

HELSINKI COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



BIMONTHLY REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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PUBLIC EVENTS AND VIOLATIONS TO DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

INCIDENTS CAUSED BY RELIGIOUS HATRED AND INTOLERANCE

During the reporting period two incidents occurred, caused by religious hatred and intolerance. The Helsinki Committee was notified by the Islamic Religious Community in the Republic of Macedonia (IRC) about the first incident that occurred on July 21st, 2013 in the village Dobroshinci, in the municipality of Vasilevo. In the correspondence it is stated that the Imam as a religious official in the village, after he finished the Isha prayer (afternoon prayer), was physically attacked by a group of villagers. According to IRC, prior to this incident he was provoked by another villager who in a rude and indecent manner asked the imam how long does he plan on practicing Islam in the village. Although the case was reported to the police, IRC was not informed whether measures have been taken against the perpetrators. The Helsinki Committee lodged a complaint to the Police Station in the City of Strumica.

The second incident occurred on August 25th in the village Oktisi, Struga. According to reports by the media the Muslim villagers blocked the road that leads to the village and thus prevented the laying of the foundation stone of the Orthodox church. The group of villagers carried Arabic flags and did not allow the priests from the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ohrid Archbishopric (MOC), as well as the donor of the church to pass through. Then the Khoja through the loudspeaker on the minaret of the village mosque, addressed the Muslim villagers in the village Oktisi, in Macedonian, and called upon them to go out on the street and to prevent the construction of the church and the consecration of the foundations. Soon after the police arrived at the scene, stretched a cordon and separated the two groups of citizens, one of them orthodox, the other Muslim. The mayor of the municipality of Struga-Zijadin Sela arrived at the scene and called for calming of the tensions and initiating dialogue to resolve the problem. The dialogue between representatives of MOC and the mayor of the municipality of Struga began on August 30th and also the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski called for calming of the tensions.

The Helsinki Committee, despite these two incidents, this year noted an increased number of incidents caused by religious hatred and intolerance. The incidents refer to verbal provocations, insulting graffiti and stoning of religious objects and physical assaults due to ignorance of the Quran, refusal to kiss the cross under coercion or to wear the cross as a pendant.

The Helsinki Committee regarding the case in the village Dobrosinci considers that the criminal act “causing national, racial and religious hatred, discord and intolerance” has been done and will insist that the attackers are found and treated according to the positive legal norms. Regarding the events in the village Oktisi, the Committee welcomes the conduct of the police which prevented a larger incident, as well as the initiative for finding a solution for the religious communities and the local self-government. However, it should be noted that

the state responds to these incidents sporadically and post festum and not preemptively and in the spirit of protection of religious freedoms. It is especially worrying that after these incidents the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and Religious Groups remains silent and does not exercise its competences. It is also noticeable that the Center for Crisis Management, which is competent to monitor such incidents, caused by religious hatred and intolerance, and to give recommendations to resolve them, does not fulfill its obligations.

**INITIATIVE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL DEFINING OF MARRIAGE SOLELY AS
A COMMUNITY BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN**

The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia is a legal act of the highest rank which contains the basic human rights and freedoms. Unlike laws, the procedure for amending the general rules and norms contained in the Constitution demands greater political support due to the purpose and maintenance of the system of rule of law and equality. At the same time it provides citizens legal security from direct interference and restrictions of the state i.e. the executive power with the basic rights and freedoms, the principle of equality in rights and freedoms and rule of law in a democratic system. According to the abovementioned, the basic rights and freedoms such as the right to self-identification, right to privacy with an emphasis on family life, status and the right to free choice should not be subject to introduction of restrictions. This especially refers to restrictions that may influence towards establishing an unequal treatment and discrimination in the society as a whole, taking into consideration the heterogeneity of social groups and individual association with a collective or lack thereof.

In this respect and according to the opinion of the European Court of Human Rights, the Venice Commission and the European Parliament supported a similar amendment to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and the European Convention for Human Rights.¹ The initiative submitted by the parliamentary group VMRO-DPMNE concerning the amendments to the Constitution, Article 40, paragraph 1 and 2 that stipulates that “The Republic provides care and protection for the family. The legal relations in marriage, family and cohabitation are regulated by law” has no legal justification to be amended because:

¹ In terms of the European Convention for Human Rights and the application of Article 8 “Right to Respect of Private and Family Life, paragraph 1: Everyone has the right his private and family life, home and correspondence to be respected” and paragraph 2: Representatives of the Government will not interfere in the practice of this right unless otherwise regulated by law for the needs of a democratic society and in the interest of national security, public safety or economic well-being of the state, prevention of unrest and crime, for protection of health or moral or for protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

The interpretation refers to the application of Article 8 especially the segment regarding the inviolability of the privacy and family life, calling upon the relations that every individual establishes in their private life regardless of their nature and they cannot refer only to the momentary situation in the society. On the contrary, the state is obliged not to introduce restrictions to this right because it cannot impose nor can it estimate what kind of correlation or relationship every individual establishes in the private and family life because by doing so it would interfere with the defining of the private sphere which is contrary to the principle of rule of law in a democratic system. For this purpose, according to the case law of the European Court for Human Rights, the Council of Europe has made a publication which refers to the interpretation of Article 8 of the Convention http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/cooperation/capacitybuilding/Source/documentation/hb11_privatelif en.pdf

1. The Family Law in the Republic of Macedonia regulates this issue identically as the submitter of the initiative for amendment of the Constitution i.e. that marriage and cohabitation are communities between a man and a woman. Therefore, the submitter has no legal justification and arguments that would refer to the need for amendment of Article 40 of the Constitution and the violation of the Family Law that regulates this issue.
2. Taking into consideration the secularity or separation of church and state as a Constitutional principle, calling upon “the centuries long tradition and ethic, moral, religious principles of all religions in the Republic of Macedonia define marriage as a community between a man and a woman” – page 7, represents direct interference of a parallel governing system that is not based on the principle of rule of law. At the same time, the argument that in the Republic of Macedonia all religions define marriage as a community between a man and a woman is invalid from the aspect of religion and customs when it comes to members of the Muslim community. This is so because according to the religious teaching in this community by tradition it was allowed that a man is married to several women. This religious practice according to the Criminal Code in the Republic of Macedonia is not allowed because it refers to bigamy and polygamy which are considered criminal acts and are not practiced by members of the Muslim religious community in modern society. Therefore, the justification of the respect of the principle of secularity of the state should be taken seriously by members of all political parties in order to prevent manipulation with the religious feelings and the affiliation of citizens with a religious community.
3. Because of the wide interpretation of Article 8 of the European Convention for Human Rights (see footnote 1) the Republic of Macedonia as signee of the Convention regulates this right with Article 40 Paragraph 1 and 2 of the Constitution. Every restriction to this right would mean direct interference of the state in the private and family life of the individual, restrictive defining of social, societal and family relations and imposing an unlawful obligation. At the same time, this restriction directly influences citizens who are members of the LGBTI community whose private and family life is not in accordance with the proposed amendment. Taking into consideration that all citizens in the Republic of Macedonia according to the Constitution are equal in rights and obligations, the direct interference of the state in their privacy would cause unequal treatment and discrimination of a certain group of citizens contrary to the rule of law and the democratic principles on which the governing system of the Republic of Macedonia is founded. At the same time, these proposals influence the spread of a negative propaganda by the majority of the population towards the people from the LGBTI community who in the last period have been victims of psychological and physical abuse.

**CASE TOMISLAV KEZAROVSKI: DETENTION OF A JOURNALIST CONTRARY
TO THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

In the course of July the Helsinki Committee informed the public that the extension of the detention of the journalist Tomislav Kezarovski is contrary to the European Convention for

Human Rights.² From the performed review of the documentation of the case, we concluded that the Criminal Council at the Primary Court Skopje 1 extended the detention contrary to the European Convention for Human Rights. Integral process violations have been done regarding the estimation and argumentation about the necessity for continuation of the detention by the Primary Court and the lack of action of the Appeal Court in Skopje regarding the appeal.

