

REPORT on THE CENSUS IN BULGARIA 2011

Prepared from a commission legitimated from the following organisations: *OMO 'ILINDEN' PIRIN, Organisation of the repressed Macedonians in Bulgaria, TMO VMRO(independent), Macedonian Christian brotherhood 'St. Prophet Ilias', KPD 'Nikola Vaptsarov', KPD 'Ilinden', KPD 'Tsar Samuil', Organisation 'Victory - 2010', Newspaper 'Will of the people', Bulletin 'Macedonian voice'* on the meeting which took place on 20 March 2011 in the town of Sandanski.

THE MACEDONIANS IN THE BULGARIAN CENSUSES 1944 – 2010

1. *During the communism period*

1.a. Period of recognition 1944 -1963

During the time between 1941 – 2011 in Bulgaria were conducted 7 official censuses. We also need to mention another census organised by the schools in Pirin Macedonia¹ in 1945. Three of these censuses have been made in a period in which Bulgaria officially had recognised the existence of Macedonian nation and respectively of a Macedonian minority on its territory – that is the period 1944 – 1963.

1. School census organised by the school inspectorate in the school year 1946/1947. From a general number of 43 920 pupils in the district, 34 039 (77, 51 %) 35 184 declared themselves as Macedonians. Declared as Macedonian Muslims were 4538 (10, 33%). The declared as Bulgarian – 3184 (7, 25 %). The rest (Roma population, Turks, Jews and others) were altogether – 1014 (2, 31%)².

2. Official census of the population the end of 1946 – the beginning of 1947. On the territory of Bulgaria as Macedonians declared themselves 169 544³ people mainly in Pirin Macedonia where the majority of them is.

¹ The term Pirin Macedonia means the territory spread a bit further away of today's Blagoevgrad district which in 1913 becomes part of Bulgaria. We prefer it rather than any other existing administrative formulations in order of their great variability. For example Blagoevgrad district in the last decade of 20th century has been a part of Sofia district and before 1944 had been divided between two administrative districts – Sofia and Plovdiv districts.

² The information is taken from the book of d-r Vassil Jotevski , National affirmation of the Macedonians in Pirin Macedonia 1944 -1948, INI , Skopje, 1996, p. 109-111. By constituency that data looks like this:

- Gorna Dzhumaja (Blagoevgrad) school constituency – 7460 Macedonian pupils + 116 Macedonian Muslims and 820 Bulgarians, Roma population, Jews, Turks altogether 113 or 87.83 % Macedonians, 9.79 % Bulgarians and 2.48 % of the rest.

- Nevrokop (Goce Delchev) school constituency – 7141 Macedonian pupils + 3002 Macedonian Muslims and 788 Bulgarians, Roma populations, Jews and Turks altogether – 622 or 87.79 % Macedonians, 6.82 % Bulgarians and 5.39 % of the rest.

- Razlog school constituency – 4522 Macedonian pupils+ 1420 Macedonian Muslims and 45 Bulgarians, Roma population, Jews and Turks altogether – 134 or 97.09 % Macedonians, 0.73 % Bulgarians and Roma population – 2.10 % and 0.08 % others.

- Petrich school constituency – 7775 Macedonian pupils, 625 Bulgarians or 95.50 % Macedonians and 7.49 % Bulgarians.

- Sandanski school constituency – 8286 Macedonian pupils 906 – Bulgarians, Roma people and others altogether -145 or 88.74 % Macedonians, 9.70 % Bulgarians and 1.55 % others.

³ Krasimir Kanev, Legislation and policy towards ethnic and religious minorities in Bulgaria ", in: A. Krasteva, (row.), communities and identities in Bulgaria, Sofia, Petekston, 1998, p. 97

3. Official census in 1956 – 187 787 from which in Pirin Macedonia – 178 000 and the rest in the other parts of Bulgaria. In Pirin Macedonia the Macedonians are 63, 33 % from the population, 33 % are Bulgarians, the other 3 % are others (mainly Turks, Roma population and Pomaks)⁴.

1.b. Period of denial and interrogation (1963 – 1989)

After the stepping into power of the dictator Todor Zhivkov in 1956 starts gradual change of the policies towards the minorities. One of the first victims of the new political line is the Macedonian minority. After several years of internal party struggles the resistance of the Macedonian lobby in BCP with its leader the Prime Minister Anton Jugov - a former activist of VMRO (united) is broken and the main leaders forced away. Officially the new policy had been proclaimed on a plenum of CC of BCP which took place on 11 March 1963. Its motto becomes the words of the dictator Zhivkov on the same plenum:

„The population of Pirin area is a part of the Bulgarian nation. There is no Macedonian nationality there and cannot be”,

And the Macedonian nation had been called “the so called Macedonian nation”⁵. Immediately after the change of the policy had been taken strict and various actions for assimilation of the Macedonians (turning them into Bulgarians) – actions starting from the kindergarten to the pensioner’s clubs and from the libraries to prohibition to sing and listen to Macedonian songs. Despite this and despite the strict measures taken in 1965 during the census 9 632 (6)people declared that they were Macedonians. Many who denied to accept to new policy had been sent to prison or interned inside Bulgaria where because of their great scatterings and smaller number was hard for the authorities to take the immense measures they had taken in Pirin Macedonia. In Pirin Macedonia just following the traditional communist pattern the number of the Macedonians was taken under 1 %.⁶

On the census in 1975 wasn’t given any right to declare Macedonian or any other minority identity – it had been conducted on the idea of a united Bulgarian socialist nation. The census planned for 1985 was called off because of problems with ‘The Revival Process’ of the Turks and the Roma people – just other victims of the serial nationalist politics of the communist regime.

2. In the period of democracy 1990-2010.

2.a. Preliminary announcements and callings for troubles in the census in 1992.

⁴ Ibidem. After the change of policy on the Macedonian minority from recognition to non-recognition (denial), and until today are made many attempts to be "explained" the results of the first censuses. They range from the assertion that people have declared themselves Macedonians under the action of violence (most often explanation) to that they were administratively recorded without asking them. In support of these theories there have never been compelling arguments, nor a memory of violence exists in the memory of the population. The fact that at both official censuses (the school one has not been considered) a large proportion of the population in Pirin Macedonia has declared itself as Bulgarian (about 1/3) demonstrates that there were neither any violence used nor automatic declaring. In the last census under the best-known Communist practice the outcome would have been 99% Macedonians and 1% other.

⁵ PA, Comintern and the Macedonian question (1917-1946), t. 2, The archives speak, book 5 Annex No 1, p. 1288, 1292. In the same program speech it is given as a task: "We need to actively, continuously affirm ate the Bulgarian national consciousness in this population" (c. 1292)

⁶ Krassimir Kanev, op. cit, 97

During the first census after the fall of communism in the local media in Pirin Macedonia have been published a series of announcements which alarmed the public for the danger which the great number of declared as Macedonians represent. In those announcements are pointed concrete villages in which over 80 % of the people had declared themselves Macedonians (concretely were quoted the villages of Ilindenci, Mikrevo and others) and some of these announcements claim that in towns as Sandanski and Petrich the percentage of the declaring as Macedonians varies between 20 and 30 %. In all of those publications the main motive is to stigmatize this occurrence as anti-state and anti-patriotic and to justify the authorities' actions against its existence. During the census took place many irregularities and manipulations had been ascertained (at which we'll take a look a bit later). When later the official results had been revealed the number of Macedonians was highly under the expected one obviously because of the mentioned announcements in the press. Instead of the number 225 000 which would have been expected taking in mind the last free census (1956) and the respective population growth or even at least 50 000 which could have been expected in order of the mentioned press releases, the official final result was 10 803 people declared as Macedonians.

