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ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Letter dated 1 June 1989 from the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria  
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to request you to have the enclosed statement by Mr. Todor Zhivkov, Secretary-General of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and President of the State Council of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, broadcast on Bulgarian radio and television on 29 May 1989, circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under items 101 and 107 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Alexander STRESOV  
First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Permanent Representative of the People's  
Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations

\* A/44/50/Rev.1.

ANNEX

Statement by the Secretary-General of the Central Committee  
of the Bulgarian Communist Party and President of the State  
Council of Bulgaria, broadcast on Bulgarian radio and  
television on 29 May 1989

As has already been reported by the press, tensions have arisen recently in some parts of the country among certain groups of the population, instigated by outside forces, in connection with the laws concerning foreign travel passports and Bulgarian citizenship passed by the National Assembly.

Public law and order in certain locations were gravely disturbed.

Some circles and radio stations in the West, still in the grips of the cold war, have been circulating incredible allegations about these events, thus conducting what amounts to a slander campaign against our country.

It is well known that our people is working in peace, and has set itself the lofty and humane goal of building a new society.

The decisions of the July Plenum of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party of 1987 marked the beginning of an in-depth process of restructuring in our country.

The ideas of restructuring have won the understanding of all strata of our people:

- The working class, agricultural workers and intellectuals have joined in this process;
- This process of renewal encompasses all parts of the country, all its regions, municipalities and boroughs;
- The policy of restructuring is backed by public organizations and movements, the religious communities and by all generations of Bulgarians.

Against the background of this process of renewal, which inspires optimism in our future, the reported events have given rise to legitimate concern in millions of our people.

Without making a tragedy out of what has happened, it is necessary to examine, with a sense of responsibility and an awareness of our duty before the nation, the true essence and the reasons behind these actions by some people among the followers of Islam in Bulgaria.

Are there economic, political, cultural or any other conditions for such actions?

First, it is a historical fact that it was thanks to the victory of our socialist revolution and to our socialist State that the Muslim population was able to come out of the darkness, poverty and servitude to which it was subjected by the Ottoman Empire. Capitalist Bulgaria had failed to remedy that.

Let me recall here a few well-known facts:

- In the period of time from the year 1900 to the beginning of the Second World War, in what was the County of Razgrad, or the so-called Ludogorie, there were only 400 industrial workers and the industry's output amounted to 900,000 leva;
- In the last 30 years alone, the fixed assets of industry in that region have increased 32 times and its output 30 times;
- Per capita income has grown more than four times, while the land yields three or four times more in crops;
- Illiteracy has been eliminated in this region as well as elsewhere and 95 per cent of children attend day-care facilities. About 500 young people enter higher educational institutions every year;
- We could also mention here the villages in which housing has been 100 per cent renovated, or the transportation system, or the provision of adequate water supply, or the spiritual progress of the whole region.

Take the Rhodope Mountains and, especially, what was until recently the County of Kurdjali:

- Before 9 September 1944, every third child there died shortly after birth; there was one physician per 22,000 people and one dentist per 54,000 people;
- In the whole region there were only 7 teachers with university education and 93 people out of every 100 were illiterate;
- Today there are more teachers in that region than there were students before the revolution;
- Only 2.4 per cent of the cities and villages were linked with roads and had running water, and only 0.9 per cent had electricity;
- It was a place where man and cattle slept under the same roof and the average life expectancy was between 40 and 45 years;
- Now the average life expectancy there is 75 years for women and 70 years for men, which exceeds the respective national averages;
- Today that region is known to have one of the lowest infant and general mortality rates. Its inhabitants rate among those with the highest savings in the country.

In the Ludogorie, in the region of Kurdjali, and everywhere else where Muslims live, true miracles have been brought about, and a new way of life, new towns and new people have emerged.

This is only natural since:

- For the first time in the conditions of socialism, man has been delivered from the chains of slavery, exploitation and unemployment to become a free, true maker of his own destiny;
- Equal rights to work and receive remuneration for one's work have been guaranteed to all;
- Society's care for each individual from birth to old age has been guaranteed;
- Everyone has been provided with free access to culture and the working people's participation in the management of society is steadily broadening;
- In our country all are equal before the law and enjoy the same protection under the Constitution.

These are fundamental values, inherent features of this population's socialist way of life.

Second, it is a historical fact that the People's Republic of Bulgaria is the motherland of everyone who was born on our land, the land where their ancestors are buried and where their children have first seen the light of day:

- The Islamized population has not come to this land from anywhere else. Bulgaria is its sole motherland. It has lived, is living and will continue to do so in Bulgaria;
- Our Bulgaria belongs to all of us irrespective of our faith or customs. We all are its sons and daughters bound by our filial duty to it.

History has taught us to live together:

- That is why we have fought together for freedom and happiness; we have worked together, prayed together, shared sorrow and happiness;
- History has been uniting us to survive as one whole, as citizens of one country, Bulgaria.

