

# The Police and the People- a Cohesive Union or a Dysfunctional Combination?

**A**s a fundamental instrument of every legal system, the Constitution strictly proclaims the essence of democracy. The basic principles for protection of human rights and freedoms and the rule of law are supposed to run through the entire structure of the state. Build upon these principles, a democratic society demands institutions divorced from politics, immune to corruption and compromised judgment. It is these characteristics that will ensure people that the institutions are meant to serve their interest in every way. However, when speaking in terms of law enforcement, the public's perception might in times witness differently. An evident proof of this is the police organization, as the most unique law enforcement agency with its ambivalent function: on the one side, it acts within its entitlement to provide and protect the basic human rights and freedoms; on the other, in order to prevent and suppress crime, it has no other option but to restrict many of them. As a consequence, the people's perception of the police has endured through different stages, from protector of the people to an instrument of the government ruling, and still has not been completely differentiated.

In order to fulfill its most important role, to detect, prevent or suppress crime and to

guarantee the personal and collective safety in the community, it is of extreme importance for the police to gain people's trust. The performance of duties by this governmental authority should be merely oriented towards protection of the human well-being and a reflection of nobility and heroism. The relationship between the police and the people should represent a strong thread of mutually-dependent figures. From one point of view, the police are the only authority that people can rely on and delegate the power to protect their basic rights. From another, the police dependency is consisted in the need to maintain the democratic values of the society by fulfilling their responsibilities to the people. Instead of an instrument of repression, violating the freedom and privacy, the people should perceive the police as a protector and servant in their interest.

However, the main issues arise when, in order to get results and achieve their mission the police authorities infringe one's dignity or personality. This comes as a consequence to unprofessional, arbitrarily oriented police forces that operate under the cover of political influence, corruption or personal interest. A striking case of police brutality agitated the Macedonian public when a young man's body was found lifeless, minutes after the celebration on the governmental elections win. After a controversial criminal procedure, the court trial resulted in sentencing one man for a brutal murder, but left numerous suspicions among the public, on who should have taken further responsibility. Provoking continuous demonstrations, this case made it impossible for the Macedonian people to entrust their deepest concerns into the hands of an entity that they believe is exploiting their fundamental rights and freedoms. Consequently, they form a defense

mechanism incarnated in distrust, fear and resentment. Instead of cooperation, you see intolerance. Instead of respecting the laws, you see disobedience. Why would one obey the law, when those who are supposed to enforce it, break it themselves? This leads to increased tendency to engage in a criminal behavior, which directly increases the rate of criminality in the society. Once the circle of trust between the police and the people is fractured by the unethical performance of the state law-enforcement organs, there can be no guarantee for the proper functioning of democratic principles.

Satisfying the standards of a democratic society does not only mean formal existing of laws and promoting principles; it means implementing them to the fullest in every segment of the state's apparatus. In order to achieve this, we have to begin at the very core of the problem by raising institutions which will be able to make every human being feel safe and protected. We have to build a police organization whose groundwork will rest upon professional standards, indiscriminating policy on every basis and devotion to being in service of the people. This will simultaneously increase the people's confidence in the institutions, especially enhance their trust in the police organization. A relationship built on mutual trust can bring vast advantages in the democracy development and the security policy of the country.

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