

# DIALOGUE

newsletter for  
democracy and  
human rights

ISSN 1857-7970

ISSUE #3 | ENGLISH EDITION | MAY 2012 | [WWW.CIVIL.ORG.MK](http://WWW.CIVIL.ORG.MK)



**STORIES FOR  
LITTLE CHILDREN**

**SUPPORT PEACE  
IN MACEDONIA!  
TODAY! NOW!**

**IF THERE IS NO  
INFORMATION,  
THERE IS  
DICTATORSHIP!**

**THE BRAVE NEW  
WORLD OF THE  
NEW MEDIA**

**TIME IS  
TICKING AWAY**

**FIGHTING GUNS  
GLOBALLY**

[contents]

**EDITORIAL** ASK QUESTIONS, DEMAND EXPLANATIONS 3

**REALITY CHECK** STORIES FOR LITTLE CHILDREN 4

**INTEGRATED EDUCATION** HIGH TIME FOR IMPLEMENTATION 6

**INTERETHNIC RELATIONS** SUPPORT PEACE IN MACEDONIA! TODAY! NOW! 7

**MEDIA FREEDOM** IF THERE IS NO INFORMATION, THERE IS - DICTATORSHIP! 9

**ELECTORAL SYSTEMS** PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT 10

**INTERVIEW** [FILIP STOJANOVSKI] THE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF THE NEW MEDIA 12

**STATE OF AFFAIRS** TIME IS TICKING AWAY 16

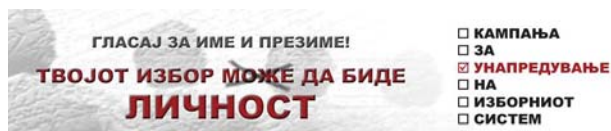
**STATE OF AFFAIRS** BE HONEST! - Civil's Appeal on May 7, 2012 17

**ARMS CONTROL** A "BULLETPROOF ARMS TRADE TREATY 18

**ARMS CONTROL** FIGHTING GUNS GLOBALLY 19

e-version (full color): [www.civil.org.mk](http://www.civil.org.mk)

discussions @ [www.dialog-macedonia.blogspot.com](http://www.dialog-macedonia.blogspot.com)



Published by: Civil – Center for Freedom | Created and edited by the Project Team of Civil: Xhabir Deralla, Risto Popovski, Ilir Ajdini, Dzvezdan Georgievski, Sonja Eftovska, Aleksandra Maya Milosevic, Biljana Zdraveska, Kreshnik Ajdini | Graphic Design: Arian Mehmeti | Cover image: "Struggle" by Alexandra Maya Milosevic (from the Human=Rights exhibition, combined techniques) | Published in Skopje | Printed by: Data Pons - Skopje | Circulation: 150 | Publisher's Address: Civil – Center for Freedom, Mito Hadjivasilev Jasmin 12/5, 1000 Skopje, Republic of Macedonia | Tel: +989 2 5209 176 | e-mail: [civil.mk@gmail.com](mailto:civil.mk@gmail.com) | Web: [www.civil.org.mk](http://www.civil.org.mk) | Blog: [www.dialog-macedonia.blogspot.com](http://www.dialog-macedonia.blogspot.com)



© CIVIL 2012 The digital version of Dialogue #3 is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Macedonia License.

This publication is part of the Cure - Political Culture and Dialogue Project, funded by the Balkan Trust for Democracy.

The project is part of the Annual Program of Civil, which is supported in the frame of the CIVICA Mobilitas Programme implemented by the Center for Institutional Development (CIRa) and financially supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

All contents represent opinions of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the donors (SDC, LTD, CIRa).



# ASK QUESTIONS, DEMAND EXPLANATIONS



**Xhabir Deralla**

We are making this new attempt to instigate discussion on important issues that torment the Macedonian society. Discuss these issues and put more of them on the discussion board. Democracy and human rights are not gifts, they are not crosswords – they are causes to fight for.

The title of this newsletter, *Dialogue – Newsletter for democracy and human rights* promises to be a place for dialogue and report on human rights and democracy. Those are quite challenging tasks, which aren't reached or at least not entirely; I can recognize that now, at the beginning of the third edition of it. The area we are trying to cover is vast, our resources are limited and - most importantly – the situation in the country seems to be deteriorating practically on daily basis that makes it impossible to cover it in a nearly sufficient way.

At this moment, we can report that dialogue between political parties is still frozen. Ethnic communities reflect that situation. They have gone further – ethnic relations in the country entered a highly dangerous phase, including a string of incidents with alarming consequences. Once categorically declared EU integration course, seems to be lifeless, too. Media remain under strong governmental control; judiciary continues to be an instrument of the ruling party, a process that lately included the Constitutional Court; economy is falling down, opposite to costly monuments and buildings that stir nationalism that are on a rise.

We need more than just assembling a few articles together and let them float in the space. We need much more from a media product like this. We need to see this newsletter as a potential to stimulate discussion and information sharing. The next, even more challenging step now is to make these issues alive among our readers, be they citizens of the country or part of the wide international audience.

We are making this new attempt to instigate discussion on important issues that torment the Macedonian society. These articles are copyright free; all we require is not to change their meaning if you publish them and to send us links where you used them. Please, find these articles on our website, share them on your social network profiles, post them to your websites and blogs, and call for more thoughts and information. Of course, we expect your comments directly to our website or blogs, e-mail us or call (see back cover of this publication). Discuss these issues and put more of them on the discussion board.

Let this edition be a wakeup call for our fellow citizens, and for Civil's members, contributors and activists across the country, as well. They seem to be asleep lately. Let me remind you, dear friends, NGOs are not one more place where you can earn some money. NGOs are not projects paid by foreigners. NGOs are you! Democracy and human rights are not gifts, they are not crosswords – they are causes to fight for. NGOs are places where you can commence that fight by using civilized and democratic tools, already provided by international and national laws and Constitution.

Don't be afraid, don't be shy: ask questions, demand explanations.

# STORIES FOR LITTLE CHILDREN



**Ljubomir Kostovski**

This selection of issues in the country, no matter how hard we try to make it a moderate one, leads to a conclusion that Macedonia is in a difficult political, social and economic situation, with no tangible solutions in sight. For the time being...

For his quick overview I made a selection of only three out of the many possible issues in order to draw a picture of current developments in the country. Logically, all these are important issues that have a serious impact on all other spheres of societal and political life in the country. As well as they influence the spheres tangled in this brief overview. I will start with the early start of the campaign for the local elections and will finish with the Prime Minister Gruevski's open pessimism on country's future. The bridge between these two important matters are, of course, money. A brief look at the budget situation of the country, promises nothing good in the foreseeable future. Let's see what happens.

## **REGROUPING OF THE OPPOSITION AND BEGINNING OF THE ELECTION RACE**

Local elections campaign started unofficially already at the beginning of this year, although they are supposed to be held in the beginning of 2013. The opposition is reuniting in a coalition "Together for Macedonia", all opposition parties under one "flag". This coalition is similar to the Serbian DOS, which was the critical factor that led to the fall of Slobodan Miloshevic's dictatorship. These days the reunion of the right parties around VMRO NP of the ex -Prime Minister Ljubcho Georgievski is being round off, which has no common platform for now.

