

CEDAW Bektashi Shadow Report for FYR Macedoni

The Bektashi women of Macedonia face double discrimination due to their gender and religious practices.

The Bektashi community of Macedonia is pleased to participate and provide latest information regarding women's rights in Macedonia today.

There are many issues related to discrimination facing Bektashi women. We will highlight specific examples to provide better understanding of our situation in FYR Macedonia today.

Bektashi community have begun to access regional human rights mechanisms such as the European Court of Human Rights and the international institutions such as the UN Human Rights Council specifically the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom.

The Commission for Religious Issues does not have any Bektashi representation. We call upon the state to include Bektashi in staff and leadership positions.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom raised the issue of non-recognition of Bektashi faith by the state. There is no action to remedy the situation.

The Law on Legal Relation of Church, Religious Community and Religious Group of 2007 changed the situation for Bektashi. Before this law, Bektashi were registered and recognized in Macedonia. However, this law changed the registration from under the Ministry of Interior to the Court. However, Bektashi were denied the opportunity to register officially. They were rejected by the court in 2009 for reregistration and again in 2012 for registration from scratch. We call upon CEDAW to request the government to accept the application so Bektashi can be legally recognized.

Another issue already raised via an official visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedom relates to Harabati Baba Teqe. While the report was accurate and well-documented. There has been no response by the state and women are still unable to practice their faith.

At the Harabati Baba Teqe in Tetovo, there has been tremendous violations of religious freedom. The Bektashi community has prayed there since 1538 until the Communist period. Then in 2002, a radical Islamic group of Suni came with weapons and overtook the Teqe where women were able to pray equally for centuries. The current Suni group does not allow for prayer in common between men and women. Therefore for over a decade, Bektashi women have not been able to exercise their religious freedom in Tetovo, the second largest city. Also, a fire was started while a majority of women were praying. The women were forced to flee. Unfortunately, there was no response yet from state regarding an investigation into the incident. We call upon the state to provide remedy and return the Teqe to the rightful Bektashi

owners that have been recognized with documents since Ottoman Empire through the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. We ask that our women are allowed to return and practice their faith.

Discrimination against the Bektashi community is widespread. From the schools to the broader society, Bektashi are constantly ignored, belittled and bullied. We call upon CEDAW to create national awareness campaign of Bektashi faith to modify social and cultural patterns as recognized in Article 5.

In Macedonia, there are only 3 Teqe where the faith is allowed to be practiced with full respect. However, we have 52 Teqe and the entire problem rests with lack of recognition of our right to property. Because of a lack of recognition of our right to religious freedom but also property, our religious teqe are becoming more and more dilapidated every day.

All human rights are interconnected. The Teqe are such an example of where women are not able to have an economic livelihood. On top of the Teqe serving as a place of worship, it is also the gathering space for women to engage in economic activity of artisan crafts that provided important funds and opportunity for equality in employment.

One example relating to article 7 and 8 is that a Bektashi woman has never been elected to any public office from local council to national parliament.