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Bulgaria: Threat to deregister the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee

On 30 September 2019, Bulgarian political party Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Bulgarian National Movement (VMRO-BND) submitted a request to the General Prosecutor of Bulgaria, to initiate proceedings for the de-registration of the **Bulgarian Helsinki Committee**. The request argues that the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee’s submissions to the courts, seminars and educational events organised for judges and prosecutors as well as the representation of clients in the European Court of Human Rights amounts to “interference with the judiciary”.

The [Bulgarian Helsinki Committee](#) works to promote human rights, stimulate legislative reform to bring Bulgarian legislation in line with international human rights standards and carry out advocacy to make human rights protection mechanisms widely accessible.

The VMRO-BND party is currently part of the ruling coalition in Bulgaria and submitted two similar requests against the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee in the past. In 2017, VMRO-BND representatives asked the Prosecutor General of Bulgaria to prosecute the director of Bulgarian Helsinki Committee Krassimir Kanev for “sabotage” in connection with his letter to the European Commission, in which he expressed concern about LGBTI rights in Bulgaria. In 2014, the party applied to the National Revenue Agency, requesting an investigation into the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee’s finances, after the organisation condemned the racist rhetoric of VMRO–BNM politicians against migrants.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about VMRO-BND’s request to terminate the registration of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, as it is intended to prevent the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee from carrying out its legitimate human rights work in Bulgaria.

Front Line Defenders urges Bulgarian authorities to

1. Decline VMRO-BND’s request to terminate the registration of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee.
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the allegations made against Bulgarian Helsinki Committee with a view to publishing the results.
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that human rights organisations in Bulgaria are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.