Meanwhile, the government has a lot of problems – no success in the economic-social issues sphere, the budget is rather empty, the petrol

prices are rising and the state has no answer to many vital problems. Instead, the government publicized results of one more prearranged opinion poll to illustrate how popular it is. These polls usually "show" that the ruling party leads 2:1 before the opposition. An analyst called it a science fiction. On the other hand, as it seems, the opposition is certainly going to lose the elections in case they are held today particularly if regulations for fair and democratic elections are not set as soon as possible. According to political analysts, the international community, such as OSCE Mission to Skopje, and the national Citizen Association MOST, put pressure on the government to clear voters' lists and keep proposing stricter electoral rules, according to which the government should be disabled from using its mechanisms of dictating electoral results. Regarding the problem of the voters' lists, there are fascinating 1.7 million registered voters, despite the facts that there are only 1.3 million identification cards in Macedonia including underage citizens who are bearers of ID cards. The country's population is 2 million. Rightwing opposition parties accused the ruling VMRO-DPMNE of electoral forgery in 2011, when dead people were "voting", as well as people who have emigrated long ago. They also reported on a number of people voting twice, since they are registered in two different places of living. As long as the government has undisputed power over media, there will be no fair and democratic climate for any decision made by people. We live in an atmosphere of continual



attack of those media that even tried to decline from the governmental positions. Examples of various forms of pressure, control, manipulation or censorship are numerous.

### THE BUDGET

Experts and opposition MPs, since the very beginning of defining of the annual budget, criticized the government's disconnection from reality. Vice Prime Minister Stavreski insisted that the country will have a fantastic annual growth of 4.5 percent. This prognosis is far much higher than the estimates of all international financial institutions, as well as of the National Bank of Macedonia (NBM), which was 2.4 percent.

From October last year onwards, the country has a negative balance in the industrial growth, which clearly indicates that we are at least at the threshold of recession. Prime Minister Gruevski said it is easy for NBM to make "those" (lower) approximation, because it is not the NBM which is going to make a rebalance.

Revenues in the first months show that there is shortage in the budget (it is also seen in the practical acts of the government) and that until the end of the year, the shortage will be certainly much higher than officially predicted. It can be compensated only with further loans, as it happened already.

Rarely anyone noticed that the government withdrew EURO 25.8

million from the deposits in NBM in February. Additional six million euro have been withdrawn from the foreign currency deposits. This happened despite financial experts' advice. Namely, foreign currency deposits may be managed in that manner only in case of servicing foreign debts, and not even then. The civil servants had a growing problem to receive salaries until the government decided to make a rebalance of the budget, and increased the budget lines for their salaries and



drastically decreased the lines in the health, capital investments, subventions in the area of development and NATO integration. Railway workers and others dependent on the state cashbox have already forgotten when they last received a salary. In January, the government collected 146 million euro from taxes and there are just above 13 million euro as untaxed incomes. When it comes to untaxed incomes, the government plans to collect about 40 million euro from fines, legal and administra-

tive taxes. Fines and penalties are extremely high and seem to be an important source for the government's wallet.

### THE PRIME MINISTER'S PESSIMISM

Maybe several days before the meeting with his Greek counterpart Lucas Papademos, Prime Minister Gruevski admitted that he has no great expectations from the process.

Gruevski openly expresses his pessimism on the name dispute and Euro-Atlantic future of the country.

This pessimism falls in the same time when compromise is reached in the negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia, which opened Serbia's way to the EU. It also came in the same time as the reopening of the case of President Trajkovski's tragic death. This all seems to be in favor of defocusing of the public attention and reinforce the stories about the world's conspiracy against Macedonia.

It looks like if Prime Minister Gruevski is confused. Obviously, he needs to clarify with himself whether he wants to lead the country to the EU and NATO or not. If he wants to keep the EU and NATO integration course, he should better start with it. If not, he should state clearly what his real plans are.

Announcements such as "we will not get in, but we are still trying" are stories for little children.



# HIGH TIME FOR IMPLEMENTATION

If implemented correctly, the Integrated Education Strategy will eventually divert negative trends in the society and the state

The Macedonian society experiences a painful process of fragmentation and ethnic segregation, which is as damaging as visible in the process of education. Ethnic communities are divided, have poor or no knowledge about each other, and look over the ethnic fences with fear, prejudices and hate. Indeed, the ongoing process of ethnic division at official educational system's level is highly damaging and dangerous for the future of the country as a whole. It intensely affects democracy, human rights, security and the overall development of the country.

The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (OSCE HCNM) worked on creation of the Integrated Education Strategy based on country's needs and composition. After a series of negotiations and modifications, the Strategy has been adopted by the Macedonian Ministry of Education (end of 2010). The Strategy, as it is adopted, provides solid basis to stop and revert degrading process in the society through improvements in the education system, dealing with the most sensitive aspects of the

education system.

If implemented correctly, the Integrated Education Strategy will eventually divert negative trends in the society and the state. Therefore, Civil is highly motivated to take the opportunity to contribute to healing of the Macedonian society through successful implementation of this important document.

The slow start of the Strategy's implementation is an additional reason that we, in Civil, decided to take an initiative and support the MoE and all other relevant stakeholders in this process. Our approach is positive and proactive, and will set a positive example for all parties involved in this important process. But, despite our attempts to offer our support and expertise in this area, the Ministry of Education remains silent after over a year of our written expressions of interest and proposals for action in this area.

During the last visit in April 2012, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Knut Vollebaek, called on the government of FYROM to work in a meaningful

and efficient way in the direction of the amelioration of the interethnic relations in the country "before it is too late". The Commissioner Vollebaek also noted that the government of FYROM must ask itself if the necessary conditions and opportunities have been created in the country for the various ethnicities to communicate and live together in harmony.

"I hope that the government considers the interethnic relations to be an important issue. But I am not sure that the energy they put into the matter is serious or sufficient", added Mr. Vollebaek and sent a plea to all the political players of FYROM to face matters that concern interethnic relations with a sense of responsibility.

Integrated education is based on the principle that by bringing pupils from different ethnic backgrounds together in a shared learning environment, they can learn to understand, respect and accept each other. Integrated education is an education system that does not assimilate or separate pupils, but rather tries to reconcile the two goals I mentioned earlier, namely societal cohesion and individual identity, by providing a space for children to meet and learn how to understand and respect different cultures, languages and traditions.

"The strategy for integrated education represents a long-term commitment to ensuring that the country's education system bridges the ethnic gap between the communities and, indeed, fosters integration of the society," Vollebaek said in one of his communiqués.

It's the turn of the government now. It only takes political will to set things right. There will be no credible excuse for a failure in this sphere. Consequences may be devastating.

**Compiled by the Civil team**



Civil - Center for Freedom is committed to support of the Integrated Education Strategy, which is stated in its Annual Program and the Strategy of the organization. Civil's slogan is Integrated Education = Integrated Society.

# SUPPORT PEACE IN MACEDONIA! TODAY! NOW!

*Ethnic violence from the beginning of the year have shown once again that the situation in Macedonia is on the edge of control. School days brings fear and uncertainty to many. Civil – Center for Freedom has responded right away with strong support to peace activities and with numerous calls for peace and dialogue in the country, proposing concrete steps for preservation of peace and confidence-building in the country*

**VIOLENCE** | Five men have been killed near Skopje [Macedonia's capital]. The victims are four young men (late teens and early twenties) and a 45-year-old. They were found on the shore of a lake near Skopje on April 12, in the eve of the Good Friday, before one of the biggest Orthodox Christian holiday of Easter.

