



Youth Initiative for Human Rights
Inicijativa mladih za ljudska prava
Nisma e të rinjve për të drejtat e njeriut

Round Table Report
Albanians and Elections
Bujanovac, December 20th 2006

On Wednesday, December 20th 2006 in Bujanovac the YIHR organized a round table "Albanians and Elections" in partnership with the Center for Multi-Cultural Education. Representatives of political parties, non-governmental organizations, media and local authorities took part in the round table discussion.

YIHR Executive Director, Dragan Popovic, opened the event and presented the YIHR's campaign aimed at motivating the youth to go to the polls in January. He also presented the project which will assess the position and status of national minorities in the election process. Popovic then presented the new YIHR's report on the implementation of transitional laws in Serbia in 2006.

Behlul Nasufi, President of the Center of Multi-Cultural Education, expressed his disappointment with the two joint-list Albanian parties. He assessed that the January elections had represented a historical chance for the Albanians to enter the Serbian Parliament through their legitimate representatives. Unfortunately, this chance seems greatly diminished now. However, he repeated his conviction that at least one Albanian representative would enter the Serbian Parliament after the elections.

Fatmir Hasani, member of the Stirring Committee of the Party for Democratic Action, said the so-called patriots were causing great problems, just like in Serbia. In his opinion, the boycott would not be a smart move since both the international community and the state of Serbia should be persuaded of Albanians' readiness and willingness to contribute to Serbia's European integrations.

Galip Beqiri, Director of the Bujanovac Library, expressed hope that the Election Committee's decision would not be withdrawn eventually, the one concerning the number of signatories needed for minority lists. Otherwise, Albanians will not be able to collect 10,000 signatures. Beqiri condemned the decision passed by the Bujanovac Municipal Court, which requires only one court-appointed attestor, a non-Albanian speaker at that, which allows down the procedure and makes the registration counters overcrowded.

Dzahid Ramadani, Director of the RTV Bujanovac, said the local television in Bujanovac would allow every political option to appear and present its agenda. He repeated that, since the struggle should take place in the institutions, it is our civic duty to vote. Going to the

polls can bring something good, while abstaining from the elections cannot bring anything, concluded Ramadani.

Nehat Aliu, a local official in the municipality of Bujanovac, said the authorities are fully aware of all dangers the boycott may bring, but they see no other way of fighting for their interests. In his opinion, the Government is behaving shamefully – the politics of mistrust against Albanians is continued. The masked and armed members of special police in the town prove this, and so does the passage of the new Constitution which is unacceptable for Albanians.