To: EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn; EU Delegation in Macedonia; Members of the European Parliament; Leader of the Senior Expert Group – Reinhard Priebe; OSCE Spillover Mission in Skopje; Embassies of EU Member-States with offices in Macedonia; United States Embassy in Skopje

Skopje, 27th January 2016

**WE DEMAND IMPLEMENTATION OF TRUE REFORMS FOR FAIR AND FREE ELECTION!**

Dear Sir/Madam,

It has been more than seven months since the European Commission adopted the Urgent Reform Priorities and expert recommendations from the Priebe Report.

Unfortunately, in the course of these seven months we have not witnessed true reforms that should have led to overcoming the political crisis in Republic of Macedonia. Instead of respect for fundamental values upheld by the EU, we are still witnessing undemocratic processes being pursued, disrespect for human rights and straightforward stomping on the Constitution of Republic of Macedonia. Instead of constructive political dialogue among the incumbent government, the opposition and the civil society, we are witnessing adoption of unilateral decisions. Instead of the rule of law and respect for the principle of separation of powers, we are witnessing political frivolous behaviour and desecration of legislative and judicial branches of government on the part of the executive branch of government.

Contrary to the requirements for urgent reforms made by the European Commission, in the last seven months we have observed that:

* No efforts have been made to de-politicize the judiciary.
* Clear signals are lacking that functional judicial and parliamentary oversight on the Directorate for Security and Counterintelligence (UBK) has been instituted or that this Directorate’s direct access to interception of communications has been discontinued.
* Independence of regulatory and supervisory bodies has been interfered in and obstructed.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* No specific measures have been put in place for de-politicization of the public administration.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* No measures have been taken to separate the state from party activities.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Moreover, nothing has been delivered in terms of the expert recommendations that should have enabled and guaranteed fair and free elections:

* There is no judicial nor political resolution concerning the direct political involvement in election manipulations;
* State Election Commission was established four and half months beyond the anticipated deadline, thus preventing effective investigation into recently disclosed irregularities from previous election cycles;
* Timely actions were not taken to address the shortcomings identified in regard to the Voters List.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Contrary to the recommendations aimed to address the serious media crisis in the Republic of Macedonia, we are witnessing further deterioration of the situation. The mainstream media continue to display “unhealthy relations” with the government’s leadership, which still acts as the editor-in-chief of current affairs programmes at the media outlets it has corrupted and controlled. Political pressure and intimidations are still pursued, as well as hate speech and incitement of violence against critics of the government. The Public Broadcasting Service does not show any signs of unbiased and independent reporting and coverage in the function of public interest. Media crisis was deepened also by the synchronized replacement of several editors-in-chief.

Particularly worrying are permanent obstructions to the work of the Special Public Prosecution, which should enjoy full autonomy in investigating and prosecuting criminal offences related to and arising from the contents of unauthorized interception of communications. Obstructing the work of the Special Public Prosecution prevents efficient investigation into criminal indications established in Priebe’s Report as well.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Given that the basic reform recommendations are not implemented and persons engaged in election fraud are not brought to justice, we are of the standing that the unilateral, frivolous and unconstitutional decision of the Parliament of Republic of Macedonia to schedule the elections for 24th April 2016, taken without participation of the large part of the opposition, is scandalous. Equally scandalous is the failure on the part of the European Commission to condemn such unilateral decision (which could be understood as support for the political frivolousness). It is scandalous to insist on date for the elections, put the Urgent Reform Priorities in second plan and ignore the appeal of vast number of civil society organizations that are demanding implementation of reforms for fair and free elections.

Dear Sir/Madam,

It was you who called for respect of fundamental values upheld by the EU, as precondition for overcoming the political crisis in Republic of Macedonia: “democracy, equality, respect for human rights and the rule of law”. It was you who publicly appealed for attainment of crucial standards on democratic governance, transparency in public affairs, guarantees for media freedom and enhanced fight against corruption.

Therefore, as citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and holders of its sovereignty, we ask you:

1. To adhere to fundamental values upheld by the EU, which you claim provide the basis for the Urgent Reform Priorities and expert recommendations from the Priebe Report.
2. To remain consistent in insisting on implementation of TRUE REFORMS FOR FAIR AND FREE ELECTIONS. Insisting only on date for elections, without previous implementation of reforms for fair and free elections, could only lead to further deepening of the political crisis in Republic of Macedonia.
3. To clearly condemn the unilateral, frivolous and unconstitutional decision to hold the elections on 24th April 2016 taken by the Parliament of RM, without the participation of large part of the opposition.

We – the citizens and civil society activists – expect the European Union to continue to be our ally and partner in the fight for democratization of the Republic of Macedonia. On the contrary, we would have to regretfully conclude that EC remains to act as an accomplice in the demolition of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Republic of Macedonia.

Without fulfilment of conditions for free, fair and democratic elections, which inevitably imply postponement of the date for elections, we – as civil society activists – have no other option but to call for boycott of the elections scheduled for April and for mass protests against the regime that continues to stomp on the democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the Republic of Macedonia.

1. The Ombudsman was not allowed to perform an efficient investigation into violation of human rights related to the interception scandal; the State Anti-Corruption Commission has not taken any effective measures related to the publicly disclosed evidence on high level corruption; while a person for which serious evidence was disclosed for involvement in election crimes has been appointed as the head of the Directorate on Personal Data Protection. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Government continues its mass action for pre-election employments and pressures on civil servants. The Law on Transformation of Temporary Employments in the Public Administration has not been suspended. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Gruevski continued to lead a party campaign with state resources during official working hours, which was duly covered by the pro-governmental media. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. According to the official press release issued by the President of the State Election Commission from 17.1.2016, activities for cleaning the Voters List according to the new methodology would take 85 days or almost three months. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “...massive invasion of fundamental rights, including the right to participate in public affairs and to vote”; “apparent direct involvement of senior government and party officials in illegal activities, including electoral fraud, corruption, abuse of power and authority, conflict of interest, blackmail, extortion (pressure on public employees to vote for a certain party with the threat to be fired)”; etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)