Victims were gunned down in a professional manner, the Interior Ministry said the first day. Media speculations in the country and in the region didn't help the situation, which was already very delicate. Hundreds of villagers protested in the days after, demanding justice, taking Albanians responsible for the killings, throwing stones at their cars and houses. Several other incidents targeting Albanians and Muslim symbols took place in the days that followed. In Skopje, over one thousand young nationalist hooligans (sports fan clubs) took the streets with an attempt to cross the river of Vardar dividing the capital along ethnic lines. Riot police were deployed in order to prevent serious ethnic violence. Two police officers were injured and several protesters were taken into custody following the unrest.

These events follow the string of ethnically motivated violent incidents in the past several months. One of the most serious incident took place in the beginning of March when a group of masked men armed with baseball and metal sticks brutally attacked several ethnic Albanian

students on a bus in Skopje.

Up to four thousand people took part in the March for Peace was organized by an ethnically mixed group of citizens who were supported by around 70 NGOs and over 50 public figures. [please, visit [www.civil.org.mk](http://www.civil.org.mk) for more information/analysis]

**ARREST** | Back to the murder of five, only a couple of weeks after, on May 1, the MOI announced that 20 suspects are in custody as a result of the police operation "Monster". The operation alleged that perpetrators are members of an Islamic terrorist cell.

This latest development brings a new light of the security situation in the country, as well as new risks in the sphere of interethnic relations. Moreover, serious doubts on the credibility of the police action were raised immediately after these news. Half of the arrested persons were released the next day. There are only three persons in custody now. No charges were raised against the released ones. Complaints of illtreatment were raised by several of the arrested persons. In its statements from the beginning, the MOI has violated the presumption of innocence entirely.

This all makes civil society's activities much needed, particularly having in mind its high visibility and capability to bridge ethnic, religious and other differences in the country. **PEACE ACTIVITIES** | Recent events of ethnic violence have shown once again that the situation in Macedonia is on the edge of control. School days brings fear and uncertainty to many. Civil – Center for Freedom has responded right away with strong support of peace activities and with numerous calls for peace and



March for Peace, Skopje, March 17, 2012

dialogue in the country, proposing concrete steps for preservation of peace and confidence-building in the country.

These are excerpts of the most recent ones:

Peace will be preserved only by taking urgent measures to calm the situation and restore peace and confidence.

These days are tough for many, tragedies and terrors have mounted, and divisions are more apparent than ever in the past few years. Now, individuals and groups from each "side" believe they are more dam-



aged and should yet retaliate. Wrong! Wrong and dangerous!

Families that experienced tragedies go through difficult trauma and pain for the murdered ones. Now we need to focus on helping them stay strong and dignified in grief. We all have to sympathize with them, calm and dignified, as befits one of sorrow and sympathy. Pain has no ethnic, religious or any affiliation. Solidarity and humanity belong to all and is shared equally by all.

We must look to the future and draw lessons from recent bloody Balkan and Macedonian history. Other Balkan countries take large and quick steps towards the European family, to progress, with open borders and without complexes.

Before us, starting today, even in the hour in which you read or hear this appeal, we face difficult and complex tasks that we must begin doing at the same moment. Some of those tasks are urgent and short, some long-term, but all need immediate action. Many tasks and projects that need to be started are not mentioned here, but we expect you

to contribute.

**APPEALS** | Civil issued several appeals. Here's a selection of the previous appeals. (see the latest appeal on page 17).

To all Citizens of the Republic of Macedonia:

Refrain from hate speech. It is just one step away from unimaginable tragedies.

Obeys the law, public order and peace and demand that from your immediate family members.

Be active in the prevention from violence in your communities.

We appeal to parents and teachers:

Talk to children and young people, ask them to remain calm and act responsibly.

Demand from them to listen and not to risk their future and future of the whole country.

Demand from them to identify the profiteers in those who call to violence.

We appeal to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia:

Take immediate measures to put an end to hate speech and violence applying the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Macedonia, especially anti-discrimination law and

sanction dissemination of national, religious and racial hatred.

Immediately begin implementing the Integrated Education Strategy. The Strategy was adopted in 2010.

Strengthen the sector of police prevention. Expand and accelerate projects to strengthen trust and cooperation between police and citizens.

Strengthen the activities, measures and projects in the field of arms control. Continue supporting projects within the civil society in the field of arms control, risk education, and overcoming gun culture.

We appeal to the Broadcasting Council of Macedonia:

Immediately sanction media that promote hate speech.

We appeal to political parties:

Issue an immediate demand - in a clear and unambiguous manner - to members and activists to contribute to calming the situation in their communities.

We appeal to editors, the Association of Journalists of Macedonia, other media and journalist associations to call upon their members/co-workers to practice accountable and impartial reporting.

We call on religious leaders to immediately stop preaches in which directly or indirectly inspire to violence.

We appeal to all organizations of civil society, regardless of their mission and statute, to take immediate actions that will contribute to calming the situation, immediately and without delay.

We appeal to all sports clubs supporter groups: STAY HOME! This situation is too serious to be dealt with the vocabulary and methods of your groups.

Peace is everyone's responsibility. Therefore, we appeal to all together and to everyone individually:

Do something for your future and the future of your child.

Support Peace in Macedonia! Today! Now!

**Compiled by the Civil team**

## A CRIME AGAINST ONE PERSON IS A CRIME AGAINST THE WHOLE HUMAN KIND

Stones and calls for vengeance won't bring anything good to anyone. Street justice will bring more tears, suffering and death. Condemning all Albanians for crime of individuals is a serious felony, too. And vice versa, taking all Macedonians responsible for crimes when Albanians suffered or lost their lives is absolutely wrong. Everyone needs to stop accusing the "others" and get out of the vicious spiral of hate and violence. It's extremely difficult to put broken windows together, take words of hate back, build bridges between neighbors when they are torn down. It only takes a moment to destroy; it takes time without end to rebuild.

The state institutions have to manifest high ethical and professional attitudes and bring criminals to justice. The police needs to remain calm and professional; politicians and community leaders need to be cooperative and wise. Institutions must work properly and in harmony with justice, law and order, respecting human rights and freedoms. That is how confidence will grow, and weapons will be expelled from homes.

We all need to remain dignified in these difficult times. A crime against one man or a woman is a crime against all of us, regardless of the ethnic, religious, racial or social background. If we all think of this today, we save ourselves from disgrace and crimes of false accusation. We will be saved from the insanity of violence that hurts all of us and the generations to come. (Xh. Deralla)



# IF THERE IS NO INFORMATION, THERE IS - DICTATORSHIP!



**Zvezdan Georgievski**

Trapped in the vicious circle between the daily need to bring bread on the table, societal and political conditions, we see the journalists in a very poor moral and professional condition...

**W**hat is the situation with and within the Macedonian media scene? Devastated? Corrupt? Completely unprofessional? Compromising? Unethical? ... If we want an answer according to the present standards of the Macedonian journalism, then we would say: None of these and yet a bit of everything. Only in the Macedonian journalism there is no “a bit of everything”, to the contrary, there is “a lot of everything”.

The big majority of journalists will complain about the political and financial pressure. Those who felt the judicial persecution on their own back would talk about the absurdly high penalties for even more absurd deeds - slander, which inevitably results with fear and self-censorship among journalists. In a poorly democratic such as the Macedonian, these side effects became “normal situation”. Finally, even in some democracies with deeper roots, the government, in one way or another makes efforts to invade journalism (Hungary). Some would say it is in the job description of governance.

The journalist guild in Macedonia is still non-resistant and fragile. There are approximately 500- 600 unemployed journalists registered at the Employment Bureau. Almost half of them have lost their job, mostly because of the unregulated and unsettled normative and market conditions. Many of them are suing their former employers. Considering the situation in the Macedonian judiciary and its servility towards the political and business power structures, these lawsuits have weak chances to bring any justice.

