



OPEN LETTER

TO:

Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission

Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council

Mrs. Teresa Blaane, Secretary General of the Council of the European Union

Mr. Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union

Dear all,

The European Union (EU) was born as a result of the defeat of Nazism and fascism. Its historic role stems from this legacy, to bring the people of Europe together on the basis of mutual respect and cooperation, and to ensure that the atrocities of the Second World War, caused precisely by these ideologies, are never again repeated.

Yet, as acknowledged in the Resolution on the rise of neo-fascist violence in Europe of October 25, 2018, adopted by the European Parliament (2018/2869(RSP)¹, neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups, as well as foundations and associations that glorify nazism and fascism in Europe, are on the rise. In this context, we hereby express our concern over such a trend, which has recently appeared in the Republic of Macedonia, and it is being enforced and promoted by a member state of the European Union, the Republic of Bulgaria.

¹ Resolution on the rise of neo-fascist violence in Europe, 2018/2869(RSP) - 25/10/2018, available at <https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1559321&t=e&l=en>



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Namely, the so-called French proposal, which was proposed during the French presidency of the Council of the EU, as a "solution" to overcome the dispute between Bulgaria and Macedonia, has determined the content of the negotiating framework based on which the Republic of Macedonia should lead its EU accessions talks. In doing so, a precedent was set, with which the Union gave control to the Republic of Bulgaria over the European integration process of the Republic of Macedonia. By establishing such a negotiations framework, the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership are being replaced and superseded by the "good neighbor" criterion, which in this case enables the Republic of Bulgaria to use the EU enlargement process as an instrument of its assimilationist policies towards the Republic of Macedonia. Such an agreement officially imports bilateral historical disputes into an EU accession negotiating framework, thereby giving Bulgaria a free hand in dictating the terms of our country's progress towards the EU, conditioning any progress on their demands, which deny our history, language and right to self-determination. In fact, Bulgaria is using its superior position as an EU member state to blackmail Macedonia into accepting its inherently fascist and assimilatory pretensions.

The forcibly imposed French proposal is not acceptable to the vast majority of Macedonian citizens, and yet the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, contrary to all democratic principles, has not only accepted it under the dictates of the EU and the Republic of Bulgaria, but now refuses to call a referendum despite two duly submitted referendum initiatives.

In parallel with these processes, two citizen associations orchestrated by the Bulgarian state were registered and began to operate in Macedonia. Both of them use symbols and hold activities that glorify Nazism and fascism and make an attempt to grossly revise history by denying the anti-fascist history of the Republic of Macedonia.

The first association of this type was registered in the Macedonian city of Bitola. It is named after the notorious Nazi collaborator during the Second World War, Ivan Mihailov. This association, "Cultural Center Ivan Mihailov" - Bitola, states in its statute and program that its goal is to rehabilitate the legacy and work of Ivan Mihailov and to promote his ideology. The ideology of this historical person, after whom this "cultural club" is named, is revealed to us by historical reports, from which it can undoubtedly be concluded that during the Second World War, Ivan Mihailov was in direct contact with Hitler and Himmler, collaborated with the Nazi regime and through his activities, encouraged and supported the occupation of Macedonia by the fascist regime of Bulgaria at the time. The opening of an association that glorifies Nazism and fascism received the highest support from the Bulgarian state, and its opening was attended by the highest delegation of the Government of Bulgaria led by the then Prime Minister, Kiril Petkov.

The second association, which was opened in October 2022 in the Macedonian city of Ohrid, is named after another Nazi collaborator and close associate of Hitler, Tsar Boris III. Historical facts state that Tsar Boris III was the autocratic monarch of the Kingdom of Bulgaria before and during the Second World War who allied Bulgaria with the Axis powers in March 1941. Even before officially siding with the Nazi regime, in January 1941, Tsar Boris III approved the anti-Semitic *Law*



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for the Protection of the Nation, which denied Bulgarian Jews citizenship and placed numerous restrictions on them. As a result of his rule and with the help of Hitler's Nazi regime, the territory of Macedonia was occupied by Bulgaria in the period from April 1941 to September 1944, and during this period countless violent acts were carried out against the local population, including the deportation of 7,144 Macedonian Jews in the Treblinka extermination camp.

We remind once again that such activities by the Republic of Bulgaria are in direct contradiction to Resolution 2022/C 345/22, whereby the European Parliament admits that it is "Is deeply concerned at the increasing normalisation of fascism, racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance in the European Union, and is troubled by reports in some Member States of collusion between political leaders, political parties and law enforcement with neo-fascists and neo-Nazis;" In the same resolution, the European Parliament urges the Member States "to safeguard their compliance with the provisions of the Council Framework Decision, to counter organisations spreading hate speech and violence in public spaces and online and to effectively ban neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups and any other foundation or association that exalts and glorifies Nazism and fascism"."

We further bring to your attention the United Nations' resolutions on combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, A/RES/69/160 of 18 December 2014², as well as A/RES/76/149 adopted by the General Assembly of the UN on 16 December 2021³, which condemn the glorification of figures and organizations which have collaborated with the Nazi and fascist movements, condemn incidents related to Nazi glorification and propaganda, including desecration and demolishing of anti-fascist symbols and monuments of victims of the Second World War. The same resolutions encourage states to take appropriate concrete measures, including legislative and educational ones, in accordance with their international human rights obligations, in order to prevent revisionism in respect to the Second World War and the denial of the crimes against humanity and war crimes committed during the War.

We would also like to point out that the Republic of Macedonia respects the rights of members of minorities in all forms and capacities, including the right to establish and maintain their own associations and political parties. A large number of associations of members of the Bulgarian minority are registered in Macedonia and function freely and without any interference from the authorities. In contrast, the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria has faced, and continues to face, various political and legal obstructions. The Bulgarian state has so far prohibited the establishment of an official association of the Macedonian minority, resulting in 16 (sixteen) decisions and

² Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly UN. General Assembly (69th sess. : 2014-2015), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/788120?ln=en>

³ Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, UN General Assembly (76th sess.:2021-2022), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3954148?ln=en>



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judgments of the European Court of Human Rights against Bulgaria, which have never been complied with.⁴ All of these and similar actions of the Bulgarian authorities directly violate Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union, where it is stipulated that the Union is based on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights including the rights of people belonging to minorities and that such values are common to member states.

Your silence as well as the statements of representatives of the institutions of the Union, who in the past period actively participate, observe and evaluate the relations between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, leave the impression that the European Union encourages this trend of promotion and glorification of Nazi-fascists ideologies and their modern derivatives.

Bearing in mind the above said, **we kindly ask you, as representatives of the highest and relevant institutions of the European Union, to express your position on these alarming developments. We urge you to publicly condemn Bulgaria's actions of Bulgaria of promoting and supporting associations that glorify Nazism, anti-Semitism, fascism and anti-Macedonian ideology in a third country through the abuse of the EU veto right**, as well as through its continuous violation and disregard of Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and the 16 (sixteen) judgments of the European Court of Human Rights regarding the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria.

Levica (The Left), as a political party based in the Republic of Macedonia, is available to provide additional information should you consider that to be necessary or useful.

With respect,

Prof. Dr. Dimitar Apasiev

on behalf of the Macedonian people and the Presidium of Levica (The Left)

⁴ Parliamentary question - E-007289/2014, European Parliament on the Macedonian minority rights in Bulgaria, 30.9.2014 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2014-007289_EN.html