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Hate speech and hate crimes against Jehovah's Witnesses

HRWF (28.05.2011) - www.hrwf.net - On **Monday, December 27, 2010, at around 13:30**, two Jehovah's Witnesses (Daniela Petrova and Sirel Comb) were peacefully carrying out their Christian ministry in the town of Montana. After a friendly conversation with an interested lady, her son, Mr. Bogomil Nikolov Atanasov, went after them and physically attacked them in front of the apartment building. Daniela Petrova was severely beaten by him and even lost her conscience. Three police cars and an ambulance arrived shortly after the incident. Mr. Bogomil Nikolov Atanasov was taken to the police station. Daniela Petrova was taken to the hospital and was diagnosed with commotion. On February 7, 2011, Daniela Petrova filed a complaint with the Prosecutor of Montana against the attacker.

On **Monday night, January 24, 2011**, unidentified persons bent the massive metal front door latch of the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in **Burgas**. Gaining access to the yard of the Kingdom Hall they broke one of the windows of the small hall. In the morning of January 25, 2011, some members of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church in Burgas called the Police. Because of the relative small amount of the damage and the fact that the perpetrator has not been identified, no proceeding was initiated by the Burgas Regional Prosecutor.

On **Sunday, January 30, 2011, in Pleven**, members and supporters of the political party VMRO, Section Pleven, protested against Jehovah's Witnesses. At about 10:00, about 25 persons gathered in front of the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in Pleven. With them there was the Orthodox priest Petko Pandov. The chairman of VMRO - Pleven, Ivan Kioldjijski, declared that the party intends to continue their campaign against Jehovah's Witnesses until this kind of sects will have disappeared from Pleven. Besides this, in newspaper articles VMRO members made slanderous comments about Jehovah's Witnesses.

On **Thursday, February 3, 2011**, at 10:30, the first court hearing against the newspaper *Borba* was held in the **Veliko Turnovo** Regional Court. On September 20, 2010, the Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses had filed a lawsuit under the civil code against newspaper *Borba* for slanderous they had published about them in 2009.

On **Sunday, March 27, 2011, in Pleven**, members and supporters of the political party VMRO, Section Pleven, protested against Jehovah's Witnesses. At about 10:00, a few supporters of VMRO gathered in front of the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in Pleven. In connection with the protest VMRO distributed leaflets against Jehovah's Witnesses on the streets of Pleven. In their leaflet the VMRO warns parents to protect their children from Jehovah's Witnesses, which according to their view are a very dangerous sect. The leaflet evidently contains slanderous lies about the Jehovah's Witnesses.

On **Wednesday night, March 30, 2011**, unidentified persons bent the front door latch and

entered the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in **Asenovgrad**. At around 11:00, on March 30, one of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Asenovgrad called the Police. The Police confirmed that there are acts of vandalism outside the Kingdom Hall. A complaint was filed with the Prosecutor.

On **Monday, April 4, 2011, at 11.00**, members and supporters of the political party VMRO Youth Organization, Section **Veliko Turnovo**, protested against Jehovah's Witnesses. At about 11:00, around 20 supporters of VMRO gathered in front of the Regional Court in Veliko Turnovo. They waved VMRO flags and posters and expressed their discontent with the up-coming court hearing inside the building between Jehovah's Witnesses and the newspaper *Borba*. On the posters it was written: "Throw the sects out!", "The jehovists ruin families" and "You are not wanted in Turnovo". Besides this, VMRO members made slanderous comments about Jehovah's Witnesses in the media. For example, the regional coordinator of VMRO for the district of Veliko Turnovo, Boris Vangelov, claimed wrongly in the media that Jehovah's Witnesses are a dangerous sect, alienate people from their families and do not respecting the Bulgarian national symbols. He stated that he wants the authorities to cancel the registration of Jehovah's Witnesses in Bulgaria.

On **Tuesday, April 5, 2011**, newspaper *Borba* in **Veliko Turnovo** published a statement made by Mr. Borislav Stoyanov, a member of the Parliament from the ATAKA political party. Mr. Stoyanov, who is also a member of the Commission of Human Rights and Denominations, claimed that ATAKA will propose in the Parliament, right after Easter, his bill for re-registration of the presently registered denominations in the country, which could eventually lead to a ban or to a refusal to register denominations that pose a real threat to the life and health of its' followers. He referred to Jehovah's Witnesses as being such a Denomination. Since year 2009, Mr. Stoyanov has talked about a re-registration of the presently registered denominations in the country, so far without any results.

Far-rights attack Muslims

Press TV (21.05.2011) / HRWF (22.04.2011) – www.hrwf.net - The supporters of Volen Siderov, the leader of the Bulgarian ultra-nationalist party Ataka, burned carpets used during Friday prayers at Sofia Grand Mosque and attacked the Muslims with stones and eggs, a Press TV correspondent reported.

Police say several people were injured as nationalists clashed with Muslims during Friday prayers. The Ataka party's followers had gathered in downtown Sofia to protest against the Muslim community in the country.

The violence erupted after one of the rightist members grabbed a prayer rug and set it on fire, leading to a fight between the two groups. The tension also escalated after an Ataka activist tried to play patriotic music on the loudspeakers of the mosque.

Siderov, who is running in the October 11 presidential election, said during the Friday protest that he wants demonstrations against Muslims to continue in Bulgaria.

Around one million Muslims currently live in the country amid grave concerns that the Muslim community could be deprived of their constitutional rights of religious expression if the extremist Ataka party's leader takes power in the upcoming election.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Boyko Borisiv expressed concerns over the incident, saying the ethnic cohesion of the Bulgarian society should be preserved.

But many people say mere words are not enough.

The Bulgarian government has recently forbidden passport pictures with women's headscarves and banned religious literature from focusing on Islam in a move that has been widely viewed as part of a smear campaign against Muslims in the country.

See Video: <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/180981.html>

Far-right VMRO attacks Jehovah's Witnesses

JW Official Website (21.04.2011) / HRWF (22.04.2011) – www.hrwf.net - On Sunday, April 17, 2011, at 7:30 pm, Jehovah's Witnesses in the city of Burgas were peacefully gathered at their Kingdom Hall for the annual commemoration of the death of Jesus Christ. About 20 minutes before the program was to begin, an angry mob of about 60 men, some waving flags of the political party VMRO, gathered in front of the Kingdom Hall. The mob threw large stones at the Witnesses who were at the entrance of the building. After that, the mob stormed the door.

The Witnesses called the police immediately, but they were slow to respond. At the time of the attack, more than 100 people were inside the hall, including women, children and elderly ones. Injuries resulted from the attack, and five victims were taken to the hospital by ambulance with severe injuries, including concussions.

Representatives of the political party VMRO have disrupted the peaceful meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses on several occasions in the past and have repeatedly used the media

to circulate defamatory lies about the Witnesses. Criminal complaints against this political party have been filed on numerous occasions, but the attacks have continued. Now, the international community is watching to see how the authorities of the Bulgarian government will react to these lawless and criminal acts.

In Bulgaria last year nearly 4,000 attended the Witnesses' annual commemoration of Christ's death. Worldwide there are over 7.5 million Jehovah's Witnesses who peacefully meet together for worship.

Contacts:

in Bulgaria: Hristo Nikolov Telephone +359 879 001 845

in Europe: European Association of Jehovah's Christian Witnesses

Telephone +32 2 782 0015

in United States: Office of Public Information Telephone +1 718 560 5600
