

Greek President Denies Existence of Macedonian Minority in Greece

Sunday, 21 May 2006

Macedonian Human Rights Movement International applauds Macedonian President Branko Crvenkovski's statement in response to comments by Greek President Karolos Papulias stating that there is no Macedonian minority in Greece. On May 17, 2006, Papulias said, "There is no Slavic minority in Greece, there is only a Muslim minority which enjoys all its rights."

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Crvenkovski responded, "The existence of an ethnic minority in a democratic state does not depend on the statements, views, announcements, or decrees of the president or the prime minister of that state. The existence of an ethnic minority in a democratic state primarily depends on the individual sentiment of every citizen of that state. It is a fact that, in the Republic of Greece, there is a significant number, that is, a large percentage of citizens who personally feel as members of the Macedonian nation. This is a fact that everyone, including the Greek authorities, must accept."

On May 20, 2006, the Bishop of Northern Greece, Pavlos, stated "Only Greeks live in the geographical region of Macedonia in Greece, we do not have any minorities here, neither do we admit the presence of such and this is not because we must say so but because there aren't any."

Despite these declarations, Greece's persecution of its ethnic minorities has been well-documented, including numerous European Court of Human Rights convictions for violating the rights of its large Macedonian and Turkish, among other, minorities.

MHRMI calls on the international community, and specifically the European Union to condemn Karolos Papulias's and Bishop Pavlos's statements and demand that Greece finally recognize its large Macedonian minority and grant it the human rights that it is guaranteed by all international human rights conventions.

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