

May 11, 2006

Prime Minister Vlado Buckovski  
Government of the Republic of Macedonia  
"Ilindenska" st, BB  
1,000 Skopje  
Republic of Macedonia

FAX: 389 2 3 112 561  
389 2 3 123 425

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I am writing on behalf of the 1.3 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, to express our serious concern with your government's announcement that it does not intend to honor the wage agreement it reached with the teachers' union SONK in February 2006. This reversal, announced just one day prior to the expected date of agreement's implementation, is a serious breach of your commitment to the teachers of Macedonia.

We have been informed by our colleagues in Education International that your government sent representatives to meet with union officials today to inform them that the wage agreement would cost more than you had envisioned. SONK is being asked to lower the coefficients in the job categories so that teachers would receive less than the amounts you agreed to and signed in February of 2006.

As you may recall, I have written to you on several occasions regarding your government's treatment of SONK and what appeared to be a clear campaign of harassment and an on-going refusal to enter into good faith bargaining. Representatives of the AFT also met with your ambassador in Washington to express our concerns. I also wrote to you in November of last year, following several steps that appeared to indicate that the campaign of harassment was coming to an end. I was encouraged by your decision to enter into negotiations with SONK and with the views you expressed regarding democracy in an article published in the Washington Times.

Now, I fear that the encouraging signs were little more than a smoke screen designed to quell international criticism of your government's treatment of SONK. Macedonia has ratified the ILO Conventions on Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining. Your government's decision to unilaterally renege on a negotiated collective bargaining agreement clearly indicates that you do not take seriously your commitments under the ILO conventions.

Buckovski/Page 2

The AFT has worked closely with the leaders and members of SONK, and we know that they represent the best in democratic trade unionism. Your decision to renege on your negotiated and agreed upon commitments to them is a serious betrayal and must be reversed.

Please let me know what steps you will be taking to live up to your agreement with SONK. I am sending a copy of this letter to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice so that she and other U.S. officials will be aware of our serious objections to the actions of your government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Edward J. McElroy".

Edward J. McElroy  
President

EJM : dlp opeiu#2 afl-cio

cc: The Honorable Condoleezza Rice, U.S. Department of State  
The Honorable Gillian Arlette Milovanovic, US Ambassador in Macedonia