2.b. Police investigation against OMO 'Ilinden' – PIRIN in 2001

Immediately before the census in 2001 OMO 'Ilinden' – PIRIN distributes tens of thousands leaflets calling the citizens freely to declare themselves as Macedonians and not to be afraid to do so. In the leaflet were included quotes from the Chart for human rights and the Bulgarian Constitution. Follows a strong campaign in the media to be punished those responsible for distribution of the leaflets and a strong propaganda against the Macedonian self-determination and attempts to prove that Macedonian minority does not exist. The regional direction of Ministry of internal affairs (MIA) in Blagoevgrad responds to the media appeals and starts an investigation against the party which is greatly advertised in the media⁷. Many leaders of PIRIN were called up and questioned in the police stations in all towns of Pirin Macedonia. No irregularities were found therefore no charge was made, neither a case was opened. The latter was kept quiet in the media though.

As well in the second 'democratic' census the same measures were taken as in the first one with the slight difference that then they were broaden and refined. They are:

2.c. Ascertained irregularities in the census in 1992 and 2001

- The census officials establish the counted automatically with a Bulgarian nationality without asking them for their opinion.
- They count old people only taking the information of their ID cards and writing down whatever they think is necessary.

⁷ .Luba Batembegska, Elitsa Zlateva, IMRO blamed OMO Ilinden for intervention in the census, v. "Journal", 8 March 2001, http://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2001/03/08/15009_vmro_obvini_omolinden_za_namesa_v_prebroiavaneto/

- Whenever anyone wanted to be written down as a Macedonian wrong or incorrect information was given to him/her (for example – ‘There is no such column’, ‘Column ‘Macedonians’ is not listed, if you would like I could write down ‘others’?’ – which was often understood by the counted people as a preposition not to be declared as Macedonians but some other nationality or anything else).
- The counters argued with the ones who wanted to be written down as Macedonians or pleaded with them not to declare themselves as such; they argued that this was not allowed or was not right and in some cases they begged the people not to declare themselves as Macedonians or threatened them.
- Pencils were used instead of pens with ink.
- In some places were made administrative counting by the mayor, especially in the small villages and towns.
- According to claims of some of the census officials they received verbal directives the people not to be recorded as Macedonians and according to others they had problems if in their census papers there were Macedonians.
- The censuses were undertaken in utterly tense and anti-Macedonian atmosphere with calls in the media to be protected the national security against foreign agents and traitors (they meant the activists of the Macedonian NGO organisations), the police started publicly advertised investigations against the Macedonian organisations claiming the latter were involved in anti-state activities, official declarations were made by officials that measures would be taken against the people calling the Macedonians to self-determine as such, claims that it wouldn't be allowed the ‘historic truth’ be crooked and so on. Intense and greatly supported by the media propaganda campaign had been started filled with threats by the nationalistic and far right organisations. Exceptional activity against the Macedonian self-determination had been undertaken by the organs of State security (now State Agency for National Security).
- Measures were taken that amongst the census officials there were no people with Macedonian conscience.

Emblematic for the pressure made over the people working for the state is the case with the mayor of the village of Kromidovo, Petrich municipality – Borislav Filatov. After it became clear that he declared himself a Macedonian on the census the Municipality council of the town of Petrich gives him an ultimatum – either to change his self-determination to Bulgarian , or to be terminated his contract. Because Kromidovo is a populated place of under 500 people the mayor is chosen by the Municipality council. Borislav Filatov stepped back under the pressure, withdrew his card , scratched off ‘Macedonian’ and wrote down ‘Bulgarian’.

POSITION OF THE BULGARIAN STATE TOWARDS THE MACEDONIANS

1. Official sate position of denial

The problems in the censuses come from the official position and politics of Bulgaria towards the Macedonians which since 1963 till now except the use of violence and prison, hasn't in

other ways been seriously changed. This continuing process of totalitarian politics in the democratic period finds a symbolic expression in the statements of some of the Bulgarian MPs and Euro MPs in November and December 2006 in regards of the proposal of the Greens and EFA in the European Parliament in the last pre-joining report on Bulgaria to be included an article for recognition of the Macedonian minority. Those are exactly: 'Macedonian minority in Bulgaria there isn't and cannot be'⁸. It was probably an unwilling quote of a slogan of well known former communist dictator made by representatives of one democratic European state .

After the fall of communism until now the Bulgarian state not only doesn't recognise but practically on all levels and through all its key institutions officially *denies* the existence of the Macedonian minority. This had been made by:

1. The minister of foreign affairs Boyko Dimitrov in an official statement on 2 January 1990.
2. The Parliament with an official declaration on 6 March 1990⁹.
3. The representative of Bulgaria in UN Ivan Sotirov on 21 May 1990¹⁰.
4. The president Petar Stoyanov and the present one Georgi Parvanov in their statements.
5. The Constitutional Court with a decision N 2 from 29 February 2000.
6. Sofia City Court with decision from 23 August 2007 on the case for registering of OMO 'Ilinden' – PIRIN.
7. The Minister of the Bulgarians abroad Bozhidar Dimitrov – extremely honest.
8. The Minister of foreign affairs Nikolay Mladenov on 7 May 2010 on an official visit in Skopje¹¹.

⁸ On 17.11.2006, Kristian Vigenin, member of the leadership of the ruling party in Bulgaria and Deputy Chairman of the BSP parliamentary group of the European Socialists: the "Macedonian minority in Bulgaria there is not and cannot be". The same day, Ivan Kolchakov, Bulgarian MP and Secretary-General of the opposition UNITED DEMOCRATIC FORCES: "The question is there a Macedonian minority in Bulgaria is rhetorical. Not only that there is not, but it cannot be ". To that joins the Mp of DPS and MEP Yanko Yankov:" there is no and there can be no Macedonian minority in Bulgaria (Lilia Tomova, Els de Groen searches media appearances to look significant, newspaper "Word", BSP in the media, 17.11.2006, [http://www.bsp.bg/cgi-bin/e-s/vis/vis.pl?s=001 & p = 0030 & n = 000700 & g = ' & vis = 000049](http://www.bsp.bg/cgi-bin/e-s/vis/vis.pl?s=001&p=0030&n=000700&g='&vis=000049).) On 14 December 2006-the leader of the parliamentary party Order legitimacy and fairness Yane Yanev : "No, there has been no and there can be no Macedonian minority in Bulgaria" (Galina Girginova, Yane Yanev: Parliament to adopt a single position, in order to put an end to the speculation with "Macedonian minority", 14 December 2006 | 15: 18 | Agency "Focus"). The same day, Plamen Rachev, a member of the Coalition for Bulgaria: "cannot not be infringed the rights of a minority that does not exist "(Maria Stalianova, Plamen Ranchev: The official Macedonian institutions do not accept the thesis of existence of a Macedonian minority in Bulgaria, 14 December 2006 | 15: 37 | Agency "Focus").

⁹ Newspaper "Rabotnichesko Delo", issue 66, 7 March 1990, p. 1. "there are neither historical nor legal, nor any other reasons to seek such a minority", the Macedonians are called "non-minority". (see also Stojko Stojkov, Macedonians in Bulgaria in their struggle for human rights, Blagoevgrad, 2005, p. 2).

¹⁰ Newsp. "Word" 22 May 1990 He in his statement called the Macedonian consciousness nonexistent "artificial self-consciousness", which someone "inside and out" is trying to create; that is something that "cannot be justified by the right of self-determination". (see also Stojkov, op. cit, 3).

¹¹ Newsp. "Time", 7 May 2010, Igor Čavevski, the Head of Bulgarian Diplomacy does not recognize minorities, Mladenov hasn't seen Macedonians in Bugarija. Here are the words of the Minister: "in Bulgaria there is no Macedonian minority, there are no minorities, there are people who have human rights."

9. The government of Boyko Borisov in September 2010 by firing of 5 senior officers in the National statistics institute because they let a sub column 'Macedonian' to be included in the trial census identified alongside with others as a ' non-existent ethnos'.

10. Bulgarian MPs in the Bulgarian and European Parliaments and political leaders of parties (look up the quotes).

The official position of the state is well-known to the public and in the past 20 years it had never been questioned by any state institution or state representative. This on its own has its negative influence on the freedom of self-determination of the Macedonians in Bulgaria.