The decisions in the case are adopted with a stereotypical formulation of sentences and without explanation about the causes due to which there is danger of escape which represents a violation of the Convention.³ The judges must describe in detail the situation of the detained person,⁴ and the practice of issuing collective decisions which leads to prolonged detention for a group of persons without separate evaluation of the grounds is declared impermissible by the European Court.⁵

The actions of the Appeal Court are also worrying. It did not begin evaluating the complaint allegations stated against the decision of the Criminal Council for continuation of the detention from June. The said case was about a decision for extension of the detention for 30 days. Therefore, if the decision is appealed, the appeal must be reviewed and decision has to be made before the Criminal Council adopts a new decision for extension of the detention as was the case in July. With its lack of action, the Appeal Court violated the effectiveness of the appeal procedure and therefore violated the European Convention.

The Helsinki Committee considers that the judicial authorities must terminate the detention of the journalist Kezarovski, determine an alternative measure (house arrest, guarantee, revocation of travel documents etc.) and to allow him to be released on bail pending trial.

POLICE CONDUCT

POLICE TORTURE IN DEMIR HISAR

In August, a new victim of police torture addressed the Helsinki Committee. The person in June 2013 was called by police officers in the police station in Demir Hisar for an informative conversation without being given reasons for it. According to his statements, immediately after entering the station, one police officer began to shout and to insult him and to accuse him of theft of car batteries. Another police officer entered the room and without any reasons hit him with his knee in the ribs area. Although the person fell on the ground, the police officer continued to hit him on the head and to stomp him all over his body. After this first assault, the police officer left the room, but after a short while he returned and continued the physical assault, whereby he hit the person with a fist on the

² See announcement: <http://www.mhc.org.mk/announcements/143>

³ *Yagci and Sargin v Turkey* (16419/90), 8 June 1995, para. 52.

⁴ *Smirnova v Russia* (46133/99 and 48183/99), 24 July 2003, para. 70.

⁵ *Vasilkoski v Republic of Macedonia* (28169/08), 28 October 2010, para. 63.

temple and then on the back of the head and knee. After this assault he once again fell to the ground after which the police officer lifted him up and took him to another room where there were minors. The minors were suspects of battery theft and the police officer began to threaten them and to pressure them into telling him that the victim was with them when they were making the thefts. Despite the pressure, the minors did not confirm this theory and so the police officer began to beat them. Then the police officer turned towards the victim and spat at him in the face. In the presence of the minors he pushed him first towards the door and then towards the wall and finally he once again hit his head against the table.

In the end, the police officer that performed the torture informed the victim that his truck had been inspected and that a stolen battery was not found after which he was released. After leaving the police station, the police officer threatened him that if he reports the case, he will never see his village again. The victim along with his father went to the hospital in Demir Hisar where he was sent to the surgical ward in PHI Bitola. Due to the pain and severe injuries, the victim was held for a two-day treatment. The medical certificates along with the medical findings were submitted to the Committee.

The Helsinki Committee is investigating the case and is taking all measures to check these findings which are supported by medical documentation (for surgical procedure and psychiatric expertise) and if proven accurate it will point to a committed criminal act "Torture and other cruel inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment" from Article 142 paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Macedonia.

SOCIAL RIGHTS

REGULATING FAMILY RELATIONS IN CASES WITH A FOREIGN ELEMENT

In the last period, the Helsinki Committee on several occasions established that in some divorce cases for which it is necessary to regulate family relations between spouses (where one of the parents besides Macedonian citizenship, also has citizenship of a foreign country or is a foreign national) and their children, there is a certain inefficiency in the implementation of legal provisions by the competent institutions.

In circumstances when the custody of the child is awarded to one of the parents and that is usually the parent that lives and works in the Republic of Macedonia, visitation of the other parent is regulated according to law with a decision adopted by the competent Center for Social Affairs. However, the fact that adopted decisions in this way are not put into practice is problematic. The Helsinki Committee considers that due to the fact that the parent that makes visitations with his child, which is regulated by law, also possesses citizenship from a foreign country creates fear in the other parent that the child would be taken away from them to a foreign country and therefore does not allow the visitations to take place despite the fact that there is a legally adopted decision.

However, this usually unfounded fear of one of the parents cannot be a reason the decision legally adopted by a competent body not to be respected and even more so it represents a

criminal act. Therefore, the Committee considers that the competent institutions which are responsible for regulation of family relations and relations between parents and their children should find a way to handle the situation when one of the parents besides the Macedonian citizenship also has citizenship from another country or is a foreign national, in order to enable the child to come into contact with both parents.

In this way the rights of children in accordance with the domestic legislation and international contracts that bound the Republic of Macedonia, especially the Convention for the Rights of the Child, are not respected.⁶ Article 9, paragraph 3 of this Convention stipulates that “ the Member-states shall respect the right of the child which is separated from one or both parents, to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except when it is against the best interests of the child.”. In terms of the abovementioned circumstances, if one parent lives and works in a foreign country, they once again have the right to maintain contact with their child in accordance with Article 10 Paragraph 2 of this Convention.

DETIRIORATION OF THE STATUS OF THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN THE 2001 CONFLICT

Acting upon the request for legal assistance, the Helsinki Committee in the course of July and August actively monitored the situation of the two remaining families in the reception center (dormitory) “Professor Mijalkovik”- Kumanovo, which are registered as internally displaced persons from the 2001 conflict.

The Ministry for Labor and Social Policy through the director of the dormitory informed the families that as of 31.07.2013 they should leave the reception center due to the full payment of the debt of the state in terms of court disputes for compensation. The families received around 3.000 euros in damages by the Republic of Macedonia, with the title material damage caused by acts of violence and terror for a partially damaged house during the 2001 conflict and based on the completed payment their status of internally displaced persons has been terminated.

Although in one of the cases the family home in the village Opae was reconstructed with a donation by the Austrian government, soon after the reconstruction in 2003, the facility was once again damaged even more than it was during the conflict. Fearing for the safety even two years after the conflict and because there were still threats for the safety of the displaced persons, they decided not to return again in their homes in the village Opae.

For these reasons one five-member family with three underage children, since August has moved in a home of their own in the village Debarsane – Kumanovo, which was built with government funds paid as damages. The paid amount was insufficient to provide even for minimum living conditions, and so the Helsinki Committee informed the Ministry for Labor and Social Policy about the matter. This family lives without electricity, water supply and without basic household items.

⁶ <http://www.childrensembassy.org.mk/WBStorage/Files/konvencija%20celosna.pdf>

Due to the fact that the status of the internally displaced persons which are accommodated in the rest of the four reception centers is unknown, we asked the Ministry for Labor and Social Policy for information about the situation of these persons, but until this report was completed we did not receive an answer.

The Helsinki Committee considers that the Government of the Republic of Macedonia should take other actions to resolve the status of the internally displaced persons because the payment for compensation does not satisfy the standards for creating basic living conditions for these persons. It is an undeniable fact that the deletion from records and the termination of the status “internally displaced persons” is not an efficient and long-term solution for this category of citizens.

**CASE TATJANA BOSNJAKOVSKA: SERIOUS VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS
OF THE CHILD**

The Helsinki Committee acted upon the request for legal assistance by the person Tatjana Bosnjakovska, who allegedly for more than 2 years has not seen her underage daughter, although there is a court order with which the Primary Court Skopje 2 Skopje awards the custody of the underage daughter A.B. to be raised, educated and partially supported by her.