All this was not enough to stir some kind of self-organizing of journalists. The Journalists Association is divided for years. The relatively new Independent Syndicate of Journalist is melted with the global picture of the Macedonian decomposed and - we would also say - nonexistent syndicalism. The civil society sector seems incapable of doing anything but scratching on the surface; not going any further than debating about known facts and recognizing the situation.

The consequence is creation of a vicious circle; “ideal” solution for a journalist is getting into political waters or to get a position in a commercial company. Indeed, political parties, big companies and governmental institutions employ spokespersons among journalists to play the role of spin-doctors. Seems that a number of journalists perceive this profession as a temporary one – “until they find something steadier”. So, since journalism is a “temporary job” for many, it’s inappropriate to criticize potential employers in the future.

You don’t have to be Egon Erwin Kisch to realize this is wrong and inexpedient tactics. On the other hand, all this is a consequence from poorly paid journalists, nomadic survival from one to another media, inability to defend from the absurd legal regulations, and finally, the equation between the party and the country. Yet, bread needs to be brought to a table every day.

In such societal conditions, you can find everything, but an honest, objective, complete, professional journalism. In combination with the ways of the current government, it is easy to draw a conclusion: if there is no information, there is – dictatorship!

# PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT



## Zlatko Dimitrioski

Enabling citizens to vote for the individual candidates on the lists will have several positive impacts for the democracy in Macedonia. This includes the fact that the voters will be offered more choice and after the elections they will be able to accurately locate responsibility

Citizen Association MOST is a national organization that works to empower and mobilize citizens to strengthen Macedonia's democratic culture, increase the democratic capacity of civic or-

aimed at fostering a mass debate throughout the society about the introduction of an Open List system.

The campaign started in February, 2011 with a national conference on which the campaign and its activities



ganizations, institutions and political actors, and to work through sustainable partnerships. MOST's mission includes work on improvement of the electoral systems in the country.

The organization launched the campaign "Your choice to be a person" last year with a main goal to raise citizen awareness about the Open List system as a variant of the Proportional Representation system. In the Open List system, as well as voting for candidates' list, the citizens will also have an opportunity to vote for the individual candidates on certain list. The campaign is also

were presented. There was a short pause due to the early parliamentary elections and the summer holidays, so the campaign continued in autumn 2011 with 9 regional debates in the bigger cities of the country. These debates served as a tool to reach as many citizens as possible in order to inform them about the Open List system, and in the same time, to give them opportunity to ask questions and clarify their dilemmas about the its introduction.

Parallel to these debates, ads and articles were also published in the printed media in which the organiza-

tions implementing the project and various experts on elections and election legislative presented their views about the proposed improvement of the election system in order to reach the citizens which do not use the Internet and social media.

Enabling citizens to vote for the individual candidates on the lists will have multiple positive impact on the democracy in Macedonia. Firstly, voters are offered more choices. After the elections they will be able to accurately locate the responsibility for (un)realised promises.

This is one of the reasons for their greater motivation to vote if they have a chance to vote for individual candidates on the list. The greater greater turnout is also expected because of this reason: many people do

not vote because their favourites are placed on the lower places on the list and do not have a chance to be elected, or because they do not like the candidates placed on the winning positions on the list.

The bigger turnout will mean more votes to be divided between the parties, so the candidates will be more motivated to pay respect to the needs and problems of citizens and the parties will have to search for candidates with more quality who will bring more votes for the party list.

Also, the elected MPs will feel responsibility directly to the voters, and not to the party elites which nominated them to stand for elections. Hopefully, this will contribute towards certain established people

in the public life running for office, because the current system is demotivating for them.

The Executive Director of MOST, Mr. Darko Aleksov says that the the Open List, on the one hand, will enable the political parties to exactly measure the worth of every candidate by the number of preferential votes he/she will gain and will have a clear picture about which candidates are popular in the people, and which of them deserve to be candidated. On the other hand, the Open List system will offer the citizens a possibility to have the final say about which candidates will enter the Parliament and represent their interests, which is the quintessence/true essence of the representative democracy.

## ADVANTAGES OF THE OPEN LIST SYSTEM































The open list system, on one hand, preserves the advantage of the majority systems in personal selection of candidates, and on the other hand is better than the closed list system because it gives more options from which the voters can choose. The candidates elected by this system are more motivated to fulfill their promises given to the electorate in order to differentiate themselves from other candidates. Also, they appear to be more sensitive towards electorate needs and requests.

The opportunity given to the citizens to vote for a specific candidate they like, and not for the list as a whole, can increase their belief that their vote is not wasted and that they have influence on the election of candidates, in the way that they can change the previous order of the list. This will contribute towards citizens perception about the electoral system as more fair and more legitimate, which will result in higher voters' turnout in the elections – another problem of the election process in Macedonia, as well as in modern democracies in general.

The individual election of candidates can also increase the level of responsibility of the politicians, and will contribute to greater connection of the politicians with the electorate, which is another positive characteristic lacking in Macedonia. All this will lead to more positive perception

of politicians by the electorate.

The open list system may also contribute to the engagement of professionals in politics who are not motivated to run for office within the current system, because they will be placed on the lower places on the lists. If the lists are open, this wouldn't be an obstacle, on the contrary, party leaders would be motivated to select better candidates on the lists, from different regions and strata of the population in order to bring more votes for their party.

Open list in EU	Open list in the rest of Europe	Open list in the rest of the world
 Sweden	 Norway	 Dominican Republic
 Finland	 Iceland	 Honduras
 Denmark	 Switzerland	 Suriname
 Belgium	 Lichtenstein	 Ecuador
 The Netherlands	 San Marino	 Brazil
 Luxembourg	 Bosnia and Herzegovina	 Colombia
 Austria	 Kosovo	 Peru
 Czech Republic		 Chile
 Slovakia		 Iraq
 Poland		 Sri Lanka
 Estonia		 Indonesia
 Latvia		
 Slovenia		
 Greece		
 Cyprus		

source: [www.otvorenilisti.org](http://www.otvorenilisti.org)



# THE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF THE NEW MEDIA

Filip Stojanovski

Program Coordinator

Metamorphosis Foundation for Internet and Society, Global Voices author and blogger



PHOTO: V. Dzambaski

Filip Stojanovski holds a BSc Degree in Computer Science from Graceland University (USA) and Masters in e-business management from Université Paris 1 - Panthéon Sorbonne (France). Since 1995 he has been active in the Macedonian civil society through volunteer projects in the area of consumer protection and e-publishing, and through professional involvement as an IT expert. He is also a contributor on information society topics to the traditional and new media in Macedonia.

His responsibilities within Metamorphosis Foundation include project coordination, research and PR. In 2005 served as a member of the Task Force for National Strategy for Information Society Development.

In web development since 1995, blogging since 2003 in English and Macedonian, contributing reports about Macedonian blogosphere for Global Voices and serving as volunteer translator for GV in Macedonian since 2008. @razvigor on Twitter.

**CIVIL:** The new era of media has begun. Despite skepticism, new media are replacing the traditional news production and are becoming a relevant news source for hundreds of millions of people. Various possibilities for interaction provided by new media directly or indirectly encourage civic involvement that is a precondition for empowerment of citizens. How high is internet literacy in Macedonia in this context?

**FILIP STOJANOVSKI:** Even though majority of Macedonian population is online, and uses various forms of new media on daily basis, there is still room for improvement of digital literacy. This type of skills do not only refer to abilities to use programs/applications via computers or mobile

devices to communicate over the internet, but also to knowledge related to privacy, protection of basic human rights online, copyright, media literacy, ability to distinguish credibility of sources, deal with propaganda, and number of other “non-technical” issues.