We are a society in the process of restructuring:

- We are restructuring the economy, legislation, culture, all spheres of life;

- In reshaping the life of our State, we are creating conditions for broadening everyone's initiative in the development of our land, of our forests and rivers, of everything that is our motherland;
- This means greater wealth for each one of us, for our homes, for the economy, for the education of our children, and so on;
- The work and life of every one of us and of everything is guaranteed by the Bulgarian State, the same State that we have built together, the one we are determined to renew now and in the future.

Third, taking into account the need for every modern society to have the broadest contacts with the rest of the world and in line with the Vienna agreements, the National Assembly of the People's Republic of Bulgaria has passed, as you all know, corresponding laws:

- Their most important feature is that every Bulgarian citizen has been given the opportunity to travel wherever he desires, to whatever part of the world; to come in direct contact with the best of what civilization has created on our planet;
- Everyone who wishes to do so may exercise this right according to his conscience and will. There can be no doubt that love for Bulgaria and civic responsibility to the motherland and the nation will remain alive in every Bulgarian no matter where he or she may be. We are convinced that even those who have left our country will sooner or later return to devote their energies to Bulgaria. This policy fully corresponds to the new historical realities in the world and to the spirit of Helsinki and Vienna.

You are well aware that there are international factors influencing the process of restructuring, of democratization and renewal in our society. We must note separate cases of speculation with the new political thinking where the principles of the State's sovereignty as laid down in the norms and standards of international affairs. Regrettably, certain circles in the Republic of Turkey have of late been conducting a daily escalation of an anti-Bulgarian campaign. In this connection I would like to state the following: in its international aspects, this policy constitutes a flagrant interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign State. As a politician who has been involved in international relations in the Balkans for a long time, I must recall that the People's Republic of Bulgaria has always sought to maintain good-neighbourly relations with all Balkan States, including the Republic of Turkey:

- There were times when these relations were conducive to the building of trust between our countries and peoples. I am now amazed at all that our neighbour is doing against Bulgaria. In the light of the better days that our relations have known, I find certain methods employed in Turkey's anti-Bulgarian drive bizarre and alarming;

- For instance, for a long time the allegation was circulated that mosques were being torn down in Bulgaria, imams were being killed, and so on. However, a press conference was held at which these very imams "rose from the dead" and on-site visits revealed not only the fact that Bulgaria is not demolishing mosques, but also that it is repairing them and building new ones. It could not have been otherwise, for these imams are part of our people and the Muslim clergy in its overwhelming majority is taking part in the constructive process in our society. Were not those same mosques, such as the mosque in the town of Samokov, a wonderful monument of culture, built both by Muslims and by Christians? Is it not universally known that no-one in our country is deprived of the right to profess any religion? After that the stage directors of the anti-Bulgarian campaign took up the issue of emigration by trumpeting high and wide that Turkey was prepared to accept all Bulgarian Muslims willing to emigrate. In this connection, on behalf of the Bulgarian Muslims and on my own behalf, as President of the State Council, I would like to address this urgent appeal to the competent Turkish authorities: open your borders to all Bulgarian Muslims who want to go to Turkey for a short-term stay or for permanent residence. The time of diversionary manoeuvring is over: Turkey ought to open its borders to the world in compliance with international standards and agreements, the way the People's Republic of Bulgaria has done. If it comes to claims, we too can bring up the question of how many Bulgarians live in the Republic of Turkey. I must tell you that many things have been left unsettled by history and by politics alike. What is more, by virtue of what international agreement, religion or philosophy does Turkey usurp the right to claim that every Muslim in Bulgaria is a Turk? On what grounds do the ruling circles in Turkey take the liberty of arbitrating on matters that, both historically and legally, fall within the competence of another State? This runs counter to common sense, history and international law. I would like to declare in full responsibility that the People's Republic of Bulgaria will never concede to such designs. The Bulgarian people will kneel to no-one. Those States which cherish the hope that they would be able to turn the wheel of history back to the time of the Ottoman Empire are greatly mistaken.

Both the present and future of the Republic of Turkey and the People's Republic of Bulgaria lie in normal good-neighbourly relations between them and in the Balkans, in understanding and co-operation among all countries in the world.

The People's Republic of Bulgaria has always pursued this goal and will continue to do so in the future. As to the real problems in our relations, both inherited and new, we are prepared, proceeding from the international realities, to discuss them at all levels, as, by the way, we have been doing so far. We stand for good-neighbourly, humane and civilized relations. In conclusion I would like to point out that, as any other State that is committed to the rule of law, we will not tolerate any activity aimed against the peace and security of Bulgarian citizens, at meddling with their religious feelings and at violating the Constitution and the law. Our people have the confidence and the strength to oppose any such actions. In order to attain the goals we have set ourselves, in

order to do what is necessary to affirm ourselves as a highly developed country, we have to be united and worthy builders of our new society. We are convinced that the unity of the Bulgarian people is the concern and destiny of every citizen of our dear motherland, the People's Republic of Bulgaria.

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