Despite the fact that since 23.05.2013 the decision is enforceable, the final judgment cannot be executed because the mother even after two years is not able to contact the child. Therefore the Primary Court Skopje 2 Skopje, adopted a decision the authorized official from the court to act upon the final enforceable judgment and to forcefully implement it in the presence of PI Inter-municipal Center for Social Work – Skopje (ICSW) and with the assistance of MIA.

Taking into consideration that the case is about a child that has not made contact with the mother for more than two years and that the child resides with its father who refuses to voluntarily give the child to its mother, the Helsinki Committee immediately addressed the competent institutions with a request for immediate reaction for enforcement of the court order. The court enforcement agent and the police reassure us that the girl will soon be found, but even after two months since the decision for forceful enforcement no results have been achieved. We addressed the Minister for Internal Affairs in written in order to inform her about the case and the fact that to this very day there are no results in the procedure and that the mother is not informed about the actions taken and about any progress made in finding the girl.

The mother was advised to get a receipt from the school where the underage A.B. was supposed to take classes about the number of absences, whereby it was established that in the school year 2012/2013 the child continuously was absent from school for seven months, and therefore she is scheduled to take the exam for first grade in August. This receipt was submitted to the court enforcement agent, MIA and the Minister for Internal Affairs.

The Committee established that in this case the rights of the child have been violated and that the child does not live in normal family conditions, it is unable to contact its mother for more than 2 years and its right to education is restricted.

The Committee established that the court enforcement agent and the police failed to act quickly and efficiently in finding the underage A.B. and to enforce the court order. Therefore we conclude that this case is proof that the institutions cannot provide protection not even when the rights of the child are in question. This especially applies to PI Inter-municipal Center for Social Work – Skopje (ICSW) which as an institution is directly responsible to determine the dynamic of the encounters of the child with the mother, and which is also obliged to make the encounters happen. In this case ICSW for more than two years has failed to enforce the decision and to protect the interests of the child.

LGBTI RIGHTS

LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY

Meeting with representatives of the diplomatic core in the LGBTI Support Centre

On 04.07.2013 in the LGBTI Centre in the Old Bazaar in Skopje, there was a meeting between the diplomatic core and members of the LGBTI community, as well as representatives of the Helsinki Committee. Representatives of the Embassy of the United States, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, as well as representatives of OSCE and the EU delegation in Macedonia attended the meeting. They were familiarized with the attack on the LGBTI Support Centre on 22.06.2013, at the very beginning of the “Pride Week”, when a group of around 30 masked people attacked the Centre, while around 40 people – organizers, associates and guests – were inside the Centre. The diplomats watched the video of the attack, recorded by the Centre’s security cameras. The Ambassadors supported the LGBTI community, condemned the attack of the LGBTI Support Centre on the 22nd of June, they demanded that Macedonian institutions provide equal rights for LGBTI people, that they actively involve in the fights against discrimination, and also stated that such violence must not remain unsanctioned by the legal system, expressing their hopes that the perpetrators are found.

The Helsinki Committee submitted a complaint and recordings of the attack to the Internal Control Sector of the Ministry of Interior, demanding that the Ministry investigates the actions of the police officers on the given date.

Even despite the demands of the LGBTI Support Centre and the Helsinki Committee, there was no reaction by state institutions, neither from the President and Prime Ministers, which makes them accomplices in these acts of violence, while the lives of a large group of people are in everyday danger. Only a few hours after the meeting with the diplomats in the Centre, there was another attempt of setting the Centre on fire. The institutions are continuously silent.

A letter by Human Rights Watch to the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski

In the letter by Human Rights Watch, sent on 10.07.2013 to the Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, the President Ivanov and the Minister of justice, Bexheti, HRW states its concern on the current homophobic atmosphere against the LGBTI population in the Republic of Macedonia, accompanied by a series of attacks in June and July this year, against the representatives, activists and premises of the community. Namely, concerned by the fact that neither the Prime Minister, nor anyone else from the Government had condemned the attacks publicly, neither have they spoken to the Macedonian people to refrain from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, Human Rights Watch believe that the lack of government response to these attacks additionally endangers the LGBTI people in Macedonia and questions the dedication of the Government to the principles of non-discrimination and equality.

International law and standards prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, hence, the protection of LGBTI people from discrimination is a part of the duties of Macedonia. The international pact for civil and political rights, which Macedonia accessed in 1994, confirms the equality of all people in article 2 and 26, including sexual orientation as a status protected against discrimination, under the reference for “sex” in article 2, paragraph 1, and article 26. The letter further states other international documents signed by the Republic of Macedonia, regarding human rights and freedoms, hence also the rights and freedoms of the LGBTI community.

Due to the fact that the Republic of Macedonia has been included in the EU accession process since 2005, as a candidate for future membership it should adhere to article 21 of the European Charter, which entered into force in December 2009, prohibiting discrimination, in particular on the grounds of sexual orientation.

The letter further contains the progress report for Macedonia for 2009 by the European Commission, which, among other things, states that there is no progress in the area of non-discrimination policy, there are no mechanisms for detecting, pursuing and criminalizing all forms of discrimination by state and non-state bodies against individuals or groups; discrimination on the grounds of sex, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation does not stop; another flaw is that neither the Constitution, nor existing legislation identifies sexual orientation as ground for discrimination, hence as a result, LGBTI people are not protected from direct or indirect discrimination, they are stigmatized, particularly in rural areas.

In 2012, the European Commission in its progress report for Macedonia, once again states that there is no great progress, particularly regarding the Law against discrimination, which is not yet fully in accordance with the legislation and practice of the EU, considering the fact that sexual orientation and gender identity are not included as grounds for discrimination. This law does not explicitly prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment; there is not structured and systemic analysis of data regarding discrimination; there is a need for increase of awareness-raising activities in relation to equality and non-discrimination.

In the letter, Human Rights Watch reminds the Prime Minister that in 2008, the Government publicly dedicated itself to fighting against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, signing the joint statement for human rights and sexual orientation and

gender identity, represented by 66 countries in the General Assembly of the United Nations. Also, in 2010, the Committee of Ministers of the 47 member-states of the Council of Europe unanimously adopted the recommendations for fighting against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, and Macedonia, as member of the Council of Europe, and its Minister of Exterior, approved those recommendations.

In accordance with those recommendations, Human Rights Watch demand from the Prime Minister and the other members of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia to publicly condemn the violence and hate speech against LGBTI people in the Republic of Macedonia, and to guarantee that such incidents shall be thoroughly investigated, the perpetrators shall be sanctioned according to law and all measures shall be taken to prevent such incidents in the future. Furthermore, the Prime Minister and the Government are asked not to ignore international human rights standards and actively protect LGBTI people in Macedonia, and care for their safety, publicly, in the media and elsewhere, and to reject all forms of violence or discrimination against these people, and call upon the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia to be tolerant and inclusive. Human Rights Watch, apart from these requests, also add the request for explicitly adding sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds for discrimination in Macedonian legislation.

The response given by the Republic of Macedonia to the letter of Human Rights Watch is given in the section *Institutions*, further in this report.

Commemoration of the European day of hate crime victims

The Council of Europe has announced that the 22nd of July is “European day of hate crime victims”. This day is commemorated throughout Europe with a campaign, joined by the Republic of Macedonia this year for the first time; there was a press-conference in the premises of the Helsinki Committee for human rights of the Republic of Macedonia.

Within the event, in the presence of a large number of journalists and cameramen, there was a press-conference and a projection of a short movie containing videos and photos of the several attacks on the LGBTI Support Centre.

In the last five months alone, the Helsinki Committee recorded 50 incidents, most of which are in Skopje and the cities in the western parts of Macedonia. The last incident, during which a group of around 40 teenagers masked with hoods stoned the LGBTI Support Centre, has not yet been resolved, neither are there information on the procedure for identifying the perpetrators.