Most of Macedonian Internet users focus on use of these media for personal communication with acquaintances, or in business setting, or as form of entertainment. Relatively small part is also active in civic sense. With over 890.000 alleged Facebook users in Macedonia (according to their advertising department), the number of shares of socially relevant articles does not exceed few thousand. For instance, the PlusInfo.mk

article which produced real impact—stopping unjust bureaucratic decision after an intervention by MP alerted via Facebook—got 1560 shares and 18 thousand “reads” ([r.ping.mk/2smb](http://r.ping.mk/2smb), [r.ping.mk/3lw3](http://r.ping.mk/3lw3)). Another example is very popular gallery of photos from the Bosnian war ([r.ping.mk/3lpb](http://r.ping.mk/3lpb)) on Off.net.mk, which got 2214 shares. Top politicians, who are also top local celebrities, get up to several tens of thousands of likes on their pages (the PM has 65 thousands) which when compared to number of users is not proportional with the support at the elections, and is also more passive form of expression. So people who produce or distribute content probably constitute few percents of the

people online.

**CIVIL: Can we speak of high technical literacy, but poor political culture?**

**FILIP STOJANOVSKI:** Culture and tradition play significant roles in shaping the ways people behave online. For instance some research suggests that certain kind of social media which provide more opportunities for voyeurism could be more popular in more provincial environments. Regional cultural differences such as communication habits of people from Mediterranean vs. Northern Europe also play a role. Macedonian population comes to the new media with engrained experience of living under colonial or authoritarian rulers, and for most of them public expression which is not sanctioned by the government is an exception. In this sense in Macedonia, Twitter is perceived as more elitist, in terms of use by more educated, cosmopolitan, and civic-minded people having meaningful conversations about current issues, than Facebook whose primary purpose is seen as entertainment and gossip. But, most of the Twitter users are on Facebook too, and share the same info. The level of feedback they get is different and often drowned in the noise saturated with trivial content.

**CIVIL: Arab spring, Occupy Wall Street movement and others owe their visibility and success (whatever the term success means) to new media. Where is Macedonia in that context?**

**FILIP STOJANOVSKI:** There are few examples of initiatives using social media which achieved some of their goals, like the outing of the murder of Martin Neshkovski which would have been hushed up unless the citizens did not initiate genuine grassroots protests via Twitter and then Facebook. At times, journalists used citizen-generated content, especially blog posts, as excuse to publish quotes about some taboo topics, and then follow up with news based on responses from official sources, which have previously refused to cooperate. In the last few years, the vector to spread information leading to action by online activists almost always included subsequent involvement of traditional media. Social media still have not proven up to the task of serving the role of replace-

ment of the destroyed or diminished independent media.

It is hard to compare Macedonia with Arab countries; first because we have much less people in general, then the percentage of young people is much smaller, so the critical mass to “translate” the social media activism onto the streets is much smaller. Also, we have far more older people who will remain offline, and serve as anchor for social change, especially because the return of some authoritarian tendencies they've experienced during communist rule might actually make them feel “at home.” And of course, many young people have channeled their desperation related to lack of perspectives through

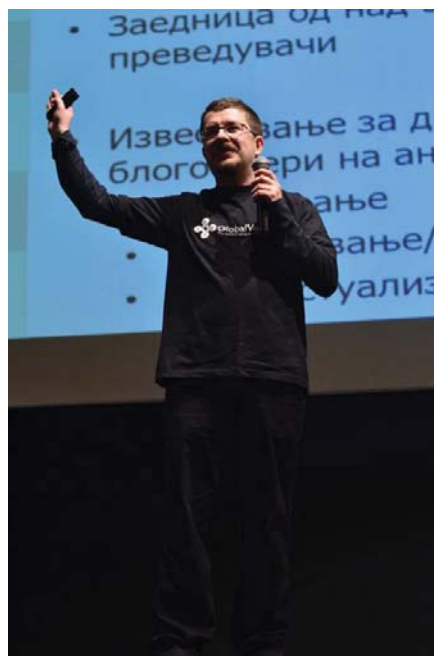


PHOTO: Vladimir Calovski

conformism, accepting that they need to become “soldiers” of political parties as a way to ensure survival-level income. The political parties use new media as just another top-down-PR-tool, a cosmetics front, not as a vehicle for democratic reform. And because they control the majority of state and other resources, this reflects on the whole society.

**CIVIL: New media provide mechanisms for interaction, participation and mobilization. They empower any citizen from any place to take active part in societal movements for democracy and human rights. But, new media can be a mobilization tool for the far-right ideologies or for a manipulative and nondemocratic government. How disorientating can be new media in this context? What would you recommend**

**to a human rights organization? What is your recommendation to the readers/users in this context?**

**FILIP STOJANOVSKI:** In terms of content and effect, the new media can be like the old media – without standards and self-regulation, and population trained to think critically, they can well serve as dark propaganda tool for the political and corporate centers of power. The dissenting voices might not be completely shut in this environment, but the real impact is related to a lot more than having some info published, because it often remains within one's circle of friends or followers. And one might not be aware, and might not even like to spend time in peeking into what people they disagree with are doing. Personalization technologies allow us to form comfortable “filter bubbles,” and through not “Liking” we might drift away from the rest of the population, especially the youth. It's been 20 years since the start of Bosnian war, and 10 years since the end of last armed conflict in the Balkans. People from the region who are now 18-20 years old have spent their formative years without direct experience, and probably without real serious reflection about consequences of war. Instead, they have been relentlessly subjected to various forms of nationalist propaganda through mainstream media, and also online, through forums, and then social media. This has not been countered at the level of the states or educational systems.

The civil sector, the processes of EU integration, and the miniscule percentage of independent media have been the only factors countering the advent of right-wing manipulations, with much less resources at their disposal. New media can play a role in addressing this issue, but they cannot be taken for granted, because it is hard to remove the people who have been conditioned to one form of content “diet” out of their comfort zone. Sometimes, it takes radical situations to make people think, or voice their hidden thoughts. Such as the immediacy of death.

Media manipulations in our region have been focused on keeping the temperature high enough to keep people distracted, while the elites hoard their money. As in Egypt, social media in Macedonia have been

used by the regime and its cronies to spread vicious rumors. This can only be countered by involving the people in a new culture based on the values of the scientific method, which involves training for critical thinking, and awareness that the new role of the citizens is to question the authorities who represent them, not to obey.

Some technical aspects of the new media allow implementation of these values (for example, giving credit to the source by linking to it), but for the masses of recent social media users they do not come pre-packaged with a new ethos, which was characteristic for the early adopters – who came from western academia or hacker culture, both based on empirical, scientific thinking.

