" and that it is "completely independent also in terms of funding." The Committee also asked for the establishment of an independent monitoring body for the police.<sup>22</sup>

### **Conclusions and next steps**

In its closing remarks, the head of the Macedonian delegation framed the government's policies as aiming to modernise and give institutional stability to the country since the 2001 conflict. Citing the European Convention on Human Rights as a guide to many of its reforms, he assured the Committee that Macedonia is working towards harmonizing legislation, not just because of its bid for EU membership, but also, more fundamentally, because of principle. As a token of his commitment, the Minister presented the chairperson of the Human Rights Committee with a copy of his book on anti-corruption.

In its concluding observations, the Committee appreciated the "constructive and open dialogue" with the delegation, echoing the sentiment expressed by Mr. O'Flaherty regarding the unusually frank and productive nature of their interaction. The section on "principal subjects of concern and recommendations" in the Committee's concluding observations revisits the themes discussed above (see bold for recommendations), widely recommending general harmonization with the Covenant. It also includes a paragraph on trafficking in women and children, which, though an issue on the Committee's list, did not enjoy much discussion. The concluding observations recommend the State party to make a series of efforts from bringing those responsible for trafficking to justice to awareness raising to help change the public's perception about the victims of trafficking.

In the previous two years, three additional treaty bodies reviewed reports and published concluding comments/observations on Macedonia: the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

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<sup>21</sup> P.14, CCPR/C/MKD/CO/2. The concluding observations are available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/CCPR.C.MKD.CO.2.doc>

<sup>22</sup> P.7 and p.11. CCPR/C/MKD/CO/2. The concluding observations are available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/CCPR.C.MKD.CO.2.doc>

(CEDAW Committee) in 2006,<sup>23</sup> the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD Committee) in 2007,<sup>24</sup> and the Committee on Cultural, Economic, and Social Rights (CESR Committee) in 2008.<sup>25</sup>

One area common to the concluding observations of all four of the treaty bodies was the status of ethnic minorities, in particular Roma and Albanian women. The CEDAW Committee and CERD Committee both highlighted the right to education in this context, with the CEDAW Committee focusing on Roma women and girls, in particular calling upon the State party to decrease dropout rates among Roma girls and to reintegrate them into the educational system. The CERD Committee encouraged the government to improve the quality of teaching in Albanian and Turkish schools, and ensure that textbooks in minority languages are available to relevant students. The CERD Committee and the CESR Committee both highlighted the need for the removal of all administrative obstacles that prevent Roma from obtaining personal documents so they can enjoy the full range of rights.

Like the Committee, the CEDAW Committee drew attention to the need to eliminate traditional gender stereotypes through education, and to sensitize members of the press on gender equality issues. It also echoed the Committee's focus on improving procedures for refugees, and underlined in particular the need to integrate a gender-sensitive approach throughout the process of granting asylum/refugee status.

The Committee's observations also concurred with those of the CEDAW and CESR Committees in their emphasis on the importance of the government effectively tackling the State party's trafficking problem. The CEDAW and CESR Committees particularly stressed that women and child victims should receive assistance and support.

The CESR Committee, like the Committee, also took the State party to task for the requirement of proof of penetration and active resistance by victims for convictions of rape.

The Committee set 1 April 2012 for the submission of Macedonia's 3<sup>rd</sup> periodic report.

*Last revised and updated: 28 May 2008.*

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<sup>23</sup> CEDAW/C/MKD/CO/3. 3 February 2006. The concluding comments are available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CEDAW.C.MKD.CO.3.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CEDAW.C.MKD.CO.3.En?Opendocument)

<sup>24</sup> CERD/C/MKD/CO/7. 13/06/2007. The concluding observations are available at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G07/428/80/PDF/G0742880.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>25</sup> E/C.12/MKD/CO/1. January 1 2008. The concluding comments are available at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G07/426/89/PDF/G0742689.pdf?OpenElement>

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The *Treaty Body Monitor* forms part of the Human Rights Monitor Series produced by ISHR. It reports on each country reviewed by the six treaty bodies (all but the Committee on the Rights of the Child) and provides an overview of every treaty body session. It is currently an online publication that can be found at <http://www.ishr.ch/hrm>.

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