2. Public stereotypes

In the years of democratic transition in the Bulgarian public space were created a number of negative stereotypes towards the Macedonians; that's something in which a key role has the state with its politics of denial of the Macedonian nation and its minority. The people expressing Macedonian conscience were publically branded as national apostates, national traitors, enemies of Bulgaria and the Bulgarians, separatists and even terrorists. The state not only doesn't try to overcome those stereotypes but actively promotes them with statements of its highest representatives¹². With such statements from highest levels are being fuelled the accusations against the Macedonian organisations in the country; that they have been created and supported by foreign governments and that they are separatist and anti-Bulgarian.

One of the aspects of these public views is the hatred against the Macedonians which in Bulgaria has become something normal and everyday activity. Except those accusations are being used offensive and humiliating epithets too, often used towards the people expressing a Macedonian conscience, such as morons, ignorant, miserable, marauders, homosexuals and many other similar. It needs to be underlined that the state does not do anything to stop, limit or sanction this occurrence. In the cases in which the Macedonians had tried to get protection in court the court defended the offenders.¹³

In those dominant public notions the free expression of the Macedonian conscience is seriously overwhelmed and the existing atmosphere influences badly the freedom of self-determination.

TRIAL CENSUS 2010

1. Scandal with sub column 'Macedonian' in the electronic census

¹² As an example may be given official accusations of Foreign Minister Kalfin in June and July 2006, and President Georgi Parvanov in January 2008, against the Republic of Macedonia, that it is its fault for the existence of Macedonian organizations, for supporting (actually non-existent) separatist trends in Pirin Macedonia, as well as the trials for the registration of OMO Ilinden-PIRIN ""-a party consisting exclusively of Bulgarian citizens and operating only in Bulgaria.

¹³ In 2004, 200 Macedonians filed a complaint against TV journalist Nicola Grigorov (specialized in speech of hatred against the Macedonians and known for use in the broadcasting of phrases such as "This swill makedonizma "), due to his interview in the newspaper "Belief", in which he stated that all makedonisti (word used in Bulgaria for identifying people with Macedonian self-consciousness) are totally ignorant, marauders and people without morals ... The Court after a long delay and transfer of the case rejected the action, therefore, that the complainants had not been mentioned by name in the interview. Macedonian activist Dimitar Sarbakov from Gotse Delchev in the period 2003-2007 is trying in vain to sue the person Staljo Stalev, which in the local Gotse Delchev journal called him because of his Macedonian consciousness a "moron". In one period even he himself becomes accused in the same case.

In the beginning of September 2010 in some districts of Bulgaria was conducted a trial census as a preparation to the general one in 2011. In the electronic form of this census in the possible answers for ethnic group and mother tongue the specialists of the National statistics institute(NSI) driven by the European practice and having in mind the results from previous censuses include additional drop-down menu in the column 'others'. One of these possibilities was Macedonian and Macedonian language. This created a true 'storm' in the media and the ultranationalist groups like VMRO BND threatened that they would boycott the census.

The scandalous according to the media and other parties which took part in the campaign was that in the census were included 'non-existent ethnicities' such as Macedonians and Pomaks. Under the great public pressure the chairwoman of NSI – Mariana Koceva gave her resignation but because of the enormous impact this could have had in Europe the Prime Minister didn't accept her resignation. Instead five senior officers of NSI had been fired; three of whom with rang deputies.

Before the government took this decision on 11 September 2010 on national TV in the programme 'Seismograph' as opponents met the chairwoman of NSI and the Minister of Bulgarians abroad Bozhidar Dimitrov. The latter strongly argued over the democratic views of the chairwoman of NSI for the right of self-determination and defended a point of view that this right had to be limited under some criteria. It became clear that the position of Minister Bozhidar Dimitrov expresses that of the government itself. Regularly distinguishing himself from his infamous Minister, the Prime Minister this time didn't find a reason to distinguish from his views.

Since that despite the protests by the Macedonian organisations the denial the right of self-determination of the Bulgarian citizens as Macedonians or any other 'non-existent' ethnicities could be seen as an official government position.

NSI stepped back under the strong political pressure and announced that in the census there would be only columns Bulgarians, Turks, Roma people and others.

After the removal of the column 'Macedonian' and the firing of the specialists from NSI OMO 'Ilinden' – PIRIN sent official letters to the Prime Minister and to the chairwoman of NSI which were left unanswered.

2. Arguments of OMO 'Ilinden' – PIRIN for inclusion of columns for all minorities and especially column 'Macedonian' in the census.

1. In the last 70 years practically in all censuses thousands and tens of thousands Bulgarian citizens self-determine themselves as Macedonians (164 000 in 1946, 187 000 in 1956, about 10 000 in 1965, 10 803 in 1992, 5 071 in 2001).

2. After the campaign in the media against the existence of column 'Macedonian' in particular, and against the existence of Macedonian identity itself and the right for self-determination as Macedonian as a whole is seen as some sort of crime which requires punishment, a strong signal has been sent against the right to self-determine as Macedonian

(or any other denied nationality/ethnicity). This is something that would have the following extremely serious consequences:

a. Inevitably it will affect the institution, organizing the census, in which an

investigation is to be instigated by the Prime Minister for revealing the " guilty" ones. With this in the society is put into question its objectivity in the forthcoming census.

b. *The census officials were made to understand that self-determination as Macedonian or anything similar is not desirable and is anti- Bulgarian, anti-state, unscientific and inadmissible. A very real temptation to the census officers stood to behave in an undemocratic way and incorrectly, as self-initially abuse their position because of wrongly understood patriotism and duty and because of the feeling of impunity and self righteousness.*

c. *Influence and pressure has been performed on the citizens of Bulgaria with Macedonian self-consciousness; it has been sent to them a clear message that self-detrmination as Macedonian is undesirable, even anti-state and criminal.*

That makes the column 'Macedonian' compulsory in order to demonstrate that it is not concerning any anti-sate, prohibited or impossible self-identification and that it is a completely acceptable and guaranteed right. The absence of such a box in the so established atmosphere would lead to strong distortion of the results of the census and logically - to their rejection by the ethnic Macedonian organizations.

3. *Due to repeated denial of the existence of a Macedonian minority by all levels of the authorities and institutions, the inclusion of the column 'Macedonian' will contribute to the demonstration of different, a positive attitude towards these people, it would lead to a soothing among the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and will facilitate the Macedonians freely and without fear to express their ethnicity.*

4. *the Bulgarian Government repeatedly has declared to the European and other external factors, that the publication of data from censuses including Macedonians in itself constitutes recognition. This claim must be brought to its logical end with inclusion in the census of this column.*

5. *Will avoid a discriminatory treatment and dividing of the ethnic groups to important and less important. After all everyone who pays taxes, should be treated equally. The greatest number should not be placed in a privileged position, and must not be given a similar symbolic, but also official documentary expression by having /not having an own column in the census. The current situation is understood by many representatives of these groups as insulting and degrading.*

6. *The presence of such column will reduce the risk of manipulations and will terminate the doubts about the existence of such, as well as doubts in the result obtained. This will help the numbers to be generally acceptable and not being denied and not being contested as in previous censuses. We believe that we all should be interested in obtaining objective and not controversial information as the previous data on this issue - this will allow for the formation of a real and objective policy and overcoming various myths and illusions, which live in the public area against people of Macedonian self-consciousness.*

7. Will facilitate both the counting officials and the counted people and will reduce the risk of errors and misunderstandings.

8. The inclusion of columns for all minorities without doubt will contribute to the strengthening of the loyalty to the state among the minorities in Bulgaria, as well as for strengthening the confidence and friendship with close and distant countries in which representatives of these minorities are living.

9. The inclusion of several additional columns would hardly create serious problems and would not be so expensive as to justify demonstration of double standards towards the citizens according to their self-determination to bigger or smaller ethnic group.

