

## "IGNORANCE IS BLISS" - MACEDONIA CHALLENGED TO SURVIVE

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The continuous appearance of social, political or security related disturbances in a short period of time may be harmful to the general cohesion of the system. At times, the sequence of events may be far more important than the meaning of individual occurrences. The question remains, is the ability to recognize a threat and resolve it, our virtue or flaw? If a virtue, than concrete and direct actions would take place, revealing the imminent hazard, repressing it and seeking responsibility. But pure ignorance of the obvious,

manipulation with facts and malformation of the truth, implicates a defective system with limited (or completely absent) principles of democracy, rule of law or justice. Unfortunately, recent happenings in Macedonia have proven exactly the latter. In the past four months has become obvious that we live in a controversial society where nothing seems to be as it appears. We have entered a turbulence zone and cannot seem to find the right way out.

The chain of incidents started with a parliamentary crisis, which from initially peaceful protest followed by

street violence and public disorder, lead to physical confrontation within the Parliament. Dramatic enough, the media representatives and members of the opposition party were forcibly removed from the parliamentary session where important laws (including the yearly budget) were arbitrarily enacted by the ruling party. The necessary intervention of the police forces on the streets prevented further escalation of the violence acts. The controversy of the incident now, is to decide who is to blame. As expected from an easy manipulated audience, people simply decide to pick a side: either you are an opposition-oriented individual, who takes them as victims and defends their (constitutional) right to protest, or, you are a position-member and justify the extensive use of force by officials (whose legitimacy still remains a mystery). Either way, it is rather concerning, that almost none of the political elites expressed any willingness to discover the whole, naked truth and reveal facts instead of a one-side story. Even though possible solutions for resolving the issue were suggested by the President of the State, both con-

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cerned actors (position and opposition) were unable to find a mutual language of understanding. Four months later there is still nothing done for confirming the objectivity of the situation.

When democratic imbalance and impaired principles exist, every other inconvenience of national importance would only mean adding fuel to the fire. By opening old wounds, an action of such sort caused national-wide discomfort and revolt among the citizens. The 2001 inter-ethnic conflict in Macedonia has left such an effect, that in spite of the reconciliation and agreement to peaceful coexistence, it will always be a sensitive subject. This is being proven by, more or less, striking incidents from time to time subscribed under the category of inter-ethnic. Within this context, appointing an ex-commandant of the Albanian National Army a.k.a UCK, on the position of Minister of Defense, has caused general unsettlement of higher proportion. Protests were organized on several occasions by united individuals who oppose

the decision, including professional army members or independent citizens. Claiming that this has been a betrayal to the Macedonian deceased soldiers during the conflict in 2001 and the nation as a whole, the protests were peaceful, calling upon reason for patriotism and national appreciation. However, other unsettling protests and acts of violence on the streets, mostly among young people, caused public disturbance where police intervention was inevitable. It is yet unknown whether the true nature behind these acts was the inauguration of the new Minister of Defense or simply expression of inter-ethnic tension. The most disturbing fact is that not one representative of the official institutions came out with an official statement, to either settle down the pressure or elaborate on the subject. The government has gone numb on everyday incidents and public accusations.

These events should be a wakeup call. The implications that these unfortunate happenings

have on the democratic system in Macedonia are far greater that we can see right now and cause an irretrievable damage. If one chooses to closely elaborate the true nature of the problems in Macedonia, he will find nothing less but ignorance as an underlined cause. Consequently, one unsolved incident causes another one to evolve, which makes the risk assessment rather impossible. The importance of evaluating the real threats, as well as demanding accountability from the responsible key figures for what has happened in the previous period, is the only reasonable choice of action that can cast a slight brightness upon the shadow. The consequences are left to be seen and felt, not only on domestic ground but internationally as well. Putting the real problems under the carpet is not going to make them go away.

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