

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS OF THE JUNE 17 AGREEMENT

Dear Members of the Universal Periodic Review Secretariat and Civil Society Section,

I am reaching out to you on behalf of over 11,000 citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, who have signed the **complaint** attached to this letter, in relation to the Agreement signed this June 17, 2018¹ (hereafter referred to as the June 17 Agreement) between the Governments of Greece and Macedonia on the "name issue," under the auspices of United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative Matthew Nimetz. I am also reaching out to you on behalf of numerous non-governmental organisations in the Republic of Macedonia and across the world. Together, we represent millions of Macedonians who speak the Macedonian language, and who identify themselves as Macedonians.

We wish to first and foremost **alert you of the fact that the June 17 Agreement aims to change the name, language, and identity² of the Macedonians.** This type of undertaking, you will agree, is unprecedented in the history of mankind. It not only violates the fundamental right to self-determination and basic cultural rights of 15 Macedonians across the world, but it is a crime against humanity – a genocide in the making.

We also wish to inform you that the President of the Republic of Macedonia has publicly refused to sign the June 17 Agreement, and stands by the Macedonians and their basic human rights. He risks being impeached and has already received threats due to this refusal.

We would like to remind you of the following words pronounced by Raphael Lemkin – the man who coined the word "genocide" and who first drafted the Genocide Convention: "Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The *objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups...*"³

This is exactly what is currently happening to the Macedonians.

The cultural genocide of Macedonians has its roots in history – a history in which certain current Member States of the European Union played a significant a role. We would like to bring your attention to the fact that we are aiming to request a public apology from these Member States, for their century old denial of the Macedonians' basic human rights, including the right to speak their language and nurture their ethnic and

¹ "Final Agreement for the Settlement of the Differences as Described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), the Termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the Establishment of a Strategic Partnership between the Parties," which can be found at: <http://s.kathimerini.gr/resources/article-files/symfwnia-aggliko-keimeno.pdf>

² See page 3 of the Agreement, as cited below :

- a) "The **official name** of the Second Party shall be "Republic of North Macedonia" which shall be the constitutional name of the Second Party and shall be used erga omnes, as provided for in this Agreement. The short name of the Second Party shall be "North Macedonia."
- b) The **nationality** of the Second Party shall be Macedonian/citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia, as it will be registered in all travel documents.
- c) The **official language** of the Second Party shall be the "Macedonian language," as recognized by the Third UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in Athens in 1977, and described in Article 7(3) and (4) of this Agreement."

³ Lemkin, Raphael, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, 1944, pp. 79-95 (italics added)

national identity, their cultural heritage and their history. We have also requested the United Nations Human Rights Council to establish an Independent Commission of Inquiry to investigate the crimes against humanity, war crimes, aggression, and genocide, that Greece, and some of these Member States may have committed, from 1913 until today, in line with their policy of denial of the identity and language of the ethnic Macedonians.

The root causes of the “name issue” and the recent seemingly innocent “good-neighborly” June 17 Agreement are in fact the attempt by Greece, since 1913, to eliminate the indigenous Macedonian population from its territory – a people which it acquired together with the acquisition of 51% of the territory of geographic Macedonia, following the two Balkan Wars (1912 & 1913), and the subsequent Treaty of Bucharest (1913).

The June 17 Agreement, far from being a “political solution to an issue,” is the **continuation and internationalization of the over one hundred years of torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, legal, physical and psychological repression, and various other policies of assimilation, including the denial of ethnic identity, population exchanges, forced mass exoduses, the forcible transfer of children, the use of chemical weapons and psychological warfare, psychological propaganda and indoctrination, and other state policies vis-à-vis the Macedonian minority in Greece, that likely amount to crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide.**

For example, while the rest of the world was engaged in the civil rights movement, in Greece, the year 1959 was known as the “year of the oaths,” where hundreds of thousands of Macedonians were gathered early in the morning in each village, to swear in front of political leaders, the military, and officials from the local church and the local school, that they would never speak the Macedonian language again. This “ceremony” was described in the September 1, 1959 Athenian newspaper, *Sphaira*, and was cited by Greek anthropologist Anastasia Karakasidou in Richard Clogg’s edition entitled *Minorities in Greece: Aspects of a Plural Society* :

“Silence fell as the villagers each raised their right hand and repeated after the president: ‘I promise in front of God, men, and the official authorities of our State, that I will stop speaking the Slavic idiom which gives reason for misunderstanding (parexigisi) to the enemies of our country, the Bulgarians, and that I will speak, everywhere and always, the official (episimi) language of our country, Greece, in which the Holy Gospel of Jesus Chris is written.’ After the oath, the village teacher addressed the congregation. [...] We have decided, with pride, all together, to stop speaking the foreign idiom which has no relation to our very Greek descent. In this way, we offer honour and gratitude to those Greek co-patriots who gave us our freedom with their blood. Long Live the King! Long Live the Greek State! Long Live our Undefeated Army!”⁴