**CIVIL: A protest or unrest in a ghetto grows into a national movement. Even if it doesn't grow bigger than the ghetto, the world learns about it in a matter of seconds via text, image and video. It becomes a real big story, updated every second. The world is reading, listening and watching revolutions. The international community gets mobilized in a matter of hours, international organizations and political structures are reacting in a matter of days. It used to be completely different, international (even domestic) public learning about movements (if ever) after they are brutally shut down, international community reacting too late or never, organizations turn a blind eye because of lack of information. Can new media serve as a tool for legitimizing mass democracy?**

**FILIP STOJANOVSKI:** Getting the word out to the world is essential for any movement for social change. Such exposure provides a new level of legitimacy, can garner various kinds of support – from human rights NGOs, and after somewhat longer process, from governments and international bodies. This provides a special form of feedback that can induce a sense of solidarity from/with the outside world, shatter various forms of isolation and motivate more people on the ground to take a stand. In this sense, new media can aid activists in using the positive aspects of the globalization for positive local change, and possibly reach the effectiveness of worldwide move-

ments of the past, without resorting to support from state sponsors. However, according to Ethan Zuckerman, co-founder of Global Voices ([www.globalvoicesonline.org](http://www.globalvoicesonline.org)), the mainstream media coverage can be correlated with the flow of capital. So, poorer regions with less geopolitical clout tend to get less attention from international media. Therefore, not too many permanent or visiting foreign correspondents in the Balkans, and especially in Macedonia. The same is true elsewhere – Al Jazeera gained influence due to their high standards of quality, but also due to lack of competition from other sources from the areas they cover. This gap provides opportuni-

and those more forward-looking viewed it primarily as a resource for harvesting new talent, turning bloggers into columnists, or harvesting ideas for articles, often without giving credit to bloggers. When they go online, traditional media like the potential to attract more visitors to their websites through promotion via social media, but very few of them consider setting up systems for user engagement, which means treating readers as equal partners in conversations.

For instance, the minority of online news outlets that allow basic interaction do it through pre-moderation, by employing administrators to filter comments before publishing them,



PHOTO: V. Dzambaski

ties for activists using new media, especially through multilingual or English-language blogs which form a lasting public record, as opposed to fleeting social media content which is very hard to locate by outsiders and very easy to disappear for various reasons.

**CIVIL: Traditional media transform towards new media. They make a full use of social networks, looking quite fancy and competing non-professional newsmakers. Could we expect that traditional media, supported by big businesses and/or governments may take over the democratizing dimension of new media?**

**FILIP STOJANOVSKI:** The issue of media independence goes far beyond the democratizing dimension of new media. In Macedonia, traditional media largely ignored the blogosphere,

putting themselves on top of hierarchical, feudalistic structure expected to function in the environment of the Internet which is inherently anti-hierarchical. At this time, commercial media can definitely use their resources in money and manpower to saturate online spaces with trivial or propagandist content, but it seems they seem cautious to thread these new grounds. Therein lays the power potential for activists – in the fact that in its purest forms, online influence is based on reputation within communities of people built on mutual cooperation and trust, not on advertising or other forms of “brute force.” Possibly the generational shift will accelerate this trend, and therein lies the fear for those who would like to conserve the media situation to the level of late 20th century.

**CIVIL: It is old news: neo-fascists,**



**right-wing nationalist groups and other haters use freedom of speech to promote their ideologies. New media are their tool, as well. They are often financially strong and get support from known and unknown political power and business structures. How to combat extremism on the Net?**

**FILIP STOJANOVSKI:** Neo-fascist and related extremism on the Net can be combated the only way people were combating crime since forever: by standing up to them – and the first and fundamental form of resistance is speaking the truth. On the school-yard, bullies are intimidated and often avoid kids that resist them, even when they are able to beat them up due to difference in size or numbers. It is not accidental that right-wing nationalists use cyber-bullying, trolling and parroting of top-down propaganda as main tools. They avoid dialogue, a “fair fight” of arguments and opinions, so getting them out in the open and exposing their statements can be very effective in shutting them up, and making them start to reassess the consequences of their words and actions. If we are to save those who succumb to such influences, we must also be aware of the psychological, emotional attachments the adherents form through the process of conversion onto neo-fascists. There is no easy way to fix this, but like the sciences or any other any great thing that improved the life of whole humanity, it would need persistent effort of many individual men and women dedicated to bettering the present and the future. Social media provide them with new set of tools to coordinate and share knowledge, and they still stand a fighting chance.

**CIVIL: Can new media in Macedonia replace mainstream media that are under governmental control? How?**

**FILIP STOJANOVSKI:** For many people, new media have already replaced the traditional media as a whole. A lot of people do not read newspapers, listen to radio, or watch TV, but satisfy all their needs for information from online sources, very often based on what their friends recommended via social media. There are rumors that some political parties recommend their members or public employees who need to show their loyalty to “un-friend”

ideologically unsuitable/undesirable Facebook friends. If these rumors are true, the motive behind such actions is preemptive limiting the influence of the new media over the people within their sphere of influence, in order to strengthen the cohesion of “the flock” they need most to control. This would be consistent with the way the political campaigns have been run online so far, mostly by “preaching to the choir”, intended to bolster the self-confidence of the supporters, not reaching out towards opponents (except to intimidate) or the large portion of “undecided” or disappointed voters who refuse to vote.

So sure, there is potential for replacement, especially in the lives of youth. But in this case, the content is important. And the essential form



PHOTO: V. Dzambaski

of content in this regard remain the products of journalism done by adhering to the basic and unsurpassed professional standards - even though it can be done by amateurs, citizen-reporters. Some independent media professionals moved online, creating web-based news outlets, quickly re/gaining audiences. However, they struggle with other aspects of running news organizations, such as funding, which in the market economies is available through commercial advertising free of governmental pressure. On the other hand, it would be harder to replace the role TV plays in the lives of more senior citizens, who are also more diligent voters and often technophobic. But, possibly “nature will find a way”, through the ongoing process of digitization of TV and merging of various kinds of media. In perspective, we could expect very different kind of media landscape in 10-20 years, which would also affect the balance of power in various other segments of society.

**CIVIL: Copyright issues, protection of minors, many other regulations,**

**justified and crooked motives drive governments and some international organizations to put an end of the chaotic and unregulated space of the Internet. Do we need control? Is it possible to put Internet under control? How? What could preserve Internet freedoms from regulations and control under the disguise of protection and copyrights?**

**FILIP STOJANOVSKI:** The Internet, and the communities built upon the infrastructure it provide, already provides a level of control, inherent in the way the network of networks is set up, in its code, as Lawrence Lessig would say. This level of control concerns protocols of communication, rules set up through process of dispute and agreement, grounded in empirical research based on the scientific method. Above that level, we have self-regulation mechanisms created by various communities. And we have the layer of laws – in essence, what goes on online is subject to the same laws governing the offline world. In this sense, the Internet is extension and integral part of reality. At individual level, the best way to deal with this reality, including protection of human rights, is to gain knowledge and apply it consistently.

However, to many people it is clear that the digital environment provides new kinds of opportunities and in some cases existing laws, made to service life under completely different circumstances, have become obsolete and need revision and change. The process has been started in the democratic societies, for instance, the Free Culture movement, encompassing Free and Open Source Software, Creative Commons, Public Domain initiatives and other initiatives, works within the existing Copyright system and strives to change it for the better. Then, we have governments (or parts of governments) which seek to impose control (as opposed to self-regulation) over their “subjects” by isolating their parts of the Internet through blocking, filtering and enacting oppressive legislation. On a long term, this is suicidal, because free flow of information cannot be limited, since it's essential for functioning within the current global economy.

Interview by the Civil Team

# TIME IS TICKING AWAY

The EU has “invented” a new tool to help the Republic of Macedonia move away from serious deterioration of democracy, rule of law, and human rights. That tool is called “high level dialogue”. As stated in the beginning of this process, the EU and the MK government started a comprehensive process and active political dialogue was starting on the rule of law, public administration, freedom of media, election laws and functioning of market economy. What will happen?