10. In addition to the recognition of the right of the Macedonians to self-determine themselves as such the column will also be an expression of respect for their repeatedly declared will.

11. Because of the existing great mistrust among the representatives of this (and other) minorities in relation to the conduct of the census, the inclusion of the column 'Macedonian' would have demonstrated the resolve of the state to obtain objective results.

The Macedonian organizations also offered a number of measures to ensure the democratic way of conducting the census.

1. On the census also to appear in the electronic form and in the census cards a separate column 'Macedonian'.

2. The census sheets to be with a serial number and to be signed by the citizens.

3. Compulsory among the counting officials to be people from all minorities, and not as happen the last time when it was particularly kept in mind not to include people with Macedonian conscience.

4. To prohibit the use of pencils and other similar impermanent means of writing when filling the census sheets.

5. To ensure the census really happens in a conversation with the people, and not in absentia, administratively or through the use of personal data.

6. To instruct the counting officers (census officials) about the freedom of self-determination and the right of the people to self-determine freely as they feel, in that number the Macedonians as well.

7. To ensure the presence of independent observers, headquarters for the registration of infringements, transparency and the possibility of inspection by independent organizations.

8. The Government officially to state that the right of self-determination will be ensured and that everyone without any fear will be able to declare their nationality, including Macedonian, and the census officials who have been obstructing or manipulating this will be strictly punished.

9. It would be very desirable, if the Bulgarian Government, based on the results of the censuses of 1946, 1956, 1965, 1992 and 2001, recognized that there is a Macedonian

minority in Bulgaria. Such recognition is necessary because of its objective existence, and because of the current hostile atmosphere against this minority in Bulgaria, and therefore, so far, the Bulgarian State of all its state levels has officially denied the existence of a Macedonian minority.

10. *To give the necessary orders to SANS and the police this time unlike the previous censuses not to intervene in the census and in no way interfere with the free self-determination of citizens (especially Macedonians).*

The sent letters never received a response. Therefore four Macedonian organizations of 13 September 2010 have made the following official declaration.

DECLARATION

In connection with the conducted through the last week action against the right of self-determination in Bulgaria regarding the inclusion of columns for all minorities in Bulgaria:

1. In respond to the strong campaign of ultranationalist and extremist parties and organizations, found support in multiple media, against the inclusion of columns for all minorities in the trial census;
2. In respond to the Government's lack of reaction against this undemocratic and disgraceful for our country stupidity and primitivism;
3. In respond to a Minister of the Cabinet open agitation against the freedom of the citizens themselves to determine their nationality and calling for reduction in various ways of that right;
4. In respond to the Cabinet's undistinguishing position from those statements of the Minister;
5. In respond to the Prime Minister's order of a full investigation to find the guilty ones not among the agitators against the right of self-determination but among NSI staff;
6. In respond to the dismissal of the two¹⁴ deputies of the NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE who have conscientiously done their job and have complied with European principles and have included in the "other" column all real existing ethnic groups which have self-determined on previous censuses,

we are forced to say the following:

The forthcoming census and its results are already compromised!

The NATIONAL STATISTICAL INSTITUTE is compromised!

Compromised is the democracy in Bulgaria!

The extremely inappropriate actions of the Prime Minister Borisov sent a clear message:

-To the staff of the INSTITUTE – to be careful with the "non-existent ethnic groups" in the forthcoming census if they wish to keep their jobs;

-Future census officials - that certain ethnic groups should not exist and that their registration is against the official government policy and may bring respectively punishment;

¹⁴ A few days after the declaration was released the number of the dismissed people increased with three more.

-To to the Macedonians, but also to other denied minorities in Bulgaria – that the right of self-determination for them is to be treated as against the state and is punishable.

There is no room for any doubt that, through the security services is being prepared another manipulation with the self-determination of the minorities in Bulgaria. The creation of an atmosphere of fear and intolerance against the Macedonians in Bulgaria attended both previous censuses. The scenario is clearly the same for the third time in a row.

While in neighboring Republic of Macedonia in the forthcoming census there will be a column "Bulgarian", in Bulgaria "Macedonian" was deleted, although in all censuses, thousands of Bulgarian citizens have self-determined as Macedonians.

But what has happened is recognition too!

Acute reactions of the nationalists – a product of totalitarian security services, are clear evidence of their fear of the truth, the truth that in Bulgaria there is a Macedonian minority and that the number of people with Macedonian self-consciousness is too big to be acceptable for some circles in the existing establishment.

In this abnormal situation, on behalf of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria and on behalf of our organizations we declare, that if no urgent measures are taken for the inclusion of the column 'Macedonian' and columns for other minorities, if no measures are taken by the Government to ensure the right of self-determination to all Bulgarian citizens is guaranteed equally and if no measures are taken to correct the abnormal atmosphere of intolerance and the witch hunting

We will not be able to recognize the results of the forthcoming census.

OMO 'Ilinden'-PIRIN, Organization(Assembly) of the repressed Macedonians in Bulgaria, TMO IMRO (independent), CPA "Nikola Vaptsarov", The Declaration was withheld in the Bulgarian media and published in the Macedonian.

3. Consequences of the events in September 2010

The events during September have led to several extremely unfavorable consequences for the free self-determination of the Macedonians in Bulgaria.

1. The inclusion of sub column 'Macedonian' was officially presented as outrageous, unacceptable, unscientific and incompetent.
2. The Macedonians again by highest level were declared non-existent, and their self-determination for unacceptable.
3. The inclusion of sub column 'Macedonian' was demonstrated as a punishable
4. The removal of sub column 'Macedonian' had a new clearly much more negative psychological effect than simply its absence. Since none of earlier censuses (even those from the period 1944-1956) there had not been a column 'Macedonian' in the Bulgarian censuses. But now for the first time happened an abolition of this column and actually without truly to be introduced.

5. The official denial of the freedom of self-determination by a Minister in the Government, after the conducted dismissals of NSI staff, made clear the negative position of the Government to the Macedonian self-determination.

6. Created was an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear among the Macedonians, but also among the staff of the INSTITUTE and among future census officials.

CENSUS 2011

1. Events on the eve of census – January 2011.

Since only one of all requests and proposals of the Macedonian organizations have been met, notably it was the prohibition of the use of other means of writing except pens¹⁵, and taking into account the previous experience, and the extremely negative atmosphere created after the events of September 2010, on 16 January 2011 on a meeting in the town of Gotse Delchev many Macedonian organizations confirmed their position that they would not recognise the results of the census. These were OMO "Ilinden"-PIRIN, Assembly of the repressed Macedonians, TMO IMRO (independent), Macedonian Christian brotherhood "St. Prophet Ilias", CPA "Nikola Vaptsarov", CPA "Tsar Samuil", CPA "Ilinden". The Macedonian newspapers "Narodna Volia(People's will)" and "Macedonian voice" also joined.

Around 20 January OMO "Ilinden-PIRIN" organized the distribution of 25 000 leaflets appealing to the people with Macedonian conscience freely and without fear to declare their identity. This democratic manifestation was followed by expected counter campaign in the media. It started with press conference given by the extremist ultra nationalistic IMRO NIE in Blagoevgrad. The leaflets were characterized as manipulative attempt to seed Macedonian conscience in the Bulgarians from Pirin Macedonia, also it was claimed that the campaign was financed by the Macedonian special agencies. The party made a threat that it " will summon the District Prosecutor's Office in Blagoevgrad to deal with the case and to punish the authors and distributors of the anti-Bulgarian leaflets". The media pays it a great attention. For example, the regional newspaper "Struma" on 24 January 2011 on its first page published threats of this party against the distributors of the leaflets and that they would be dealt by the Prosecutor's Office. The distribution itself is presented as an attempt of the Macedonian secret services to create problems to Bulgaria. The information is conveyed by influential media as national Darik radio and newspaper "Monitor ". In the publication of "Monitor" and sourcing from it media the distribution is called "illegal propaganda campaign", "illicit distribution" and "criminally distributed leaflets" and is quoted, that distributors will be given to the Prosecution. This news is published in various electronic media.¹⁶

This time, however, the authorities refrain to take a media advertised investigation.

