

Organisation of Repressed Macedonians in Bulgaria Victims of Communist Terror

Thank you Madame Chair. Nelson Mandela said “no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails” and this truth resonates with the people I am representing here today. This organization is one of hundreds of Macedonian organizations still be refused registration in Bulgaria. Its members are elderly activists, whose repression began in their youth. In 1963, the policy of denial of the Macedonian minority was the first in the series of revival processes aimed at assimilating minorities into a unified Bulgarian socialist nation. In this period, Macedonian youths resisted these aggressive assimilationist policies by forming circles to study their own history, singing forbidden songs, listening to banned radio stations, and writing slogans about Macedonia in public spaces. For this, they were investigated by state security, imprisoned, surveilled, harassed, and exiled. Just this week, the leader [inaudible] who is 77 years old, believed he was being invited to give evidence for his complaint on the genocide of the Macedonian minority only to be interrogated by the intelligence service for three hours and pressured to identify as Bulgarian. He has asked me to voice today that the repression continues in a different, hidden form, but that they still make people afraid to say they are Macedonian. To amplify minority voices in peacebuilding, accountability, and transitional justice processes, there must be dialogue. Bulgaria remains stuck, as it has since the 60s, in the first stage of grief, and that is denial. An aggressive denial still repeating the words of the communist dictator Zhivkov that Macedonians must not and cannot exist, and so there is no dialogue. Leaving minority issues to individual states depends largely on the goodwill of that state to act, and Bulgaria has none, especially when it concerns its Macedonian minority. Transitional justice and reconciliation are only possible if dialogue exists and we ask for the support of the UN [CUT OFF BY CHAIR].