It was also stated that after one month since the last attack against the LGBTI Centre, the Ministry of Interior has not yet identified the perpetrators, even though they have been provided with video recordings of the Centre's security cameras. The lack of processing by the institution, in particular the Ministry of Interior, makes them accomplices in the hate crimes and gives legitimacy of these acts of violence. The members of the LGBTI community and the human rights defenders are potential victims of such criminal acts, due to the fact that they receive no protection by the institutions. What matters right now is to apprehend the perpetrators, and to show that there shall be no impunity for violence in Macedonia. The continuance of the attacks, combined by the lack of appropriate measures by the Ministry of Interior to stop the attacks, is a clear message that the Ministry of Interior

does not control the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, precisely due to the fact that a group of teenagers, for which there is a video recording, should be found very quickly.

The web portal www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com was presented, and it was stated that most crimes are due to ethnicity or religion, such as bus fights, juvenile and adult victims with bleeding injuries, attacks on trains and buses, and both Albanians and Macedonians are equally involved perpetrators in these incidents. Regarding attacks on the grounds of ethnicity or religion, they most frequently occur in ethnically pure settlements, or where there are only a small number of members of the minority ethnic community. It was stated that due to the fact that the institutions do not tackle these incidents timely, the crimes are repeated.

Support for the first Seaside Gay Pride in Montenegro

On the 24th of July 2013, in Budva, Montenegro, the first Seaside Gay Pride took place, organized by the LGBT Progres organization from Podgorica, and supported by the Government of Montenegro. Among the participants, there were representatives of the LGBTI Support Centre – Helsinki Committee for human rights of the Republic of Macedonia, STAR, the support groups for trans people, gay men and LezFem, all of which gave their support and wished success for the organizers in their future work.

Twisting the facts, Sitel once again fuels homophobia in Macedonia

Sitel is one of the private TV stations in the Republic of Macedonia. On 13.08.2013, SITEL published an article on its website, www.sitel.com.mk, titled "For American doctors, homosexuality is a disease with a code 302.0". However, when the LGBTI Support Centre attempted to locate the source of this article, we found something very surprising - not only that we did not find the article in that format, but also all other news we found, give out entirely different facts, far from those which SITEL presented.

Primarily, this is a mistake of a single doctor, and it is not a practice of American doctors, which is undoubtedly the impression caused by Sitel's title of the news. Further in their article, SITEL omits many facts which put the entire event in an entirely different connotation, and which unambiguously state the position of the medical institutions in the United States that homosexuality is not a disease and that they do not support, nor approve the use of code 302.2 for diagnosing "homosexual behavior".

The article ends with the words: "The doctor explained to Moore that homosexuality is still a disease". However, the original news states that the doctor did not succeed in scientifically explaining anything, neither that they did anything more than explaining their own (in this case – wrong) opinion.

With this, this article gives a general impression to the public that diagnosing homosexuality as a disease is common practice in the United States, which is entirely wrong. With this, SITEL once again fuelled and escalated the already high level of homophobia in Macedonia, without thinking about the possible encouragement of new cases of hate crimes and hate speech.

The LGBTI Support Centre contacted SITEL, requesting a correction of the published article, also submitting a translation of one of the published articles regarding this news, as

well as several other links to articles about the same news, in which the given facts are different or more complete from the facts published by Sitel. The Centre noted article 153 and 154 of the Broadcasting Law of the RM (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 100/05, 19/07, 115/07, 08/08, 103/08 и 152/08), demanding that Sitel corrects their mistake and note that this was an isolated doctor's mistake, and not medical practice in the US; the doctor's mistake is recognized by relevant institutions in the US and medical institutions in the US do not consider homosexuality to be a disease, hence they do not endorse nor approve the use of code 302.0 for giving a diagnosis of "homosexual behavior"; and that the doctor, in their explanation that "homosexuality is still a disease", was expressing their own opinion, and not a medical fact. Apart from this, the Centre requested Sitel to state their source of information if they have extracted their information from a public source which states the fact as given in Sitel's article.

THE MEDIA AND THE LGBTI COMMUNITY

In July, the trend of media coverage of LGBTI-related events in Macedonia continues to grow. At the beginning of the month, the media coverage on the condemnation of anti-LGBTI violence by the diplomatic core in Macedonia was significant, and the manner of reporting⁷, was mainly ethical and neutral, with the exception of two media, which limited the condemnation by the diplomats only on the attacks of the LGBTI Support Centre, omitting the condemnation on the entire anti-LGBTI violence⁸.

Furthermore, the media coverage of the arson attempt on the LGBTI Centre was mainly neutral, but what is concerning is the exclusively factual display of the event, without defining it as a hate crime⁹, and one media went as far as to name the article "The LGBTI Centre once again a target of a pyromaniac"¹⁰, entirely depriving the event of the hate crime component, and using sensationalism to display the act as a part of classic criminal activity.

During the analysis of the media coverage of the letter sent to the Prime Minister, President and Minister of justice by Human Rights Watch, we may conclude that this has been done

⁷ <http://a1on.mk/wordpress/archives/173715>, <http://24vesti.mk/diplomatskiot-kor-bara-odgovornost-za-nasilstvata-vrz-lgbt-zaednicata>

⁸ <http://novatv.mk/index.php?navig=8&cat=18&vest=5320>, <http://sky.mk/index.php/makedonija/20518-ambasadorite-go-osudija-nasilstvoto-vrz-lgbt-centarot>

⁹ <http://novatv.mk/index.php?navig=8&cat=2&vest=5336>,

<http://libertas.mk/%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%B8%D0%B4-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D1%9A%D0%B5-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BB%D0%B3%D0%B1%D1%82-%D1%86%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%82/>,

<http://www.radiomof.mk/obid-za-palene-na-lgbt-tsentarot-vo-skopskata-charshija/>,

<http://a1on.mk/wordpress/archives/174139>, <http://www.sky.mk/index.php/makedonija/20546-utrovo-povtorno-napadnat-lgbt-centarot>,

http://lokalno.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27656%3A2013-07-05-11-46-44&catid=180%3A2012-11-19-13-13-35&Itemid=161&lang=mk,

<http://www.makdenes.org/archive/news/20130705/428/428.html?id=25037573>,

<http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/hronika/9632-povtorno-napadnat-lgbt-centarot>

¹⁰ <http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/98278/LGBT-Centarot-povtorno-meta-na-piroman>

with incomplete reporting on the content of the letter. Specifically, with the exception of two media¹¹, the rest¹² only publish a part of the condemnation of B. Dittrich regarding the anti-LGBTI violence, without publishing even a part of the comprehensive argumentation offered by Mr. Dittrich, and omitting his negative conclusions regarding state policies which discriminate LGBTI people in the Republic of Macedonia. Moreover, only one medium¹³ published the reaction of the Government of Macedonia, in which an unidentified minister of our government responded to a foreign medium (once again with a lack of government reaction in domestic media), but what is positive is that this medium also offers a short analysis on social consequences from this type of behavior of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. The neutral and ethical media reporting also marked the media coverage of the hate-motivated violence which occurred against the actor and human rights activist, Petar Stojkovic.¹⁴

Another topic of interest to the LGBTI community in the Republic of Macedonia is the media coverage of the first gay Macedonian seeking asylum in the US as a result of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. However, we encounter sensationalism in this occasion as well. Namely, even though all media report on this event, the titles have one key difference. With the exception of one medium¹⁵, which named their article “A gay Macedonian seeks asylum in the US”, all other media covering this event¹⁶, named their articles “A Macedonian seeks gay asylum in the US”, which, in a very sensationalist manner, leaves an impression that the US authorities make some sort of a difference between a “gay asylum” and “straight asylum”, which is entirely incorrect.