¹⁵ This requirement is well underlined in the Tutorial for completing the census card on page 8.

¹⁶ Darik News, 24 January 2011, Bulgarians being Macedonized in the Census? http://dariknews.bg/view_article.php?article_id=657700, transferred by Dnes +. <http://dnesplus.bg/News.aspx?n=518543>. The publication in "Monitor" is quoted from a publication in Actualno.com, transmitted by Novini.bg <http://www.novini.bg/news/7788> and Kurier.bg <http://kurier.bg/bulgaria/14935.html>.

For the distribution of leaflets in the town of Sandanski activists of OMO Ilinden-PIRIN "reported that they had noticed greater police presence and surveillance of distributors of flyers from police cars and standing on the streets policemen, but there have been no incidents.

On 31.01.2011, in the morning, officers of the State Agency for National Security (SANS) thrust into the printing firm "Iranik-M" in Blagoevgrad and without display order and without giving any explanation confiscated the just printed and still undistributed bulletin "Macedonian voice" in the full edition of 2500 numbers, dedicated mainly to the forthcoming census in Bulgaria, which would begin on 1 February 2011. The Director of the printing firm Stoyan Nikolov Mihailov and one of the workers Ivaylo Ljubchov Mitev were taken by the officers of SANS in the building of the Ministry of Interior affairs in Blagoevgrad and detained throughout the day as they were made to write explanations about the printing of the bulletin. Throughout this time, the staff of the National Security Agency refused to show any order and to give any explanation for their illegal actions. The confiscated bulletin has not been returned.

Two complaints have been logged. One to MIA Blagoevgrad and the other to the Public Prosecutor's Office. Receipt was obtained from the Ministry of the Interior 13 days after sending the letter, from the Public Prosecutor's Office nothing was ever explained about this actions. On February 14, was received a response from the MIA dated 8 February and signed by Director J. Kochev, in which it is alleged that employees of the District Ministry of Interior or the City Police of Blagoevgrad, have not participated in such actions, that similar actions have not been reported nor did the local Police help the authorities of SANS (it is common practice the officers of SANS in actions followed by seizure and confiscations to be accompanied by uniformed staff of MIA). The Public Prosecutor's Office did not send any answer again. However, the case was moved from the Public Prosecutor's Office to the internal security of the MIA, which, through its representative Georgi Atanasov Chikov conducted meeting with the person who sent the appeals to the Office - Stoyko Stoykov on 17 February in the town of Sandanski. Stoykov once more wrote everything to the best of his knowledge of the case and indicated how it can be verified who the involved were: through the entry book of MIA (in which building he arrested printers were held all day), by the name of the called lawyer and by the testimony given by detainees. Stoykov repeatedly stressed that his interrogation is pointless since he was not witness and directed the staff of the internal security to the victimized printers and especially to the owner Nikolov who were the real witnesses. But although he gave the telephone number of the owner of the printing firm on a telephone conversation, on 15 February and again on 17th until the date of submission of this report (20 March) the representatives of the internal security neither have visited, nor have questioned the real witnesses or their lawyer. No new information has been received on the case of the investigation of internal security of MIA or by the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Practically at the time of completion of the report it would not be underestimated the statement that the bulletin is illegally confiscated by the employees of SANS in serious ignorance of the law and the rights of the citizens.

The case caught the attention of the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) as well as the electronic media, Balkan Insight.¹⁷ Harshly protested the organizations Australian-Macedonian Committee of human rights, International human rights committee of Canada and the United Macedonian Diaspora in the United States. The last defies 'The actions of SANS without a corresponding judicial order to detain and confiscate the entire drawing of the bulletin is without precedent in democratic Europe'. In the Bulgarian media that severe case of breaching the freedom of speech did not attract almost any attention.¹⁸

The confiscation of the bulletin placed several serious questions.

1. Why was it confiscated before it came out of the printer? This situation shows clearly that it is not possible to have been any complaints by the citizens from the bulletin and its content. I.e. SANS acted proactively as in the case of prevention of serious public danger. But what danger could there be a bulletin that calls for no violence or illegal action?
2. From where the SANS knew that the bulletin would be printed, and precisely in this printing firm and that this was the day of its completion (printing lasts three days and is completed in 31 January). Inevitably comes the conclusion that the security services in Bulgaria spy on ethnic Macedonian activists and records their phone conversations, a circumstance well known by the Macedonian activists in Bulgaria.
3. Had the employees of SANS a judicial order for their actions? The fact that they have refused to show such and the fact that until today nobody has dared to take responsibility inevitably led us to a negative conclusion.

Considering that the entire issue was dedicated to the census, and that the confiscation was carried out by a public authority on the day before it began, this once again shows the view of the Bulgarian authorities to the self-determination of the Macedonians and their determination to oppose the expressing of Macedonian self-consciousness even with illegal means.

2. Census -February 2011

2.1 Contents of the census card

1. Terminology used in paragraphs 10 and 11 shows the refusal of the Government to treat minorities as national and from there, putting into question the application of the framework Convention for the protection of national minorities. Instead of nationality question 10 says "Your ethnic group is?", and question 11 uses the confusing concept mother tongue, often used to justify a refusal to grant the right of minorities to study the literary language of their nation, since it is not identical with the dialect the respective communities speak.
2. Column for 'Macedonian' is not added but also for other minorities except for the two largest-Turks and Roma.

¹⁷ Macedonian Remains a Dirty Word in Bulgaria, By Boryana Dzhambazova, Balkan Insight 22 February 2011.

¹⁸ Some agencies are satisfied by publishing on their sites short retellings of publications in the Macedonian media, but they are written under the publications about the corresponding countries, i.e. what is being published in the neighboring countries about Bulgaria, and not as news from Bulgaria.

3. Contains many unneeded data such as social security number, employment and other, which may create concerns in the being counted and may influence on the way in which they would self-determine.
4. The absence of signature gives opportunities for any changes and replacements.

2.2. Agitation in the media against the self-determination 'Macedonian'.

On the third day after the beginning of the census the campaign in the media regarding the leaflets was reestablished. As occasion has been used a publication on 3 February in Today. BG: "The people of Plovdiv had been provoked to be counted as Macedonians"¹⁹ based on a signal of the correspondent Zlatka Karaivanova. In this material the leaflets are called "scandalous" and the false information is placed in them that "The people of Plovdiv are called to show and prove that the Macedonians are a nation and a people, and not a minority". On 4 February the IMRO NIE went with official declaration on that occasion. In it the distribution of the leaflet is qualified as "anti-Constitutional action" behind which "stand as the conceptual instigators and financial donors the Macedonian authorities and this is part of their unstoppable anti-Bulgarian propaganda". The distribution of the leaflet by organizations of Bulgarian citizens is qualified as an expression of "the unstoppable anti-Bulgarian campaign of FYROM, whose overall policy is based on anti-Bulgarian feeling". The Declaration was launched from the encirclement of the Mayor of the town of Plovdiv (second largest city in the country) Slavcho Atanasov. People from his surroundings threatened "to signal the prosecutors for this challenge, for it is clear that in 2011, nobody could allow, and most importantly paid agitators from abroad, to divide once more the Bulgarian people as it was split in 1944 by the Serb-communists and their descendants".²⁰ The same material that day was published in Newshub. bg too with the heading "OMO-Ilinden spreads leaflets" Macedonian" and in News. bg with the heading "OMO "Ilinden" agitates to declare ourselves as Macedonians"²¹. The same day agency "Focus" gave the word to the leader of the extremist party Boris Jachev. In the published material was launched the notion that the organizations which had signed the leaflet are registered with the aim "of consuming moneys from Macedonia" (in fact, except one all of the other associations had been refused registration). Distribution of leaflets was described as an attempt for the realization of "provocation of national emergency".²²

In all these cases, as well as in the first media campaign no media took into account the opinion of the distributors! In addition, nobody tried to protect the distributors and their right.

