

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION BULLETIN 1/2006

1. THE “POLITICAL HEADLINES”

Lawsuit Filed against Leader of *Ataka*

On 01.02.2006 66 non-governmental organisations and prominent individuals filed a civil claim lawsuit against Mr. Volen Siderov, the leader of the *Ataka* political party, for publicly inciting ethnic hatred. The legal suit, based on the Law for Protection against Discrimination, was filed over Siderov's numerous public statements, including in his own TV show, where regularly speaks against “gypsy criminality”, and “Turkish separatism” or the “international Jewish elite”. The *Ataka* party, which describes itself as patriotic, holds 15 seats in Parliament, but is considered by many as a nationalist and extremist political power.

<http://coalicia.hit.bg/>

<http://www.stop-discrimination.org/>

The Prosecutor's Office Found Guilty of Discrimination

Mr Ivelin Iliev, a Roma man, has won a race discrimination lawsuit against the Bulgarian Prosecutor's Office. The first-instance court found the Prosecutor's Office guilty of race discrimination, committed by a prosecutor in the Razgrad Prosecutor's Office. The Prosecutor had made derogatory and slighting remarks against the Roma minority in official prosecutorial decrees issued by him. The statements are contained in the prosecutor's ruling, terminating the investigation into the death of Mr. Iliev's brother, killed by a landslide while collecting scrap metal as part of his job.

The court found that from the words of the prosecutor it can be concluded “[...] that, in his view, the Roma are undisciplined, unruly, irrational, greedy and uncivilized.” The court opinion states that the prosecution's expressed “slighting attitude” constitutes an act of discrimination, because “if another ethnic group were referred to, no such qualifications would have been made [...] It is namely on the grounds of the Roma ethnicity that the prosecutor made qualifications of the psychology of this ethnic group's members, in particular that of the victims – the plaintiff and his family.” The plaintiff is supported by the European Roma Rights Center.

<http://www.bghelsinki.org/index.php?module=news&id=500>

2. LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

Anti-discrimination Clause in the New Law of the Ministry of Interior

A new Law of the Ministry of Interior was adopted on 09.02.2006 and will enter into force on 01.05.2006. For a first time the Law, governing the work of the Ministry, introduces the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, race, and religious affiliation as one of the main guiding principles for hiring and for professional development of Ministry of Interior staff (Art.169.4). The Ministry's staff includes not only Ministry employees but all police officers, fire-fighters, and all other agencies, totaling some 60 000 individuals.

<http://www.parliament.bg/bills/40/502-01-31.pdf>

3. RESEARCH

A new report by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee evaluates NGO run desegregation projects in eight cities. The publication also presents the main achievements and failures of the official government policy regarding the desegregation of Roma education in Bulgaria between 2002 and 2005. The report examines the multi-cultural attitudes, social distance, and academic achievements of Bulgarians and Roma students in 26 schools. The research finds the Roma children in integrated schools to score better on tests than Roma children in segregated schools. In addition, a national household survey finds that the Bulgarians, who have had contact with Roma, are less likely to have negative ethnic prejudice. Bulgarians that have happened to visit a Roma home, are 3.5 times less likely, than those that have not, to agree with the statement that the "Roma are lazy and irresponsible". The household survey also indicates that 86% of Bulgarians would oppose their children being in a class where most of the students were Roma, and 27% would oppose even if there were only a few Roma children in the class. On the other hand, most Roma (84%) support desegregation programs.

Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (2006), *Five Years Later: The Non-Governmental Projects for Desegregation of Roma Education in Bulgaria*

<http://www.bghelsinki.org/index.php?module=resources&lg=bg&id=327>

4. ANNEX

