How the NGOs Center in Razgrad forced the District Prosecutor to resign?

"DEMOCRACY WILL NOT DIE FROM THE TRUTH"
Pastor Yoachim Gauk, Germany

As a result of the public pressure exercise by a non-governmental organization in Razgrad, one of longest ruling District Prosecutors in Bulgaria (since 1990) has resigned. The great publicity, public commitment, right arguments and the message addressed to the Chief Prosecutor have played an important role for the sudden resignation.

On 27 June 2006, Chief Prosecutor Boris Velchev personally announced the surprising resignation of District Prosecutor Elena Hadzhidimitrova citing two established violations in the Razgrad District Prosecutor's Office. Two weeks earlier, on 12 June 2006, the Chair of the NGOs Center in Razgrad Mr. Georgi Milkov sent an open letter to the District Prosecutor requesting that she respond in public whether it was true that a prosecutor, one of her subordinates, had delayed the serving of a six-year sentence of the alleged killer of Alexander Makedonski that had entered into force.

In another letter we immediately requested that the Chief Prosecutor order an enquiry into the work of the entire Razgrad District Prosecutor's Office. In August, the NGOs Center prompted a public discussion in the local newspaper *Ekip 7* about the qualities of 6 candidates for the position of District Prosecutor. We appealed to all candidates to announce publicly their property status and whether they had had any dependencies in the past. None of the candidates responded to the appeal nor wrote even a line about themselves.

For the past two years, the NGOs Center in Razgrad has successfully developed the capacity of an organization which monitors the local court. Two projects of civil monitoring have been implemented over court cases involving domestic violence and access of vulnerable groups to justice. The projects were funded by the Open Society Institute and the USAID Judicial Strengthening Initiative for Bulgaria.

The NGOs Center in Razgrad develops the monitoring over public institutions as a priority. We develop the capacity of a watch-dog organization, an NGO which monitors the public institutions and announces the results. The NGOs Center in Razgrad monitors mainly public finances, management of municipal property, municipal policies, application of local procedures and rules.