On 6 February, Sunday, several days before the start of the census in person (till 9 February census was only conducted on the Internet) on the Bulgarian national television has been

¹⁹ Today. BG 3. February 2011, Krasimira Gesheva-Tsvetkova, The population of Plovdiv provoked to be counted as Macedonians <http://www.dnes.bg/stranata/2011/02/03/provokirat-plovdivchani-da-se-broiat-kato-makedonci.110449>.

²⁰ Today.bg 4 February 2011, OMO - Ilinden 'PIRIN' told to have handed leaflets "Macedonian", <http://www.dnes.bg/stranata/2011/02/04/omo-ilinden-razdavalo-listovkite-makedonec.110542>.

²¹ http://news.ibox.bg/news/id_1850139509, OMO-Ilinden-razdavalo-leaflets-officially. 374813. html, also <http://www.snews.bg/bg/statiya/pazete-se-mente-prebroitelite-plaznaha:4054>,

²² Vesela Baramova, Boris Yachev : OMO Ilinden - 'PIRIN' distributes leaflets, agitating Bulgarians to be recorded as "Macedonians", <http://www.focus-news.net/?id=n1489013>

broadcast a long program – nearly 5 hours devoted to the nonexistence of the Macedonians. It involved a large number of public people known for not recognizing the Macedonians. Trendafil Mitev Mihov of the Macedonian Scientific Institute²³ explained the nonexistence of Macedonian nation, the famous Bulgarian nationalist from Macedonia Perev explained that the Macedonians do not exist and that the Bulgarians in Macedonia were persecuted, the former Macedonian Premier with Bulgarian citizenship Ljubcho Georgievski spoke for the common origin of the Bulgarians and Macedonians, the well known Ljubka Rondova said that Macedonian refugees from Aegean Macedonia (Greece) were Bulgarians and, and similar like her the protégé of the President folk singer Nikolina Chakardakova explained that the Macedonian refugees from the Aegean were Bulgarians and that those who self-determine themselves as Macedonians in Bulgaria, were only a handful of people.

Since this is a national television, behind which stands the state itself, with the propaganda, which was so actively and in such extraordinary size broadcast on official television once more the State declared itself against the Macedonians and their self-determination.

On the National television on the evening of 10 February when airing the census there was a moment in which the counter official filled out the needed information but when he got to questions 10 and 11 without reading and explaining them directly said that they were optional. Information about the optional nature of questions 10 and 11 was announced in most of the reportages about the beginning of the census. Because these questions are voluntary it could be used as an excuse for many manipulations (as we'll see later) but opens another question because the authorities cite the numbers counted in the minorities as absolute, irrespective of the voluntary nature and possibility not to complete these questions.

2.3. Infringements in the Census – general.

-Frequent practice on the censuses is people to be recorded as Bulgarians without being asked, despite the imperative requirement in the directions for completing the census card that the person being counted must declare his/her ethnic group himself/herself and language. .

-One of the most common forms of manipulation is the ignorance of questions on ethnic group and mother tongue. Using the voluntary nature on these questions, if they aren't filled in, it is considered that the citizen has refused to self-determine. This has been done in different ways. In some places these issues directly are passed (not filed or the citizens are determined automatically as Bulgarians). At others instead of being read questions 10 and 11 the people have been informed that they are optional, so if the citizens were not informed about them could easily be misled to overlook them. In the third variant they are read in a hurry without stopping and allowing the citizen to take respect for them and without their permission to be self-determined as whatever they wish. In the following cases the citizens themselves had to intervene and return the officer to these questions in order to be able to answer.

²³ So-called science propaganda institution aiming to prove that the Macedonian nation and minority does not exist, that Macedonians are Bulgarian. Financed by the budget of the State.

-The counting officer instead of executing the request of the citizen to be recorded Macedonian by completing "Macedonian" in the column 'Others', stated that there was no such box. In the following cases the citizens had to explain the census officers that even though there was no such column they could be recorded 'Macedonian' in the column 'Others', something the officers should have known by the census instructions. This type of manipulation relies on insufficient information of the citizens in order to be taken away the possibility to self-determine as Macedonians, without formally this to be refused to them.

-At the request of the citizens to be recorded as Macedonians the officers have started long arguments that such a nation, language and minority do not exist.

-In many cases, the officers were rude enough to refuse categorically to record citizens as Macedonians with arguments that such do not exist or simply that this could not be done.

-Registered are cases in which the refusal to record the citizens as Macedonians were accompanied by threats. Registered is a case of intimidation of Macedonian activist during the e-Census to be careful how he/she would self-determine ...

-Administrative record - in the absence of citizens in some places (especially in smaller villages)-the officers, often the village mayor, have taken ID cards of the people and are filled out the census cards in their absence. In some places the census officers have taken the necessary data from the mayors and the cards had been filled out without the presence of the people being counted.

-Noted is, especially in the smaller villages, the participation of representatives of public authorities, either as attendants of the census officers or they themselves have taken into the role of counting officers, a circumstance which further more intimidated the representatives of the denied minorities by the State.

-Introduced after the complaints of ethnic Macedonian organizations definite requirement the census cards to be filled with pen is often disrupted. In some cases is neglected, and a pencil was used, and in other cases was disrupted by using a corrector ink. In the first case it had been explained that the at first the field is filled in with pencil in order to be able then to correct any errors in the filling with a pen. In the second - direct corrections were made on the spot – with corrector ink. In one of the cases, even the irreparable paperboard (census card) had been torn and started all over. The latter demonstrates how easy it can be destroyed and refilled the paperboards once they are not signed by the people being counted.

-There were cases where people counted on the internet and given their census number, had been further visited in their homes and asked questions, as the census officers had brought a printout of their paperboard and been asked additional questions and additional information in the cards filled out.

-Messages from the town of Gotse Delchev had been filed, that in the e-Census in completing 'Macedonian' in the column 'Others' the program refuses to accept it.

-There are cases of people who have not been visited by a census office and do not know whether someone has counted them and how.

These basic types of infringements we will illustrate with concrete cases:

2.4 Control examples

* 7 February-the case in the village of Kavrakirovo, Petrich municipality Nikola Kalpsazov was visited by three people, young and strong men, and was told in a threatening voice to watch out with the census and be careful how he would declare himself. The men didn't introduce themselves, or who sent them.

* Before the census started in the homes of 7 February in the village of Musomishte the census officer Lidka Dimitrusheva visited Vasil Madzharov in order to count him. He had to argue a lot because she refused to fill the card in with the self-determination 'Macedonian'. She told him that such a column was not included. After he told her to record him Macedonian in column 'Others' she said that such a nation did not exist. He was forced to be counted over the Internet with number 0262002092.

* On 10 February in the village of Lilianovo (municipality of Sandanski) the census officer was accompanied by a representative of the official authority- the mayor. He was heard to be assuring the officer that the people who were not at their homes, would be recorded anyway because he would give the necessary data.

*On 9 February in the village of Mikrevo, municipality of Strumiani at the house of the Macedonian activist Kostadin Metodiev Petkov the census officer Sofia Panteva was conducting the census and had in her hand a pen and a pencil, however, she did not use the pencil this case. When she came to questions regarding the ethnic group and mother tongue she read them quickly and without waiting or asking Petkov and his wife Zorka Nusheva-Petkova how they would self-determine, she passed to the next question. Petkov had to stop her and return to those questions, only then she recorded him 'Macedonian'. The census officer has done so only with these two questions!

