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ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Letter dated 29 June 1989 from the Permanent Representative of
Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In his letter of 16 June 1989 (A/44/330, annex), the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, His Excellency A. Mesut Yilmaz, provided information about the plight of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria.

Since then, various Bulgarian texts have been circulated which attempt to mislead the reader about the true nature of the issue. Consequently, it has become necessary to provide additional information on this subject to set the record straight.

Bulgaria would have us believe that there is no Turkish minority in that country. Ever since Bulgaria appeared as an independent State at the beginning of this century, there has been a Turkish minority there. This fact is borne out by bilateral and multilateral treaties to which Bulgaria is a party and also by official statements made by the Bulgarian Head of State as well as by other government and party officials. The existence of this minority has been acknowledged in official Bulgarian statistics and documents as well as in school textbooks. In the recent past, Bulgaria has provided United Nations organs with information about the condition of the Turkish minority. All of this is on the record and cannot be denied. The Turkish minority in Bulgaria has a historical and legal basis that will not go away merely because, since 1984, the Bulgarian administration has started to deny the existence of this minority. The latest events have proven once again that history cannot be rewritten. The arrival in Turkey of over 80,000 ethnic Turks from Bulgaria during the course of the current month is evidence of the baselessness of the official Bulgarian line.

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Bulgaria has now embarked on a policy of mass expulsion. Large numbers of people are being expelled to Turkey and forced to leave behind their properties and social security benefits, earned through their labour over many years. These expulsions have nothing to do with tourism or the right to travel. To pretend that the tens of thousands of refugees who are fleeing Bulgaria's cruel policies of oppression are tourists is to insult human intelligence.

One of the most tragic aspects of the present exodus is that it creates more divided families. Many adolescents are prevented from joining their parents in their migration to Turkey on the grounds that they have not performed their military service or some other obligation towards the State. This results in the breakup of families and the separation of children from parents, compounding the suffering of these people.

The Bulgarian claim that Turkey instigated these events is also devoid of all foundation. It was Bulgaria that resorted to the bloody suppression of the ethnic Turks who were engaged in hunger strikes and were demonstrating peacefully to recover their basic human rights. The reaction of the Bulgarian Government to people raising their voices to regain their rights was one of panic. This was the first time since 1944 that people were demonstrating for their rights in Bulgaria. This is the fact that Bulgaria is trying to hide from view with its noisy claims that Turkey is interfering in its internal affairs. It is well known that Turkish diplomats in Bulgaria are subjected to a restrictive travel régime in which all travel beyond a radius of 40 kilometres requires special permission from the Government. Such permission is granted only in exceptional circumstances, and, when travelling, Turkish diplomats are trailed by security personnel and often harassed. It is also well known that Turkish radio broadcasts are systematically jammed in Bulgaria. Ethnic Turks are denied access to Turkish diplomatic missions and even their telephone calls are intercepted. Bulgarians of Turkish descent are either prevented from corresponding with relatives and friends in Turkey or, when allowed, their correspondence is strictly censored. Given this background, the claim that Turkey is responsible for the events in Bulgaria is ludicrous.

It is Bulgaria that must bear full responsibility for the failure of the negotiations carried out within the framework of the Protocol signed on 23 February 1988 at Belgrade. It is Bulgaria that tried to escape the universal opprobrium it was attracting because of its oppressive policies by trying to convey the impression that it was negotiating in good faith without, however, in any way softening its hard line. It is this that led to the collapse of the negotiation.

Bulgaria's strident allegations against Turkey are all part of a disinformation campaign that cannot hide the fact that there is a Turkish minority in Bulgaria and that, despite the Bulgarian Government's repressive policies, this minority has not allowed itself to be intimidated, let alone assimilated. Furthermore, no amount of disinformation can disguise the real nature of the relentless flow of uprooted humanity that we are witnessing today.

I shall be grateful if you would kindly have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 101 and 107 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Mustafa AKSIN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