**Xhabir Deralla**

**R**epublic of Macedonia was given the candidate status for EU membership in 2005. For seven years, the country has got into real trouble while “structures” were (pretending or not) trying to move forward in reforms. The reality of Macedonia is precisely described in the five issues raised at the recent start of the “high level dialogue” between EU and Macedonia, represented by the EU Commissioner Štefan Füle and Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski. Commissioner Füle concisely has set the (old) new agenda for the government to start a comprehensive process and active political dialogue in the areas of rule of law, public administration,

freedom of media, election laws and functioning of market economy. These five areas are, indeed, the areas which the current government has deteriorated and seems to continue doing so.

High level dialogue started in March and is due to continue on May 7. A third and probably the last visit of the EU Commissioner in the frame of these dialogues is due in September. What is Gruevski going to present in May that he couldn't present in March? None on the bright, lots on the dark side.

For years, the Macedonian government pretends to make moves towards the EU integration, having only the name dispute with

Greece as the main excuse for wrong and destructive policies. In the years behind us, the government fails to respect human rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech and independence of media. The whole country is persistently and thoroughly politicized.

Public institutions and administration, business and economy, culture, society, security, educational and employment policies, birth control (you name it) – everything depends on the political parties in power or, more precisely, on the few people holding political power in the name of their parties and voters.

The “high level dialogue” is the new tool of Brussels to make one more attempt to help Macedonia get back on its declared EU track. In the country, the ruling politicians are spinning this new approach of the EU Commission as one more success of the government in “actually opening negotiations” (Ali Ahmeti, DUI, coalition partner in March).

The Prime Minister and his team didn't miss mentioning that everything is fine with Macedonia and it's only the irrational name dispute with Greece that holds the country back. Irrational and damaging it is, indeed, but the “high level talks” process opened in March and due to last only a few months did not put this problem on top of the agenda. To the contrary, the five issues stressed by Commissioner Füle are clearly indicating that the country faces the most serious problems internally and – institutionally.

However, there were some tiny hopes that something will change after the first visit of Commissioner Füle, at least a bit. Those tiny hopes were blown after the discouraging statements issued by the Prime Minister in the media close to the government.

Then, Gruevski dismissed any hopes of any accession to NATO or

## Statements in March...

*EU Commissioner Štefan Füle: “We wish to work with you so that your EU membership becomes reality. I assure you that I am dedicated to supporting your reform process. I am convinced that your future is in the EU and that together we can reach truly sustainable and visible progress in reforms and EU accession.”*



*Prime Minister Gruevski said that his government wishes to continue with reforms in all areas, and that he hoped this would be noted once the European Commission publishes its progress report for 2012. He also said that the goal was for his*

*country's accession talks with the EU to start “as soon as possible this year”.*

EU, due to the name dispute. Period.

By doing so, he once more diverted the whole bunch of internal problems caused by misconducts of his Cabinet and himself to the field of this bilateral dispute. The external enemy is there, Greece, so let's squeeze the maximum out of it.

Just as the economic and financial crisis in EU and the world was used to justify terrible economic policy of the government. The economic policy is presented as an example of the most successful one in the country; EU and the rest of the world should learn from our government on how to deal with crisis.

Other problems in the society, the deterioration of democracy and rule of law are areas that were diverted by invention of internal enemies, such as the Albanian nationalist extremists, Islamic fundamentalists, traitors among Macedonians who want to surrender the name and identity, etc.

Just like in the good old times of communism...

Deadline for taking immediate steps towards reforms are being constantly breached. The EU Commissioner came back as promised. And left empty-handed. Actually, the empty-handed ones are the Macedonian citizens.

We are facing additional troubles meanwhile. They include the killings of five in April, and the arrests of alleged Islamic terrorists among ethnic Albanians that followed; further politicization of the administration and judiciary; collapse of the negotiations between journalists and the government; and so on.

Well, the Commissioner could spare his time and plane ticket money both the first and the second time. Right after his second visit, just as the previous time, the government and the spin doctors acted with a clear message - changes won't happen.

They were never meant to happen.

Investments from Qatar in oil exploration in Macedonia should be expected, instead.

# BE HONEST!

Civil - Center for Freedom's appeal, May 7, 2012

**F**ollowing the latest developments in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as in continuation of the previous appeals and recommendations issued in the past several months, Civil - Center for Freedom expresses high concerns about the situation in the country.

The appeals and recommendations issued in the past seem to be unheard, though entirely valid. Meanwhile, the country is under new risks every next day, due to the lack of dialogue and wrong policies. Therefore, we reinforce our calls for respect for human rights and freedoms, rule of law, democracy, peace and tolerance. We appeal to all citizens and institutions in the country; every single individual, all communities and institutions at all levels can and have to take steps towards solutions for serious problems that our society and the state are facing.

**Be honest.**

Deterioration in the spheres of human rights, democracy and rule of law must stop and immediate measures to revert the current trends must be introduced with no delay.

In particular, our appeal is addressed to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and all political parties in the country.

**All political parties** have to immediately start a dialogue on the main challenges that concern all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, namely, their human rights and freedoms.

Political leaders should set aside the struggle to win power and immediately abandon nationalistic rhetoric in order to gain political scores before the voters.

Political parties are expected to offer measures that will overcome ethnic boundaries and will provide vision for European Macedonia for all. Work with your members and supporters and encourage them to make a step towards a new course that this country needs.

**Be honest.**

**The Government of the Republic of Macedonia** has to prevent any further escalation of the situation at all levels and in all spheres. (Small example: broadcasting video footages from special police's raids do not help the situation at all. To the contrary, brings more hatred and escalation.)

There is no need to elaborate any further. Just follow the agenda that has been publicly agreed between the Prime Minister and the EU Commissioner Štefan Füle. And do it in an accurate and transparent way.

**Be honest.**



# A "BULLETPROOF" ARMS TRADE TREATY

*Every day, according to Amnesty International, thousands of people are killed, injured, raped, and forced to flee from their homes as a result of armed conflict, armed violence, and human rights violations and abuses perpetrated using conventional arms.*

## Roberto Curtis

Media Global News

<http://www.mediaglobal.org>

Every day, according to Amnesty International, thousands of people are killed, injured, raped, and forced to flee from their homes as a result of armed conflict, armed violence, and human rights violations and abuses perpetrated using conventional arms.

As violence continues unchecked around the world, a coalition of humanitarian and health organizations is rallying support for a "bulletproof" global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), to be discussed in July, that would stymie the flow of small arms and light weapons, such as assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and handguns to countries around the world.

The US Department of Commerce estimates that corruption in the arms trade accounts for 50 percent of all global corrupt transactions, despite the fact that the arms trade does not exceed 1 percent of global trade annually.

"We have regulations that govern the sale of bananas, why not ones governing the deadly sales of conventional arms?" asked Oxfam International Policy Adviser for Arms and Development Deepyan Basu Ray in a recent preparatory committee hearing on the pitfalls of arms procurement and corruption.

The UN hosted a series of preparatory committee hearings last month as a preliminary discussion on the stipulations of the long-proposed arms trade treaty, which is tabled to be negotiated from July 2-27 in New York.

A 2011 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Develop-

ment report on the global burden of armed violence correlates the relationship between the arms trade, gun violence, and wealth disparity and how they combine to undermine development in those parts of the world that need it most.

According to the report, an estimated 526,000 violent deaths occur every year, of which only 55,000 are the result of armed conflict or terrorism. Nine out of ten of those violent deaths are the result of crime, such as American drug violence or economically motivated piracy in Somalia.

The report makes a strong case for conventional arms regulation by demonstrating the high cost women and girls pay because of gun violence. "About 66,000 women and girls are violently killed around the world each year. High levels of 'femi-



cide' are frequently accompanied—and in some cases generated by—a high level of tolerance for violence against women," the report states.