* On 11 February in Blagoevgrad on 'Colonel Drangov' street in the house of Yordan Kirilov Palahanski the census officer categorically stated that she was unable to record him 'Macedonian' and told him 'Think about it, you might feel sorry about this later!' Followed by more than 15 minute dispute on the matter whether or not did Macedonians exist she finally wrote down something according to her own discretion, deciding it without asking. Palahanski does not know as what he has been recorded but by the conversation held he assumes has been recorded as a Bulgarian.²⁴

* On 13 February in Sandanski in the house of Strahil Tupalski, the census officer attempted to fill the board in with pencil, he objected and insisted to be used pen. She explained that the pencil was used so if there were any errors they could be corrected. After Tupalski insisted to use a pen the officer agreed. When she reached to column nationality Tupalski stated that he wanted to be recorded Macedonian. Instead of executing his desire she

²⁴ In Balkan Insight the case was described as follows: February 11, on the second day of the classic population count in the Balkan country, Pahler, 51, welcomed two officials responsible for filling in the questionnaires for his neighbourhood into his home. Little did he know that he would soon find himself having to justify his choice of ethnic identity to them. "We were arguing for more than 15 minutes over the existence of Macedonians, and in the end I'm not sure which ethnic group the official put me in," he told Balkan Insight. "They basically don't count us as a people," he complained, puffing away at his cigarette, still irritated by the humiliating experience.

exclaimed: ' Well now. There is no such a column?! "Tupalski had to explain in detail that despite the absence of column 'Macedonian' she could record him such in the column 'Others', and then without causing more problems the counter office recorded him Macedonian. But if he hadn't been informed well, she would not record him Macedonian.

* On 17 February about five o'clock in the afternoon two census officers visited the family of Vasilka Tihanova Tsoneva on str. "Krajrechka" in the town of Sandanski. After having counted the husband who declared himself Bulgarian they past to Vasilka. She told them to record her 'Macedonian' at which the census officers reacted harshly, asking how could this be if she was not married to a Macedonian, but to a Bulgarian. She was asked for her ID card. She said that she was going to give it to them and answer any questions after they recorded her 'Macedonian'. They were very angry at this statement, the lady told them that if they didn't record her 'Macedonian', they were free to go, the younger of the two women-officers threatened her that they would come the next day with the police and would charge her 120 BGN because she refused to be counted. After the case was published in the Macedonian media and widely on television "Channel 5" on the Bulgarian media it was reflected absolutely incorrectly. So on 21 February in the news agency Actualno.com a text was published commenting the messages in the Macedonian media. Not only the self-determination as 'Macedonian' of Vasilka was enclosed in quotation marks, but she was also announced as Roma. This change in her origin has been carried out without any verification and without any concrete information — Tsoneva was never contacted. The news agency conceals behind the letter of an alleged reader, whose name is not specified, but the Roma origin of Vasilka is given as a citation of it.²⁵ The reason for all of this was to protect the census officers who contravened roughly the right of self-determination, to acclaim the self-determination of Vasilka as unnatural and false and to be compromised her testimony for the infringement to it and dealing with threats, while at the same time show that the case has nothing to do with Macedonians. In fact, Vasilka is from the family of Macedonian activists, her father Tihan is one of the first members of OMO Ilinden ", her brother Atanas graduated in Skopje and works there as a journalist, and she herself is a regular participant in the Macedonian commemoration in memory of Yane Sandanski. This manipulative message has been re-published by a large number of Bulgarian media.²⁶ On 21 February by the case was interested the national television BTV, as its journalist Peter Tomov seeked contact with Vasilka through OMO Ilinden-PIRIN and obtained it. There was a conversation with Vasilka on 22 February in the morning and she's been told that if she had been recorded Bulgarian against her will, the journalist would come and do an interview but if it was anything else they weren't be interested. The manipulation with the false Roma origin was not good enough reason to come and do an interview. A few hours after this conversation, around 12 o'clock at the home of Vasilka arrived the census officers again, this time extremely polite and recorded her and her child as Macedonians, without even making a question, that the father is Bulgarian. All of this happened after a 5 day absence (despite the promise to come the next day)and after the national private television BTV showed interest in the case. Still

²⁵ A similar approach to the manipulation of news about Macedonian minority in the Bulgarian media is widely spoken. The media usually refer to anonymous letters, anonymous sources, people who had desired anonymity and so on in order to distribute fully targeted and incorrect information which would compromise the dignity and actions of individual Macedonian activists or entire organizations.

²⁶ For example, moments after the publication in the in Actualno.com the same news is already in the BG News, in which except the alleged Roma origin was added the following text: "Macedonian journalists made anthropogenic-social revolutionary discoveries, by starting to identify with the people of Roma origin". On 22 February the same was published in the regional newspaper "Struma" too.

doubts remain about interference of a third party for not airing her case on national television.

* Nicholaj Mitev from Petrich but living in Sofia was visited in his rented flat by census officers. They skipped questions 10 and 11 and Mitev had to ask them to return to them. They asked him "but you are Bulgarian, right?" but Mitev said that he was Macedonian, to which he was told that such a thing as Macedonian nation did not exist. After having insisted the officers agreed and recorded him 'Macedonian'.

* In the village of Kolarovo, Petrich municipality Irina Shopova refused to record as Macedonian Makedonka Veleva Gugusheva/Markova, 88 years old, with the argument that "here there are not Macedonians". Makedonka firmly insisted as well that even her name as an argument, and said that she was named after Macedonia, but however the counting official recorded her as Bulgarian. The old lady spoke crying later about her experience to her neighbor Georgi Markov, she said that they made her to feel "as though I was a traitor". After two days the same counting officer revisited Makedonka since some data has been faulted, and this time, after many requests she recorded Makedonka as Macedonian and even shared that many young people claimed to be Macedonians as well.

* The same census officer in the same village, on the request of Georgi Markov to be declared Macedonian the answer was that a column like this was not included. But after he explained that there was a column in which you could be declared as other nationality, she made no more objections.

* The counting officer Victoria Tokova visited the home of Nadezhda Stankova in the village of Kolarovo, Petrich municipality. On the question of ethnicity Nadezhda declared that she wished to be recorded as Macedonian. The officer replied that there was no such column. After Nadezhda insisted the woman agreed to it, but wrote Macedonian filled with pencil.

* In the village of Samuilovo, Petrich municipality. At the home of Krum Filatov the census officer was writing with pen, but in few places she made corrections with corrector ink. For one unrecoverable error she called on the phone and then torn the form and filled in a new one. She recorded Filatov as Macedonian without making any problems, but when recording the rest of the family (6 people, which were not at home at that moment) whenever he said Macedonian, she asked him – "But are you sure?" to which he always replied – "More than that I speak with you at the moment?"

* In the village of Samuilovo, Petrich municipality Tsveta Atanasova Gogova, 85-year-old woman, was found by the census officer with the help of her neighbor Krum Filatov. He told the census lady that granny Tsveta was also a Macedonian and then left. When the census officer was ready Filatov asked whether granny Tsveta was recorded as Macedonian to which the officer looked as even though very surprised and exclaimed: 'Oh, I have recorded her Bulgarian and now I can't make corrections and delete', then fled through the door outside. The census official did not ask the elderly woman about her nationality although she had been made aware of that, and despite Filatov's warning she recorded her as Bulgarian. She refused to correct her "error" although previously in Filatov's home did not hesitate to use corrective ink to make adjustments.

* The village of Samuilovo, Petrich municipality. Ivan Donchev was visited by Valentin Alexandrov Atanasov (census officer), activist of the nationalist party IMRO. When he came

to the question of nationality the official advised him to declare as Bulgarian, because he knew that the citizen was a Macedonian activist. After Atanasov insisted he finally was recorded as Macedonian.

* Georgi Orakov of Belasitsa, Petrich municipality, reported that his cousin from the same village, who does not wish his name to be mentioned, that the census officials did not ask him for ethnicity and mother tongue.