The Macedonian language is forbidden in Greece to this very day. The Greek government continues to deny that such a language exists. The June 17 Agreement is thus also a continuation of the present Greek domestic policy of denial of the ethnic identity and language of the Macedonian minority in Greece, about which numerous human rights experts have warned, including Gay McDougall, United Nations Independent Expert on Minority Issues; Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe; the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance; and Human Rights Watch. Please refer to these and other documents listed in annex to this letter, for more information on this matter. Please also refer to the following documentaries of victims and witnesses of these violations: <https://youtu.be/L9r1J4Abwmg> (victims who fled to Canada); <https://youtu.be/ZxJyC-qhx8o> (victims who fled to Australia); <https://youtu.be/QKxXDaO4Sbw> (victims who fled to Macedonia); <https://youtu.be/A0pNAV9t-Qc> (Arguments from the Black Book of Victims).

As such, we appeal to you to **understand the urgency of the matter, the scale, scope and implications of the June 17 Agreement resolving the so-called “name issue,” and the imperative of raising, at the Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Macedonia to be held in January 2019, THE RIGHTS THAT ARE BEING VIOLATED WITH THE JUNE 17 AGREEMENT, ENUMERATED IN THE COMPLAINT ATTACHED TO THIS LETTER WHICH WAS SIGNED BY 11,000 CITIZENS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA.**

⁴ Karakasidou, Anastasia. “Cultural Illegitimacy in Greece: the Slavo-Macedonian ‘Non-Minority.’” In *Minorities in Greece: Aspects of a Plural Society*, edited by Richard Clogg. London: Hurst and Company, 2002.

We appeal to you to call on the Macedonian Government to:

- 1) **Immediately annul the June 17 Agreement**, which blatantly denies the Macedonian peoples' rights to self-determination and their cultural rights, and is a form of cultural genocide;
- 2) **Accept the establishment of a Fact Finding Mission by the United Nations Human Rights Council** to establish the whether the June 17 Agreement, is in complete and utter violation of the fundamental and basic human rights of the Macedonians (rights enumerated in the complaint attached to this letter). This Fact-Finding Mission should also be tasked with determining the link between the present policies of denial of the ethnic Macedonian identity and language within and outside of Greece, including through the "name issue" and the June 17 Agreement, and the past violations of human rights of the Macedonian minority in Greece (from 1913 until today) which may amount to crimes against humanity, war crimes, aggression, and genocide.
- 3) **Call for the establishment of an Independent Commission of Inquiry by the United Nations Human Rights Council**, to establish the truth and to examine whether war crimes, crimes against humanity, aggression and genocide were perpetrated against the Macedonian minority in Greece between 1913 and today. This Commission should be tasked with determining the link between these past violations, and the present policies of denial of the ethnic Macedonian identity within and outside of Greece, including through the "name issue" and the June 17 Agreement.

The international community must henceforth focus on the preventive aspects of the ongoing issues in the world, before it is too late. We solicit you to react before the June 17 Agreement has been set in stone, and the Macedonians have been erased from the world's maps and history books. We have faith in your judgement, and I trust you will act accordingly.

We remain at your disposal for a meeting at your earliest convenience, having in mind the urgency of the matter.

With kind regards,

Vera Lalchevska, PhD

Director of the Joint Representative Office to the
United Nations Office in Geneva of Macedonian
Non-Governmental Organisations Worldwide

**COMPLAINT AND POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR A COMPLAINT TO THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL
RAPPOREUR IN THE FIELD OF CULTURAL RIGHTS, AS WELL AS TO ALL OTHER RELEVANT
NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES/INSTITUTIONS AND COURTS COMPETENT
FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS**

I, THE PERSON SIGNED ON THE BACK OF THIS SHEET, GIVE THE POWER OF ATTORNEY TO THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS: “WORLD MACEDONIAN CONGRESS,” “MACEDONIAN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT INTERNATIONAL,” AND “PRERODBA,” AND/OR TO THEIR REPRESENTATIVE IN GENEVA – TO SUBMIT IN MY NAME, A COMPLAINT TO THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPOREUR IN THE FIELD OF CULTURAL RIGHTS, AS WELL AS TO ALL OTHER RELEVANT NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES/INSTITUTIONS AND COURTS COMPETENT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS – FOR THE VIOLATION OF MY BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS WITH THE NAME TALKS (NEGOTIATIONS), AND WITH THE NON-RECOGNITION, DENIAL, OR ATTEMPT TO CHANGE MY ETHNIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITY (MACEDONIAN), MY LANGUAGE (MACEDONIAN), THE HISTORY OF MY PEOPLE, AS WELL AS THE CONSTITUTION OF MY COUNTRY, THE CONSTITUTIONAL NAME OF MY COUNTRY (REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA), AND ALL OTHER NATIONAL SYMBOLS OF MY COUNTRY. WITH THE NAME TALKS (NEGOTIATIONS) AND THE AFOREMENTIONED ACTS AND ATTEMPTS, THE FOLLOWING FLAGRANT VIOLATIONS OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS, AS WELL AS CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, ARE DIRECTLY BEING INFLICTED UPON ME:

