

that a unified system had not been created and the Federation partners had been unable to agree on a joint curriculum; attempts in several schools to introduce parallel systems for children belonging to national groups which form minorities in given areas, and created a requirement that children identify themselves according to their nationalities; and, terrorist and criminal acts, in which people were killed, religious objects destroyed, and property stolen.

The priorities identified for 1998 were: rule of law; human rights institutions and support for NGOs; human rights aspects of the return of refugees and displaced persons, and human rights education, training and public information; continuation of the project on the appointment of judges; and, participation in an ad hoc working group considering the issue of violence against women, with the goals of influencing the training of local police, gathering information including statistics, and lobbying for improved protection for victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence in general.

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BULGARIA

Date of admission to UN: 14 December 1955.

TREATIES AND REPORTS TO TREATY BODIES

Land and People: Bulgaria has not submitted a core document for use by the treaty bodies.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Signed: 8 October 1968; ratified: 21 September 1970.

Bulgaria's third periodic report (E/1994/104/Add.16) is scheduled for consideration at the Committee's April/ May 1999 session; the fourth periodic report is due 30 June 1999.

Reservations and Declarations: Paragraphs 1 and 3 of article 26.

Civil and Political Rights

Signed: 8 October 1968; ratified: 21 September 1970.

Bulgaria's third periodic report was due 31 December 1994.

Reservations and Declarations: Paragraphs 1 and 3 of article 48; declaration under article 41.

Optional Protocol: Acceded: 26 March 1992.

Racial Discrimination

Signed: 1 June 1966; ratified: 8 August 1966.

Bulgaria's 15th periodic report is due 4 January 1998.

Reservations and Declarations: Paragraph 1 of article 17 and paragraph 1 of article 18; declaration under article 14.

Bulgaria's 12th, 13th and 14th periodic reports were submitted as a single document (CERD/C/299/Add.7) which was considered in March 1997. The report prepared by the government contains information related to articles 2 through 7 of the Convention. The report includes demographic data based on race or ethnicity as well as, *inter alia*: constitutional and legal provisions related to non-discrimination; reform of the judiciary; the propagation of racial or national hatred; the rights of foreign residents; freedom of thought, conscience and belief; due process and the administration of justice; and the situation of the Roma.

In its concluding observations and comments (CERD/C/304/Add.29), the Committee noted that the transition to democracy and a market-oriented economy, including a high level of external debt, were among the factors impeding implementation of the Convention. These factors had a negative impact on minorities such as Roma since they led to a high rate of unemployment and poverty, which contributed to the marginalization of a broad segment of the population.

The Committee welcomed the fact that international instruments such as the Convention are part of Bulgaria's domestic law and take precedence over norms of domestic law that contradict them. Legal reform measures were acknowledged, including the Law on Names of Bulgarian Citizens, which makes it possible for Bulgarian to use non-Slavic names; the Law on Amnesty and Restitution of Sequestered Properties; and the Law on Restoration of Property Rights and Real Estate to Bulgarian Citizens of Turkish Origin.

Areas of concern identified by the Committee included: persistent marginalization of the large Roma population; discrimination against minorities in the workplace, especially the Roma who have had relatively little training and education; difficulties encountered by the Roma in applying for social benefits; attitudes and practices which discourage rural Roma from claiming land to which they are entitled under the law disbanding agricultural collectives; the insufficiency of measures taken to guarantee the rights and freedoms of Bulgarian citizens and their integration into society regardless of race, nationality or ethnic origin; and, the persistence of expressions of racial hatred and acts of violence, particularly by neo-Nazi skinheads and others, towards persons belonging to minorities, especially Bulgarian citizens of Roma origin.

The Committee expressed alarm that the government has not been sufficiently active in effectively countering incidents of racial violence against members of minority groups and that Bulgarian police and prosecutors do not appear to have investigated acts of violence promptly and effectively. The Committee also expressed concern at information received from various sources indicating a low number of charges and convictions relative to the number of abuses reported, and the fact that acts of propagating and instigating racial and nationalistic hatred against ethnic minorities, and the perpetrators of such crimes, are not considered to pose a significant danger to the public order. Further, the report notes cases where members of security forces have harassed minorities or used excessive force against them, especially against the Roma community. The Committee expressed concern that law enforcement officials may not be receiving sufficient training on the Convention.

The Committee noted that the right to associate and to found political parties is stated as a general principle in the Constitution, but also stated its concern that the Constitution prohibits the establishment and registration of political parties formed on an ethnic, racial or religious basis.

The Committee recommended that the government:

- ▶ provide in its next report detailed information on the effective implementation of the new legislation, including on the law on restitution of confiscated immovable property or compensation for those affected;