



Resolution 927 (1989)¹

Situation of the ethnic and Muslim minority in Bulgaria

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Considering its [Resolution 846 \(1985\)](#) on the situation of ethnic and Muslim minorities in Bulgaria, its [Recommendation 1109 \(1989\)](#) on the situation of refugees of Bulgarian nationality in Turkey, and the report on the situation of the ethnic and Muslim minority in Bulgaria presented by its Committee on Relations with European Non-Member Countries ([Doc. 6106](#)) ;
2. Noting with satisfaction that the Bulgarian authorities finally received a sub-committee of the Assembly from 13 to 19 July 1989 under the required conditions, namely that it should be able to choose where it went and with whom it spoke and use its own interpreters ;
3. Regretting, however, that it did not have the opportunity of meeting all the "dissidents" mentioned in the programme ;
4. Taking note of the following information brought back by the sub-committee :
 - 4.1. a major human tragedy is taking place in Bulgaria, with hundreds of thousands of Bulgarian Muslims leaving for Turkey ;
 - 4.2. these Muslims are leaving the country both because of the serious denial of their rights - name-changing, ban on speaking Turkish and restrictions on the practice of their religion - and because they are encouraged by offers of resettlement through the Turkish media ;
 - 4.3. although there were a number of expulsions in May 1989, since then departures, although nominally voluntary, have constituted a mass exodus ;
 - 4.4. quite apart from the human tragedy they represent, these departures are not a lasting solution, particularly in view of their consequences both for Bulgaria - loss of manpower and disorganisation of rural life - and for Turkey - reception, accommodation and labour-market problems ;
5. Noting that the number of immigrants has reached over 300 000, that, as from 22 August 1989, the Turkish Government decided to re-establish the entrance visa obligation for Bulgarian citizens, and that about 20 000 of them have already returned to Bulgaria ;
6. Observing that there is disagreement as to the ethnic identity of the majority of the Muslim community : the Bulgarians say that it is composed of Bulgarians islamised during Ottoman rule and the Turks that it consists of Muslims of Turkish ethnic origin undergoing forced assimilation ;
7. Recognising that the amendments to the legislation on nationality and passports adopted by the Bulgarian National Assembly on 8 and 9 May 1989 represent a step forward in terms of the provisions of the instruments adopted within the CSCE and United Nations framework and should help to satisfy Turkey's demands aimed at securing a free choice of homeland for the Bulgarian ethnic and Muslim community and guaranteeing that families are reunited ;

1. Assembly debate on 26 September 1989 (17th Sitting) (see [Doc. 6106](#), report of the Committee on Relations with European Non-Member Countries, Rapporteur : Mr Probst). Text adopted by the Assembly on 26 September 1989 (17th Sitting).



8. Welcoming the resolution adopted on 21 September 1989 by the relevant committee of Bulgaria's National Assembly stressing the need that the authorities implement the freedom of religion which is guaranteed by the Constitution as well as the free use of different languages in everyday contacts between citizens, and hoping for an immediate application of this resolution by the Bulgarian Government ;
9. Observing that dialogue between the Bulgarian and Turkish Governments is currently at a standstill, and that the protocol which they signed in Belgrade on 23 February 1988 has not been implemented, and encouraging the Council of Europe and its member states to contribute to the opening of a constructive dialogue between the Bulgarian and the Turkish Governments with a view to establishing more satisfactory neighbourly relations which will lead to a migration agreement between the two countries ;
10. Noting, moreover, that several countries have already put into practice with regard to Bulgaria the control mechanism relating to the human dimension of the CSCE provided for in the concluding document of the January 1989 Vienna Conference ;
11. Recalling that, in its [Recommendation 1109](#), adopted on 6 July 1989, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers "appeal to the governments of member states so that they provide, as a matter of urgency, concrete and co-ordinated aid to Turkey in order that these exiles be accorded a decent reception corresponding to standards of human dignity",
12. Urges the Bulgarian Government :
 - 12.1. to end immediately its policy of forced assimilation, which is to be regarded as the main cause of the present exodus, with a view to allowing its ethnic and Muslim minority to resume the practical use of their original names, together with the unrestricted use of the Turkish language and of Muslim religious practices ;
 - 12.2. to grant its ethnic and Muslim minority the rights of a minority in the spirit of the concluding document adopted by the Vienna CSCE review meeting of January 1989 ;
13. Also urges the Turkish authorities :
 - 13.1. as a gesture of goodwill, to avoid any propaganda element in its information services to the ethnic and Muslim minority in Bulgaria ;
 - 13.2. to take the necessary steps to enable separated families to reunite in accordance with their wishes ;
14. Demands that both governments examine together what each country can do to help solve the concrete problems of the ethnic and Muslim minority in Bulgaria in order to avoid the mass exodus ;
15. Asks the member states of the Council of Europe to promote the opening of negotiations between Bulgaria and Turkey with a view to easing the tension between the two countries, which could have dangerous political and economic consequences for the whole of the continent ;
16. Instructs its Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography to examine on the spot the conditions under which Muslims from Bulgaria are received and settled in Turkey, to check that compliance with Assembly [Recommendation 1056](#) on national refugees and missing persons in Cyprus is observed, and report back to it in due course, with proposals, in the light of [Recommendation 1109](#), on the level of assistance the member states of the Council of Europe should supply to the Turkish Government to carry out its resettlement programme.