- Denial of the Right to Self-Determination, established as an absolute right to all peoples under common Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Denial of Human Dignity, under Article 1 of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
- Denial of Integrity of the Person, under Article 3 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
- Discrimination based on language and national origin, and on the international status of the country, under Article 2 of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights
- Denial of cultural rights, under the Preamble and Articles 1, 3, 6, and 15 of the of the International Covenant for Economic Social and Cultural Rights
- Intentional destruction of cultural heritage, as defined under Part II of the UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage
- Degrading and Inhuman Treatment under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights;
- Torture, under Article 1 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Crimes Against Humanity, Under Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court
- Genocide, under Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and under Article 6 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

AS A VICTIM TO THESE FLAGRANT VIOLATIONS OF MY BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS, IMPOSED UPON ME BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF CERTAIN COUNTRIES AND REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND ALLIANCES, I GIVE MY EXPRESS CONSENT TO THE SPECIAL RAPPOREUR OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE FIELD OF CULTURAL RIGHTS AND THE OTHER RELEVANT MANDATE-HOLDERS IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS:

- To send letters and communications, and file complaints and lawsuits on my behalf;
- To indicate and explain in their communications and correspondences to the respective governments and representatives of regional and international organizations and alliances, all flagrant and grave violations of my rights and freedoms;
- To indicate, whenever and wherever relevant, my name and / or the name of the entity I represent;
- To publish this information in a public report;
- And to take specific measures in the direction of the protection and promotion of my fundamental human rights.

ANNEX: PUBLICATIONS AND LITERATURE FOR REFERENCE WITH REGARD TO THE “NAME ISSUE”

PUBLICATIONS:

- Human Rights Watch Report “Denying Ethnic Identity: The Macedonians of Greece” (New York/Washington, D.C./ Los Angeles / London: Human Rights Watch, 1994)
- United Nations Human Rights Council, “Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights, Civil Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Including the Right to Development: Report of the Independent Expert on Minorities Issues, Gay McDougall - Addendum, Mission to Greece, 8-16 September, 2008” (Human Rights Council, 18 February 2009)
- Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, “Report on Visit to Greece on 8-10 December of 2008” (Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 19 February, 2009)
- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, “Report on Greece” (Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 15 September, 2009)
- Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the “Case of Sidiropoulos and Others v. Greece” (Judgment, Strasbourg, 10 July 1998) (Finding Greece in Violation of Article 11: Freedom of Assembly and Association of the European Convention on Human Rights for closing down the Home of Macedonian Culture)
- Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the “Case of Ouranio Toxo and Others v. Greece” (Judgement, Strasbourg, 20 October, 2005; 20 January, 2006)
- Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the “Case of the House of Macedonian Civilisation and Others v. Greece,” (App.no. 1295/10 Strasbourg, 9 July 2015)
- Statements by Greek Helsinki Watch, and Panayote Dimitras, Greek Human Rights Defender, at the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, and Committee on Civil and Political Rights, on Greece

LITERATURE:

- “Legal Aspects of the Use of a Provisional Name for Macedonia in the United Nations System” (Igor Janev: *American Journal of International Law*, Jan 1999, pp.155-160)
- *The Importance of Being Macedonian: Origins and Consequences of the 'Name Issue' Between Greece and Macedonia* (Vera Lalchevska: Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, January 2017)
- *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood, Passages into Nationhood in Greek Macedonia from 1897 to 1998* (Anastasia Karakasidou: Chicago University Press, 1997) : Note –Just when this Greek anthropologist’s book was about to be published by Cambridge University Press, it was pulled back last minute, causing a scandal and the resignation of three professors from the Cambridge University Editorial Board. Karakasidou subsequently published her book in Chicago University Press.
- “Cultural Illegitimacy in Greece: the Slavo-Macedonian ‘Non-Minority.’” (Anastasia Karakasidou: *Minorities in Greece: Aspects of a Plural Society*, edited by Richard Clogg. London: Hurst and Company, 2002)
- *Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory* (Loring M. Danforth and Riki Van Boeschoten, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012)
- “Childhood in the Maelstrom of Political Unrest: The Childtowns (Paidopoleis) and the Experience of Displacement in Thrace during the Greek Civil War (1946-1949),” (Theodorou, Vassiliki and Vassiliki Vassiloudi *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Vol. 5, No 1, 2012)
- *In the Shadow of Olympus: The Emergence of Macedon*. (Eugene Borza, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990)