In July, the media space was also filled with the reaction of domestic civil organizations working on LGBTI issues, in particular with publishing the videos from the attacks on the LGBTI Support Centre (the publishing of the video from the attack on the 02.03 and the

¹¹ <http://libertas.mk/%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BC%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%85%D1%98%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BD-%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%98%D1%82%D1%81-%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%87-%D0%B4%D0%BE-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B8%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%82/>,
<http://www.radiomof.mk/hjuman-rajts-voch-do-gruevski-vasha-rabota-e-da-gi-zashitite-lgbt-litsata/>

¹² <http://www.makdenes.org/archive/news/20130710/428/428.html?id=25042260>,
<http://novatv.mk/index.php?navig=8&cat=2&vest=5509>, <http://a1on.mk/wordpress/archives/176784>,
<http://sky.mk/index.php/makedonija/20985-hjuman-rajts-voch-ja-kritikuva-vlasta-i-bara-od-gruevski-da-ja-zashiti-lgbt-zaednicata>

¹³ <http://www.utrinski.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=3B2E5D9C7CC417499CACB1E5F26D74AD>

¹⁴ <http://a1on.mk/wordpress/archives/177955>, <http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/hronika/12687-povtorno-kamenuvana-kukata-na-akterot-petar-stojkovik>, <http://24vesti.mk/povtorno-kamenuvana-kukata-na-petar-stojkovik>, <http://www.skopjeinfo.mk/gradot/1062072389/povtorno-kamenuvana-kukata-na-akterot-i-aktivist-petar-stojkovik>, <http://sky.mk/index.php/makedonija/21154-vtor-pat-kamenuvan-domot-na-akterot-stojkovik>, <http://maxim.mk/povtorno-kamenuvan-domot-na-aktivistot-petar-stojkovik>,
<http://www.press24.mk/vandali-povtorno-ja-kamenuvale-kukjata-na-akterot-i-aktivist-petar-stojkovik>

¹⁵ <http://republika.mk/?p=102805>

¹⁶ <http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/makedonija/19227-dnevnik-makedonec-bara-gej-azil-vo-sad>,
<http://dnevnik.mk/?ItemID=58F61E89E81A684E8319C7AE4EEADE90>,
<http://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/politika/makedonec-bara-gej-azil-vo-sad>, http://mkd-news.com/makedonets-bara-gej-azil-vo-sad/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=makedonets-bara-gej-azil-vo-sad,
<http://sitel.com.mk/mk/makedonec-bara-gej-azil-vo-sad>, <http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/100909/Makedonec-bara-gej-azil-vo-SAD>, <http://a1on.mk/wordpress/archives/185436>,
<http://www.vecer.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=F6C7984CA81F224FB6E21243BC7942F3>

video titled "Hate breeds violence", as a part of the press conference on the International day of hate crime victims) and the reaction of the Helsinki Committee on the second stoning of the house of Petar Stojkovic. The media coverage was mainly ethical and neutral¹⁷ with the exception of one medium¹⁸ whose editor, under the news titles "The LGBT community and the Helsinki Committee demand reaction and protection by the police" permitted publishing of homophobic comments by the readers, abundant in hate speech, and even calls for segregation of the LGBTI community from the rest of the population of Macedonia.

The LGBTI people were also present in the media coverage of the organization, conduction and follow-up events after the first pride parade in Montenegro, held in Budva on the 24th of July. The media coverage of the event was very comprehensive and mainly neutral, but unfortunately, investigative journalism in Macedonia once again failed to finish the work properly. Namely, while reporting on the news, national portals only published the information from the media in Montenegro, without doing any research and discover that nearly half of the participants on the parade in Budva were representatives of the LGBTI community from the Republic of Macedonia¹⁹.

Furthermore, regarding news from other countries about the LGBTI community, the national media in July covered the events related to the anti-LGBTI legislation and anti-

¹⁷ <http://novatv.mk/index.php?navig=8&cat=18&vest=5346>, <http://a1on.mk/wordpress/archives/174223>, <http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/98299/VIDEO-Helsinshki-komitet-Imame-snimka-od-site-napadi-na-LGBT-Centarot>, <http://novatv.mk/index.php?navig=8&cat=18&vest=5599>, http://lokalno.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28775%3A2013-07-14-12-36-14&catid=180%3A2012-11-19-13-13-35&Itemid=161&lang=mk, <http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/makedonija/12925-lgbt-aktivistite-protestiraat-pred-vratite-na-mvr>, <http://makfax.com.mk/314232/lgbt-zaednicata-i-hk-baraat-vladata-i-mvr-da-gi-kaznat-licata-shto-napagaaat-vrz-osnova-na-seksualna-orientacija>, <http://sky.mk/index.php/makedonija/21236-lgbt-bara-da-se-kaznat-licata-koi-napagaaat-vrz-osnova-na-seksualna-orientacija>, <http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/100104/VIDEO-Kocho-Andonovski-Dosta-e-da-im-lichite-na-LGBT-za-da-ve-napadnat>, <http://novatv.mk/index.php?navig=8&cat=18&vest=5839>, <http://www.makdenes.org/content/article/25053486.html>

¹⁸ <http://24vesti.mk/lgbt-zaednicata-i-helsinshki-baraat-reakcija-i-zashtita-od-policijata>

¹⁹ <http://www.radiomof.mk/parada-na-gordosta-zakazhana-vo-podgoritsa-na-27-oktomvri/>, <http://www.netpress.com.mk/mk/vest.asp?id=133740&kategorija=5>, <http://novatv.mk/index.php?navig=8&cat=5&vest=5783>, http://lokalno.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=29577%3A2013-07-20-12-01-01&catid=110%3Abalkan&Itemid=135&lang=mk, <http://tocka.com.mk/1/100880/budva-se-podgotvuva-za-parada-na-gordosta>, http://lokalno.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=29595%3A2013-07-20-14-37-34&catid=110%3Abalkan&Itemid=135&lang=mk, <http://republika.mk/?p=99117>, <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/DetailNewsInstant.asp?vestInstant=21503#.Ugs-zZIwdqU>, <http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/100109/Vo-sreda-vo-Budva-kje-se-odrzhi-gej-parada>, <http://www.press24.mk/homoseksualcite-izlegoa-na-ulicite-niz-budva-prva-gej-parada-vo-crna-gora>, <http://maxim.mk/se-odrzhuva-prvata-parada-na-gordosta-vo-crna-gora>, <http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/region/17241-tenzicno-vo-budva-vo-presret-na-gej-paradata>, http://kanal5.com.mk/vesti_detail.asp?ID=13169, <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/DetailNewsInstant.asp?vestInstant=21683#.UgtDzZIwdqU>, <http://makfax.com.mk/315081/pop-go-osvetuval-ploshtheadot-vo-budva-po-paradata-na-gordosta>, <http://www.sitel.com.mk/mk/haos-na-gej-paradata-vo-budva-nekolkumina-povredeni>, <http://republika.mk/?p=101156>

LGBTI violence in Russia²⁰, the legalization of same-sex marriages in Britain²¹, the legal consequences of staying in the US due to the constitutional legalization of same-sex couples²², the changes of the tax system in Germany in relation to same-sex couples²³, the legalization of same-sex marriages in Mexico²⁴, as well as the accidental, short-lived legalization of same-sex marriages in Costa Rica.²⁵

It should also be mentioned that there was media coverage on the statement of the Pope Francis regarding the LGBTI people, that they should not be judged and that they should be integrated in society. The media coverage of this event by national media was ethical, neutral and professional²⁶, and one portal²⁷ published an analysis of the significance of this statement regarding the policies of the Catholic Church.

