



EMBASSY OF GREECE
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Mr Stephen Mulvey
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BBC
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RE: Your article: "Greece's invisible minority – the Macedonian Slavs"

Dear Mr Mulvey,

It was to my great surprise and dismay that I read yesterday, Sunday February 24, on the BBC's website, the article entitled "Greece's Invisible Minority". This article contains significant historical inaccuracies, distorts facts at the expense of Greece and, importantly, does not do justice to the Prespa Agreement: a historic agreement, which resolved a decades-long dispute, reinforcing stability in the Balkan region and offering a paradigm for the settlement of differences on the basis of dialogue and mutual respect.

There is only one minority in Greece, as recognized by international treaties, namely the Muslim minority. Nevertheless, the article attempts to raise a non-existing issue by distorting the Prespa Agreement, while its writer has opted to not quote even its relevant provisions.

The article postulates that "by ratifying an agreement with the newly renamed Republic of North Macedonia, Greece has implicitly recognized the existence of a Macedonian language and ethnicity".

As regards the issue of language, the Agreement refers (Art. 1, par. 3(c)) to the "Macedonian language" in a very specific way: i.e. exclusively as the official language of North Macedonia. Moreover, it explicitly clarifies (Art. 7, par. 4) that it falls within the group of South Slavic languages and, most importantly, that it is not related to the history, culture, and heritage of Greek Macedonia, from antiquity to-date.

As regards the fallacious presumption that there is an implicit recognition of "Macedonian ethnicity" supposedly emanating from the Prespa Agreement, allow me to point out a very basic principle of international law: states recognize states, not ethnic groups. The ethnicity of citizens, cannot be determined by inter-state agreements. Hence, Greece retains the right to refer to the citizens that comprise the ethnic majority in our neighbouring country with the terms used to date, whereas they retain the right to self-identification.

The Prespa Agreement does not refer to ethnicity, but to "nationality (citizenship)" (article 1), which is the legal bond between the state and the citizen. North Macedonia has amended its constitution accordingly (Article 23), underlining that nationality (citizenship), as agreed in the Prespa Agreement, "does not define or pre-determine ethnic affiliation/ethnicity".

It is therefore plainly obvious that the Prespa Agreement in no way leads to the "implicit recognition" of any minority in our country, as the writer incorrectly and arbitrarily holds. On the contrary, the Prespa Agreement sets out clearly, inter alia, that nothing in its constitution, as it is in force or will be amended in the future, can or should be interpreted as constituting or will ever constitute the basis for interference with the internal affairs of the other Part in any form and for any reason (Art. 4, par. 3).

It is in this very context that North Macedonia amended Art. 49 of its Constitution, so as to refer exclusively to the support of its citizens and Diaspora, and deleted references such as "support of the Macedonian people... in neighbouring countries".

The various allegations in the article seem to echo the views of "Ouranio Toxo", the only political party that claims to represent a so-called "Macedonian minority". Let me add that in all national or European elections in which it has participated, the electoral support this party has received was always minimal, while it has always run as part of multi-party coalitions.

I would ask you to kindly publish this letter in order to restore facts and set the record straight. I remain hopeful that these insights will be taken into account in future reports of your esteemed public service broadcaster on the subject.

Yours sincerely,



Dimitris Caramitsos-Tziras
Ambassador of Greece