"The world desperately needs this treaty," Oxfam International Humanitarian Campaigner Øistein Thorsen tells MediaGlobal.

Proponents of the ATT have "reached the final hurdle," Thorsen says. Despite hundreds of thousands of lives lost, states are still resisting the broad implications of the treaty, which could have adverse effects on domestic defense industries. "Certain states are okay with regulating the sale of arms but want no restrictions on the sale of ammunition," he says.

Russia and the United States are currently on the fence regarding the treaty. The two largest arms exporters are critical of such a binding

agreement based on its financial implications, while private groups in the United States like the National Rifle Association (NRA) vehemently oppose restrictions to legally owned civilian weapons.

The US is currently the world's largest exporter of small arms and light weapons and voted against a resolution in 2006 proposing an international ATT. In 2009, President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton had a change of heart, saying they would indeed support a strong UN treaty. The NRA continues to lobby lawmakers to strike down the pact once it reaches the US Congress.

Other countries like Egypt, Iran, and Pakistan are also in favor of a treaty with much lighter restrictions.

Despite the opposition, support is growing, according to Control

Arms, the alliance of international organizations spearheading the ATT. A July 2011 joint statement by 21 of the world's largest financial institutions and signatories of the UN-backed Principles of Responsible Investment, called for a "robust and comprehensive ATT." Together, the institutions own or manage a combined total of \$1.2 trillion in assets, more than the entire global small arms and light weapons industry.

"We're making marked progress," Control Arms Director Jeff Abramson tells MediaGlobal. "But progress is being mired in procedural debate. As we think about this meeting, people are dying."

As Kalashnikovs and hand grenades remain readily available on the worldwide black market, the impasse in the preparatory committees stalled on issues of consensus and veto power.

"(Disagreement) primarily revolved on how to define consensus," Abramson says. "There are several skeptic states. We'd rather see consensus defined in a pretty clear way. The fact is a majority of states are in favor of the treaty text. However, I expect skeptic states will continue to try to affect the outcome."

# FIGHTING GUNS GLOBALLY

## CONTROL ARMS ALLIANCE

**control arms**

Control Arms is a global civil society alliance campaigning for a “bulletproof” Arms Trade Treaty that will protect lives and livelihoods. A “bulletproof” Arms Trade Treaty means an international legally-binding agreement that will stop transfers of arms and ammunitions that fuel conflict, poverty and serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The idea of an arms trade treaty first came from Nobel Peace Laureates, supported by civil society organizations worldwide. In 2003, the Control Arms Campaign was launched and has since gathered support for the Arms Trade Treaty from over a million people worldwide.

In 2006, Control Arms handed over a global petition called “Million Faces” to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan 2006.

In December 2006, 153 governments finally voted at the United Nations to start work on developing a global Arms Trade Treaty. Momentum for the treaty has been building ever since.

In 2009 the UN General Assembly launched a time frame for the negotiation of the Arms Trade Treaty. This included one preparatory meeting in 2010 and two in 2011, before the final negotiating conference scheduled for July 2012.

## PARLIAMENTARIAN DECLARATION

Control Arms started the Parliamentary Declaration campaign to collect signatures of support from members of parliaments across the globe. To date, 1098 members

of parliaments from 50 countries worldwide have signed the Global Parliamentary Declaration. Civil – Center for Freedom has launched the Parliamentary Declaration campaign in 2008 and collected 0 [zero] signatures. This year, our team was more decisive and has put a lot of efforts to explain the importance of the Arms Trade Treaty to both general public and the members of the Macedonian parliament, and that MPs role is very important in the whole process. Our approach was combined and included daily communication with MPs and political representatives, the Chairman of the

Parliament Mr. Veljanovski, a press conference [March 28] and numerous briefings, as well as posting news on Civil’s website, social media, and the newly registered blog [www.arms-control.blogspot.com](http://www.arms-control.blogspot.com).

According to the criteria and the format of

the Campaign, each bearer of the people’s trust could express his/her support by individual signature on the Declaration, which Civil translated in Macedonian and Albanian



## SPEAK OUT

**CONTROL ARMS NOW!**



language, provided a copy of the Declaration for each Member of the Parliament on March 27, and was available to give additional information to parliamentarians and journalists, as well as to provide more copies of the Declaration when required in the days and weeks that followed. The outcome of these efforts of our team is signatures of 87 members of the Macedonian Parliament, a great achievement that has been acknowledged also by the Control Arms Secretariat.

Civil accelerates its activities in the frame of the Speak Out campaign as you read this article. For more information about the actions and campaigns please visit [www.controlarmts.org](http://www.controlarmts.org).

## COMING EVENTS AND CAMPAIGNS

Civil is a longstanding member organization of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). As a member of IANSA and as an organization committed to arms control issues in the country and the region, Civil contributed to a number of awareness-raising events including the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence since 2002. This year, the Global Week of Action is 11-17 June.

International Gun Destruction Day is on July 9, a day which the Macedonian government is marking since 2004 by destruction of weapons seized in police actions or in the actions for voluntary surrender of illegal weapons. Please, visit [www.iansa.org](http://www.iansa.org) for more information.

Civil committed its resources to contribution in these actions and lobbied with the government for stricter arms control measures and for actions on voluntary surrender of illegal weapons.

Another relevant resource is [www.gunpolicy.org](http://www.gunpolicy.org).

Citizens are a valuable source of information and a starting point towards building guns-free society. Please, contact Civil to share your thoughts, stories and information on arms control issues, including gun culture.

# LINKS AND CONTACTS OF CIVIL

OFFICIAL  
WEBSITE

[www.civil.org.mk](http://www.civil.org.mk)

human rights and freedoms | peace and tolerance | arms  
control | languages: Macedonian, Albanian and English



- our blogs offer information and space for discussion
- check them all out :

[www.civil-link.blogspot.com](http://www.civil-link.blogspot.com)

THEMATIC  
AND  
PROJECT  
BLOGS

## CURE

POLITICAL CULTURE AND DIALOGUE PROJECT

The Cure is a project dedicated to fostering political culture, awareness-raising and education on human rights, and initiation and facilitation of a dialogue in various societal and political domains and levels. The Cure Project started in 2010. In 2012 it grows into a program and becomes one of the priorities of Civil. For the time being, we registered three blogs that correspond with different lines of activities and publications.

On the project in general and selection of articles from the Cure - Journal on Political Culture and Dialogue, please, follow the link:

[www.cure-mk.blogspot.com](http://www.cure-mk.blogspot.com)

The Dialog blog covers the contents of the Dialog Newsletter and offers an opportunity to start a dialogue on topics published there. Please, check it out at:

[www.dialog-macedonia.blogspot.com](http://www.dialog-macedonia.blogspot.com)

Your comments are most appreciated.

## ARMS CONTROL

- activism ► education ► lobbying
- global ► regional ► national ► local

[www.human-macedonia.blogspot.com](http://www.human-macedonia.blogspot.com)

## HUMAN=RIGHTS

HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS PROJECT

- Awareness-raising and education
- Art exhibition ► Events ► Media ► Workshops

[www.human-macedonia.blogspot.com](http://www.human-macedonia.blogspot.com)



## ▶ ▶ ▶ CONTACTS:

e-mail:  
[civil.mk@gmail.com](mailto:civil.mk@gmail.com)

phone number:  
+389 2 520 91 76

postal address: **Civil - Center for Freedom**  
**Mito Hadzivasilev Jasmin 12/5**  
**1000 Skopje**  
**Republic of Macedonia**