In July, there was great attention of the media to the case of sexual abuse of a child adopted by a gay couple. However, what makes this case characteristic is the entirely unethical reporting of the media, where the sexual orientation of the pedophiles was an integral part of the headlines of all news regarding this event²⁸. Three media²⁹ went as far as to publish a

²⁰ <http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/svet/12944-lgbt-aktivisti-vo-moskva-homofobijata-e-fasizam-video>, <http://ruskarec.mk/news/2013/07/15/moskva-na-crveniot-plostad-e-odrzana-akcija-na-lgbt-aktivisti-241-91.html>, <http://republika.mk/?p=102225>, <http://www.sitel.com.mk/mk/namamuvaat-tinejdzheri-homoseksualci-pa-gi-teraat-da-se-kaat-shto-se-rodile>, <http://www.idividi.com.mk/vesti/evropa/858117/index.html>, <http://ruskarec.mk/news/2013/07/02/independent-zakonot-za-zabrana-na-gej-propagandata-e-osuden-na-zapadot-a-23727.html>, <http://sitel.com.mk/mk/rusija-definitivno-protiv-homoseksualcite-usvoen-zakon-so-koj-se-zabranuva-stranski-gej-dvojki-da>,

²¹ <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/DetalNewsInstant.asp?vestInstant=21278>, <http://www.sitel.com.mk/mk/domot-na-lordovite-go-usvoi-predlog-zakonot-za-gej-brakovite>, <http://a1on.mk/wordpress/archives/179055>, <http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/svet/13467-britanija-usvoen-predlog-zakon-za-gej-brakovi>, <http://maxim.mk/britanskiot-parlament-gi-odobri-gej-brakovite>, <http://on.net.mk/vesti/svet/elizabeta-ii-odobri-gej-brakovi>, <http://www.makdenes.org/archive/news/20130717/428/428.html?id=25049112>

²² <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/DetalNewsInstant.asp?vestInstant=20613#Ug4cvpIwdqU>, <http://www.telegraf.mk/zabava/od-se-po-nesto/7864-gej-par-bugarin-i-amerikanec-cekaat-zelena-karta>, <http://24vesti.mk/povtorno-kje-se-razgleduvaat-molbite-za-zelena-karta-od-gej-imigrantite>, <http://www.mtv.com.mk/mk/vesti/svet/82839/kje-se-prerazgleduvaat-molbite-za-zelena-karta-od-gej-imigrantite.aspx>, <http://www.sitel.com.mk/mk/kje-se-prerazgleduvaat-molbite-za-zelena-karta-od-gej-imigrantite>

²³ <http://maxim.mk/gej-parovite-kje-imaat-isti-danochni-prava-vo-germanija>

²⁴ <http://maxim.mk/odobreni-homoseksualnite-brakovi-vo-meksiko>

²⁵ <http://republika.mk/?p=92321>, <http://www.mkd.mk/svet/vesti/kosta-rika-najsluchajno-gi-legalizira-gej-brakovite>, http://kanal5.com.mk/vesti_detail.asp?ID=11877

²⁶ <http://www.vecer.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=A8262F2997B311449185A8FFAD0C2EF7>, <http://telma.com.mk/index.php?task=content&cat=1&rub=5&item=29204>, <http://off.net.mk/zivot-i-zabava/religija/koj-sum-jas-da-im-sudam>, <http://off.net.mk/zivot-i-zabava/religija/koj-sum-jas-da-im-sudam>, <http://novatv.mk/index.php?navig=8&cat=5&vest=6096>, <http://www.radiomof.mk/papata-frantsisko-koj-sum-jas-da-im-sudam-na-gej-lugeto/>, <http://tocka.com.mk/1/101584/istoriska-izjava-na-papata-francis-koj-sum-jas-da-i-sudam-na-gej-populacijata>, <http://www.netpress.com.mk/mk/vest.asp?id=134404&kategorija=6>, <http://makfax.com.mk/315344/istoriska-izjava-na-papata-koj-sum-jas-da-im-sudam-na-gejovite>

²⁷ <http://off.net.mk/zivot-i-zabava/religija/dali-papata-e-katolik>

²⁸ <http://maxim.mk/gej-par-si-go-silual-sincheto>, <http://sky.mk/index.php/svet/20299-gej-par-si-go-silual-malechkoto-dete>, <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/DetalNewsInstant.asp?vestInstant=20653>

²⁹ http://mkd-news.com/gej-par-si-go-silual-sincheto?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=gej-par-si-go-silual-sincheto,
(footnote continued)

photo of the juvenile child who was a victim of this act, violating his right to privacy and acting contrary to the Journalist Code of Macedonia.³⁰

In July, lesbians were only mentioned in media space when the LGBTI community was spoken of as a whole. Trans people, however, were mentioned on several occasions. Firstly, one medium dared to judge the decision of parents of a six-year-old trans boy to support their son, encouraged by their family psychiatrist, calling the event “sad and distressing”. Further in their introduction, the medium writes that the results of “an aggressive promotion of the LGBT agenda” can also be seen in Macedonia, which “is a target of such long-term campaigns which last for years, and in a period from 10 to 15 years change society for the worse”³¹. Also, there was sensationalism in the reporting of the physical conflict between the candidates for “Mis Gay” of Peru.³²

In the end, we must conclude that in July, the media space has an increase of the analyses of human sexuality and the social significance of LGBTI issues.³³

During August, in the media there is a decrease of the number of articles of interest to LGBTI people in the Republic of Macedonia, and the news published in the media space mainly refer to: The proposal of the ruling party for constitutional amendments in order to define marriage as a community between one man and one woman; the activities of national NGOs working with LGBTI rights; the public kiss between Russian athletes on the awarding of medals during the athletics world championship; the attitudes of certain members of the international community on the treatment of LGBTI athletes on the upcoming Olympic games in Russia; the legalization of same-sex marriages in New Zealand; and show-business events which also concern the LGBTI community.

Regarding media coverage of the proposal of the ruling party for constitutional changes, according to which, marriage is defined exclusively as a community between one man and one woman, we notice media reporting which is mainly ethical and neutral, including the views of the government, the opposition and the LGBTI community in the Republic of

<http://www.netpress.com.mk/mk/vest.asp?id=132253&kategorija=6>, <http://sitel.com.mk/mk/monstruozno-homoseksualci-posvoile-dete-potoa-go-siluale-i-prodavale-na-pedofili>

³⁰

http://www.mim.org.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=88&Itemid=68%E2%8C%A9=mk

³¹ <http://kurir.mk/svet/vesti/123197-Tazno-i-zalno-Promena-na-polot-na-6-godini-Foto>

³² <http://komentar.mk/archives/15480>

³³ <http://okno.mk/node/29530>,

http://www.dw.de/%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B5%D1%82%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%85%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%84%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0/a-16959696?maca=maz-rss-maz-pol_makedonija_timemk-4727-xml-mrss,

<http://www.radiomof.mk/dw-polnoletstvo-na-homofobijata/>,

<http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/100681/Globalna-kampanja-za-ednakvost-na-LGBT>,

<http://libertas.mk/%D0%B3%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%BA-%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%87-%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B7-%D0%B3%D0%B5%D1%98-%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%98/>,

<http://off.net.mk/offside/fudbal/sent-pauli-e-prviot-gej-frendli-fudbalski-klub>,

<http://www.okno.mk/node/29922>, <http://off.net.mk/offside/razno/london-domakjin-na-gej-igrice-2018>,

<http://www.radiomof.mk/petitsija-za-zapirane-na-anti-lgbti-napadite/>, <http://okno.mk/node/30135>,

http://lokalno.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=30300%3Aapalm&catid=68%3Azabava&Itemid=146&lang=mk

Macedonia³⁴. What is lacking is a deeper analysis of the need for existence of a particular constitutional definition of marriage in such a manner.

Furthermore in media space in August, we notice coverage of national NGOs working with LGBTI rights. The manner of reporting on the statement of LGBT United on the influence of state policies on the psycho-social situation of young LGBTI people in Macedonia was performed in a mainly neutral and ethical manner³⁵. There was also an interview with the actor and human rights activist, Petar Stojkovic.³⁶

An event of particular interest for the Macedonian, but also world public, is the kiss on the winning pedestal shared by the Russian athletes Tatjana Firova and Ksenija Rishova. National media³⁷ which reported on the news, did so in an ethical and neutral manner.