* The town of Stamboliyski. The census officials rushed in marking column "Bulgarian" in questions 10 and 11 without asking the citizens for their self-determination. Dimitar Moskov stopped a woman who was counting him and ask her to record him Macedonian and his language - Macedonian, to which the census lady responded in a dismay that so far she has not encountered anyone like him. Moskov states that this approach has been widely applied in the town of Stamboliyski and the surrounding area.

* The town of Stamboliyski-Nikola Marvakov was recorded without being asked as Bulgarian. The present at the moment Jordan Kojnarev, knowing the Macedonian self-consciousness of his friend pointed to him that he was recorded Bulgarian and advised him to ask for his census card(board) to be destroyed and filled out a new one in which he could respond to questions 10 and 11, according to how he himself determines. Marvakov refused to do so, saying that he prefers to leave as it is as he would not want to have problems.

* The Mayor of the village of Teshovo, Gotse Delchev municipality - Dimitar Popov would collect the ID cards of the elderly people and filled them in at the Town Hall on his own initiative. The village is known as a stronghold of OMO 'Ilinden'-PIRIN.

* In the village of Teshovo, Gotse Delchev municipality, an elderly woman who wished to remain anonymous testified: "I am Macedonian and my husband is such. I would have declared myself Macedonian if it was not for the mayor who gathered our ID cards and without asking us, declared us as whatever he decided".

* In Hadzhidimovo Naska Dermendzhieva was not at all asked about ethnicity and language.

* In Gotse Delchev, in the house of Ivan Singartijski the census officer used corrector ink to correct the incorrect lines. The same commented that where he worked in the local school they weren't allowed to use it in any documents and where amendments were made a signature had to be given next to the amendment. He was amazed how you could use corrector ink at a census since this would allow arbitrary changing of the data.

* Asenovgrad, a couple of census officials - a man and a woman visited the home of Zdravko Gramatikov who was not at home, his wife was at home only. She asked for her husband to be recorded Macedonian, but the couple responded that in Bulgaria there were not any Macedonians. The officials started a dispute and because they did not stop the woman told them to leave. When they came again the husband was at home and insisted to be recorded Macedonian. After some resistance the officials stopped arguing, but tried to write with a pencil. The man had to argue once more to force them to fill in the information with ink.

* A similar case with the same pair of census officials from Asenovgrad. Yordanka Popkrasteva requested to be recorded Macedonian, to which she was replied that there were no such people in Bulgaria. The woman was very persistent and after a long dispute

forced the officials to record her as a Macedonian. According to our sources the same pair of officials had lots of similar cases.

* In the village of Liaski, Gotse Delchev municipality Ivan Vantov said that the official Liliana Pandareva did not want to record Macedonian. She made it after a great dispute.

* In Musomishte, Gotse Delchev the official Kostadinka Apostolova had filled in the census cards of Petra and Slavka Uzunov without even mentioning questions 10 and 11.

* Petra Churukova from the village of Musomishte was recorded as Bulgarian instead of Macedonian as it was her wish. Kostadinka Apostolova stated that Macedonians did not appear in the census card.

* From the same village has been received information that, on the briefing of the census officials in the municipality, they were not given instructions to respect the freedom of self-determination, questions 10 and 11 have been completely ignored leaving the census officials to understand them on their own. Given the negative and intimidating atmosphere created by the Government and media before the census, together with the existing prejudice towards the Macedonian minority, the absence of instructions on how to fill out these questions and guidelines for respecting the right of self-determination have opened the door for all kinds of infringements on this matter. In this particular action once again is seen the reserved position of the State on the matter of freedom of self-determination.²⁷

* In the town of Gotse Delchev municipality the Committee of OMO " Ilinden" -PIRIN in a recorded statement on the meeting held on 18 March reported a problem with the e-census, where after filling in the word Macedonian in the column 'Other' — the program refused to accept it and skipped to the next page. The reason for this is unknown. It was not reported from other places for a similar problem.

* Spas Zahariev from Blagoevgrad counted himself over the Internet. He left the number on the door to be taken by the census official and so it happened. Later on he was visited by the official who brought with himself a printout of his census card. He was asked additional questions about his property. Zahariev expressed concern that these additional questions and amendments on the card could serve as an opportunity for amending of his self-determination. There were many similar cases in Blagoevgrad.

* Citizens on a State employment insisting on their anonymity have declared that they were reluctant to declare as Macedonians on the census due to fear of losing their jobs. Their fear is real ,taking in mind the dismissals of employees of the NSI for the admission of sub column Macedonian in the censuses.²⁸

²⁷ The municipal census committees are dominated by officials of the municipal and local administration in accordance with art. 19.3 of the law on census of the population.

²⁸ . These cases are used for illustration and do not represent the total number, which will also include insufficient documented cases, requests the case not to mentioned and so on. Registered cases are too many having in mind that the ethnic Macedonian organizations which prepared the report do not have the capacity to cover all or at least a substantial proportion of the representatives of the minority-scattered throughout the country, and almost all their members and activists preferred to be counted on the Internet in order to avoid the problems made in past censuses.

2.6. Additional notes

-The authors of the report failed to obtain an expert opinion on the matter whether it is possible to manipulate the results of the e-census. The position of the State against the existence of the Macedonian minority and the Macedonian self-determination created serious worries about this being actually possible.

-In the collection of information about the specific infringements was concluded that the Macedonians were highly reluctant to speak about what had happened during the census in order of fear of having problems. Some of the people even refuse to speak, other shared their story, but did not give consent to be stated, third agree, but insisted on anonymity. Even those who agree that their names be mentioned in the report do not wish to submit individual complaints in the census commissions and do not wish to deal with police, Court and administration.

-It should be noted that the direction of the NSI particularly its chairwoman made some efforts to protect the right of self-determination, first on television in a debate with Minister Dimitrov, then in public statements at a press conference in Blagoevgrad before the very beginning of the census. In addition, in the instructions for completing the census cards are placed unambiguous indications that the citizen determines to which ethnic group he/she belongs and what mother tongue they speak. Also in this guide is underlined with a thick line the requirement the information to be recorded only with ink. But despite these efforts, the NSI was not in a position to compete with the impressions and actions by the Government, nor to protect its dismissed workers. Unfortunately these requirements, as indicated, did not have a great impact on the census officials and had been widely infringed.

CONCLUSION

The summary enables the following conclusions to be made:

- 1.** The census was carried out in official and public position of the State that the Macedonian minority, nation, language, etc. do not exist.
- 2.** It was conducted in one generated by decades negative public atmosphere which sees the self-determination as Macedonian as national treason, anti-Bulgarian(anti-patriotic) and an act against the state.
- 3.** It was conducted in a manifestly demonstrated negative position of the Government towards the Macedonian self-determination, and denying/restricting the right of self-determination by representatives of the Government.
- 4.** It was held in an atmosphere of fear and mistrust among the Macedonians, as well as uncertainty among the census officials created by the public message sent by the Government that the tolerance of the self-determination as Macedonian is potentially punishable (the dismissal of the five specialists from the NSI for the inclusion of "non-existent" columns).

- 5.** The Government has not taken any measures to correct this unacceptable situation, although it has been warned by the ethnic Macedonian organizations. On the contrary, there were undertaken specific measures to make these problems even worse.
- 6.** The content of census cards included an extraordinarily large number of personal information, such as social security number, address, place of work, and such of the kind that further intensify the mistrust among some groups of citizens, and specifically among the Macedonians, that whatever was recorded might be misused against them (this is especially true for the Macedonians who have state jobs).
- 7.** There was no transparency about how the collected results will be treated nor control and guarantee that interference will not be admitted, there was no protection against the replacement of census cards.
- 8.** The Government has intervened before and during the census by its officials in order to influence the self-determination as Macedonian.
- 9.** Column Macedonian was not included in the census, despite the apparent need for it.
- 10.** Multiple violations and manipulations were observed during the census, which minimizes the number of people with Macedonian self-determination in Bulgaria.
- 11.** Questions on ethnicity and mother tongue are voluntary, but nevertheless the results for minorities are cited by Government representatives as absolute figures.