In August, national media space was also filled with the views of certain members of the international community on the treatment of LGBTI athletes on the upcoming Olympic games in Russia. Namely, a part of the media reported on the views of the US President, Barack Obama³⁸ and the Prime Minister of Britain, David Cameron³⁹ stating that even despite their disagreement with Russian anti-LGBTI policies, the upcoming Olympic games in Russia should not be boycotted.

Also, there was attention by the media on the legalization of same-sex marriages in New Zealand⁴⁰.

In August, trans people were covered in the article of one medium regarding the first transgender character in a mainstream comic book, and the significance of this act on the comic culture.⁴¹

³⁴ http://mkd-news.com/da-vleze-vo-ustav-brakot-e-zaednitsa-megu-mazh-i-zhena-bara-vmro-dpmne/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=da-vleze-vo-ustav-brakot-e-zaednitsa-megu-mazh-i-zhena-bara-vmro-dpmne, <http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/makedonija/20974-reakcii-inicijativata-na-vmro-dpmne-e-neseriozna>, <http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/makedonija/21020-izmeni-na-povidok-definiranje-na-brakot-nov-predizvik-za-ustavot>, <http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/makedonija/21571-jankuloska-predlogot-za-brak-pomegju-maz-i-zhena-ne-diskriminira>, <http://press24.mk/gordana-jankuloska-dodeka-e-vmro-dpmne-na-vlast-brakot-kje-bide-megju-mazh-i-zhena>, <http://www.telegraf.mk/temi/vlatko-gjorcev>, <http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/makedonija/20912-inicijativa-na-vmro-dpmne-brak-e-zaednica-megju-maz-i-zhena>

³⁵ <http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/102412/LGBT-Junajted-Mladite-LGBT-lica-zhiveat-vo-strav-i-vo-depresija>, <http://www.radiomof.mk/lgbt-junajted-kolku-lgbt-mladi-ja-napushitija-drzhavata/>

³⁶ <http://www.radiomof.mk/intervju-petar-stojkovic-vleguvam-vo-politikata-za-unapreduvane-na-lgbti-pravata/>

³⁷ http://www.kukuriku.mk/svetskoto-prvenstvo-vo-moskva-na-dodeluvan-eto-na-medalite-firova-i-rishova-se-baknaa-vo-znak-na-protest-video/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=svetskoto-prvenstvo-vo-moskva-na-dodeluvan-eto-na-medalite-firova-i-rishova-se-baknaa-vo-znak-na-protest-video, <http://www.radiomof.mk/baknezh-na-ruskite-atleticharki-protiv-silnata-anti-gej-propaganda/>, <http://www.mkd.mk/sport/drugi-sportovi/za-inaet-na-isinbajeva-ruski-atleticharki-sochno-se-baknaa-vo-usta#1>

³⁸ <http://kurir.mk/sport/ostanati-sportovi/126331-Obama-protiv-bojkot-na-Olimpiskite-igri-vo-Soci>, <http://republika.mk/?p=108507>

³⁹ <http://ruskarec.mk/news/2013/08/11/kameron-britanija-nema-da-ja-bojkotira-olimpijadata-vo-soci-por-adi-antig-25239.html>

⁴⁰ http://kanal5.com.mk/vesti_detail.asp?ID=14976,

<http://www.makdenes.org/archive/news/20130819/428/428.html?id=25079384>

Furthermore, the LGBTI community was also mentioned in numerous reportings in the area of show business⁴², where LGBTI matters were not the main topic of interest of the articles. The information in those articles was mainly transferred in a sensationalist manner, above all due to the category they were placed in – “show business”.

In the end, we would like to conclude that in August, once again there is a lack of investigative journalism in the Republic of Macedonia, there is no deeper analysis of wider social significance of challenges faced by the LGBTI people in Macedonia, not even when reporting on the proposal of the ruling party, on constitutional amendments for defining marriage as a community exclusively between one man and one woman.

CASES OF DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE

The violence against LGBTI people in Macedonia escalated this summer, and reached perhaps the highest level of hate violence, hate speech and homophobia in private and public space. The lack of reaction by the institutions has enormous consequences by itself, such as the increase of violence regarding individual cases but also generally. In Macedonia, we are witnessing structuralized homophobia and transphobia for several months, fueled by the misinformation regarding LGBTI matters, as well as the defocusing from the real problems with non-existing debates on marriages and adoption of children, which has caused a series of attacks and violence with no public condemnation whatsoever by the relevant institutions, which created an illusion of justification of anti-LGBTI violence. In July there were no changes of this trend, on the contrary, there were two new attacks.

1. On the 5th of July 2013, the LGBTI Centre was attacked once again. This time the attackers climbed on the roof during the night, removed the layer of roof tiles, poured gasoline on the roof, which also covered a part of the upper floor of the Centre, after which

⁴¹ <http://www.okno.mk/node/30672>

⁴² <http://www.plusinfo.mk/vest/104008/riki-martin-gi-tepav-decata-za-koi-znaev-deka-se-gej>,
http://hitportal.com.mk/show_bizz-detail/riki-martin-gi-tepav-detsata-za-koi-znaev-deka-se-gej/,
<http://lady.mk/riki-martin-bev-nasilen-so-decata-za-koi-znaev-deka-se-gej/2199>,
http://hitportal.com.mk/show_bizz-detail/ventford-miler-prizna-deka-e-gej/,
<http://interesno.com.mk/showbusiness/36-showbiz/26172-fraerot-od-serijata-prison-break-jas-sum-gej>,
<http://kajana.com/dzvezdata-na-prison-break-izjavi-deka-e-gej>
<http://primetime.mk/index.php/zabava/zvezdiitracevi/item/2806-ventvort-miler-jas-sum-gej-prenesete-mu-na-putin>,
<http://www.mkd.mk/svet/vesti/televiziski-voditel-vo-zhivo-priznal-deka-e-gej-dobil-otkaz-mu-go-blokirale-mejlot-i-go>,
http://lokalno.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=31907%3apink&catid=68%3azabava&iitemid=146&lang=mk,
<http://zazabava.com/akterot-od-bond-prizna-deka-e-gej>,
<http://tocka.com.mk/4/103490/koi-slavni-licnosti-se-deklarirani-pripadnici-na-lgbt-zaednicata>,
<http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/detalnewsinstant.asp?vestinstant=23192>,
<http://ruskarec.mk/news/2013/08/09/lejdi-gaga-i-se-zakanuva-na-rusija-so-gej-revolucija-25175.html>
<http://interesno.com.mk/showbusiness/36-showbiz/25899-lejdi-gaga-povikuva-na-revolucija-so-ostrri-kritiki>

they set the roof on fire. Fortunately, the fire was reported before spreading in the Centre and surrounding buildings, and was extinguished by the firefighting unit. The Centre had significant material damage from the previous attack, from the fire itself but also from the water during the extinguishing action, but it is a lucky circumstance that there were no people in the Centre during this attack.

However, what is most concerning is that the arson attempt occurred only hours after representatives of the diplomatic core in the Republic of Macedonia visited the Centre, expressing their support and calling upon the relevant institutions to condemn the violence occurring recently against the LGBTI population. Furthermore, in the official daily bulletin of the Ministry of Interior, there was no report on this attack whatsoever, while considering the fact that the Centre is in the Old Bazaar which is cultural heritage, this attack is even more significant and the repercussions should have greater magnitude.

2. After the increase of hate speech in social networks and media after the misinformation by the media on holding a gay parade in Skopje, the young actor Petar Stojkovic, who publicly spoke of his sexual orientation in his column, was a victim of direct threats, and his home was attacked in June. On the 13th of July, Petar's home was once again stoned by unknown perpetrators, which jeopardized the safety of Petar and his partner in their home. The case was reported to the police and is under investigation.

What can be noticed in the last two months is that the silence of the institutions is interpreted as a green light for violating the norms and against the LGBTI people in Macedonia, with negative consequences regarding the motivation of victims, who decide not to undertake any measures whatsoever in order to initiate a procedure for protection of their rights. Several cases were reported in the Helsinki Committee, but in the end, the victims decided not to take measures due to fear of the homophobia in our justice system. The fear of the victims was also present and noticeable so far, however, we may conclude that after all the events, it has escalated to an even higher level. Since the opening of the Centre, until today, most of the reports refer to domestic violence. August has been no exception from this negative trend.

3. Two lesbians from Struga were attacked by a family member of one of the girls. The case was reported to the Helsinki Committee, which currently undertakes all measures for legal aid. The case is processed and measures are taken in line with the victims' interests.

4. A young girl reported a case of domestic violence in the Centre, stating that the violence had been occurring for a longer period of time, and after she had moved away, the violence decreased. However, on the last meeting with one of the family members, the girl was attacked in front of the entrance of the home she wanted to visit. However, after the appearance of another family member, the attack was stopped. The case was reported in the Centre, and the girl was advised regarding the measures she may take and the help which may be provided by the free legal aid team.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Even despite the temporary cessation of the work of the Centre due to renovation, the work with the support groups continued, but with reduced intensity. The groups also had meeting on individual level, during which ideas for further activities were considered, and there was an emphasis on socialization.

The event called *Lazy Sunday*, held every Sunday afternoon in the Centre, was transferred in a night club in Skopje, under the name *Busy Sunday*. The first party was on the 21st of July and the parties were held continuously in the following weekends. The members of the groups, the supporters of the community, as well as a large number of new people attended the parties. It may be concluded that the continuance of the Sunday events is very significant for maintaining the wholeness of the community and its strengthening, regardless of the circumstances and the location.

The coordinator of the parents' support group had numerous contacts with members of the different groups, as well as personal contacts with some members. As a parent, she put herself at the disposal of the members and offered them counseling help and support.

While expecting the renovation of the premises of the Centre in order to have more frequent meetings, the support groups maintained the working tempo of the previous month. The *Busy Sunday* event continued to take place in the same night club, with an increased number of visitors, which indicates the success of this initiative.

Some group members expressed a need for psychological support, and they were referred to the appropriate experts. The cooperation with the Gestalt Institute is still active and will continue in the premises of the Centre.

The coordinator of the parents' support group continued her counseling work with some of the members of the groups, and was also contacted by a person of the community who had never come to the Centre and who announced a meeting together with his parents in the near future. These cases indicate the need for existence of such a group which tackles very specific issues, on a topic rarely spoken of in Macedonian public space.

The coordinators of the groups conducted several written and video interviews for several national and foreign media. The topics cover general LGBTI issues, the work of the Centre and the groups, as well as concrete examples of the lives of LGBTI people in Macedonia. Some of them have already been published, and the rest are expected to be published in September.

INSTITUTIONS

On the 5th of July, the First Instance Court Skopje 1 brought a verdict which stated that the members of the mob which committed the crime of "Participating in a mob which will commit a criminal act" during the protests on the 2nd of March (protests for the Minister Tallat Xhaferi) are found guilty. The LGBTI Support Centre was also attacked during those

protests. The 14 defendants of the protests on the 2nd of March received prison sentences of a total of 12 years. The Helsinki Committee and the LGBTI Support Centre saluted this decision.

The Macedonian Government quickly responded to the letter by Human Rights Watch, stating in the LGBTIQ Nation interview that the situation is under investigation and that they intend to prosecute the attackers of the series of anti-LGBTI attacks in June and July this year. As a reaction to the letter by Human Rights Watch, a minister who wished to remain anonymous stated that this problem is taken seriously and that the Government shall prosecute the perpetrators of the attacks on the LGBTI Centre. In his statement, the minister said that the Prime Minister Gruevski had already condemned the attack on the LGBTI community and that he is against any type of violence, for which the investigation was already underway. On the questions on whether there will be a direct prohibition for discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, the minister responded without explicitly condemning the violence, and stated that he does not know whether such actions are planned, but that discrimination on any grounds shall not be tolerated. In an interview, when asked if he stands against anti-gay violence in his country, the Prime Minister responded: "Neither against them, nor against anyone else, violence is not a solution." In his statement, there is a lack of explicit condemnation of anti-LGBTI violence, which includes the attacks from June and July 2013, against the LGBTI Centre, together with the attempt to set it on fire, and several persons were attacked, among which Petar Stojkovic, a famous actor and board member of the Macedonian Helsinki Committee, which recently spoke of his sexual orientation, and afterwards his home was stoned; he is constantly being threatened. Stojkovic stated that the Government attempts to evade the answer and deliberately gives false information, because there has been no public condemnation of anti-gay violence. The British human rights activist, Peter Thatchell, called the Government of the Republic of Macedonia "weak and unclear". According to him, neither has the Government explicitly condemned anti-gay violence, nor does it plan to adopt a law prohibiting discrimination of LGBTI people. Thatchell believes that as a result, the EU will be forced to block the membership application of the Republic of Macedonia, and that the country should not be given a seat in the UN Human Rights Council.

After the attack on the home of Petar Stojkovic, Amnesty International also reacted, calling upon the Minister of Interior, Gordana Jankulovska, to put an end to the impunity of homophobic violence.

On July 14th, members of the LGBTI community, the Helsinki Committee and the LGBTI Support Centre gathered in front of the Ministry of Interior in order to state several demands. They asked the Government to publicly condemn the attacks which continuously occur against the LGBTI people in the recent period, and demanded that the Government and the Ministry of Interior undertake a quick and effective investigation and apprehend the attackers. The Ministry of Interior responded that it has taken all necessary measures to apprehend the perpetrators. However, there was still no explicit and direct condemnation of the violence against LGBTI people.

On the 1st of August, one day before the Parliament should have started vacation, the ruling party VMRO DPMNE submitted to the Parliament a proposal for constitutional changes, according to which, marriage is defined exclusively as a community between one man and

one woman. With these new amendments, the adoption of children would be permitted only for different-sex couples and single parents.

The opposition party SDSM reacted to this proposal, stating that the ruling party has been provoking for a longer period of time, with discriminatory policies and lack of tolerance, which result in incidents. They also stated that they believe that such amendments require a longer public and expert debate, and that the civil sector and the academic community should also be involved. SDSM expressed their dissatisfaction of the fact that the ruling party submitted this proposal only one day before the vacation of the Parliament.

The civil sector also expressed their dissatisfaction on the marriage redefinition proposal. Kocho Andonovski from the LGBTI Support Centre believes that, in a time when the matter of same-sex marriages has not even been opened, this proposal is only another twist in order to defocus the public attention from other problems. The Helsinki Committee also reacted to the proposal for the constitutional redefinition of marriage, stating that the reduction of marriage to a community exclusively by one man and one woman is discriminatory toward people with different sexual orientation and that it signifies ignoring of all international standards prohibiting discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation. Considering the fact that state institutions do not react to the everyday violence against LGBTI people, this initiative shall lead to encouraging violence toward the members and activists of the LGBTI community.

The representatives of the ruling party are unanimous. The MP Vlatko Gjorchev believes that the initiative is derived from the people, due to preservation of traditional values. The Minister of Interior Gordana Jankulovska has been clear and decisive in her statement that as long as VMRO DPMNE is in power, there shall be no legalization of same-sex marriages, and that marriage is a community exclusively by one man and one woman. They believe that the redefinition of marriage is not discriminatory toward people with different sexual orientation, and that this shall not lead to intolerance and violence against the members of the LGBTI community. They believe that the initiative for redefinition of marriage is a policy which shall lead to preservation of the values of society.