

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION BULLETIN 3/2007

1. POLICIES, INITIATIVES AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Ethnic riots in Sofia

On 14.08.2007 a fight between ethnic Bulgarians and Roma in a Sofia bar was followed by riots. Some 300 individuals of Roma origin, armed with knives, axes, spades, etc. have broken car windscreens, waste containers and have been heard shouting "Death to the Bulgarians!". The leader of one of the biggest Roma parties has intervened in an attempt to calm them down. The police forces that have guarded the place have not interfered harshly fearing of subsequent accusations in racial discrimination against the Roma, the Police Secretary General said.

The case was followed by another demonstration in the town of Samokov, where on 21.08.2007, after a fight between ethnic Roma and Bulgarian youngsters a 17-years-old Roma child died. Some 500 Roma from the murdered boy's neighbourhood protested against his murder screaming "Death to the Bulgarians". The police characterised the crime as a common fighting, not representing an act of racist violence.

After the murderers were caught and considering the statement of the Police Secretary General in Sofia the Police were strongly criticised by the press for their tolerant attitude towards the Roma.

<http://www.dnevnik.bg/>

The leader of the Bulgarian National Union (BNU), a political party considered as a nationalistic one, publicly presented the uniforms of the future members of the national guards – armed forces, which will be supposed to guard the Bulgarians against the "gypsies' terror". Most of the Bulgarian political parties and non-government organisations explicitly opposed the idea of creating such a guard. The reason for the formation of the guard, according to the BNU, was the government's lack of action as regards the recent ethnic riots in the country. The volunteer guards should interfere in cases of rebellions, catastrophes and other extreme situations, the BNU spokesman said. The gathering of such semi-military private armies, according to lawyers, contradicts the Constitution of Bulgaria.

<http://bns.gvardia.net/content/blogcategory/21/78/>

2. LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS AND AWARENESS-RAISING CAMPAIGNS

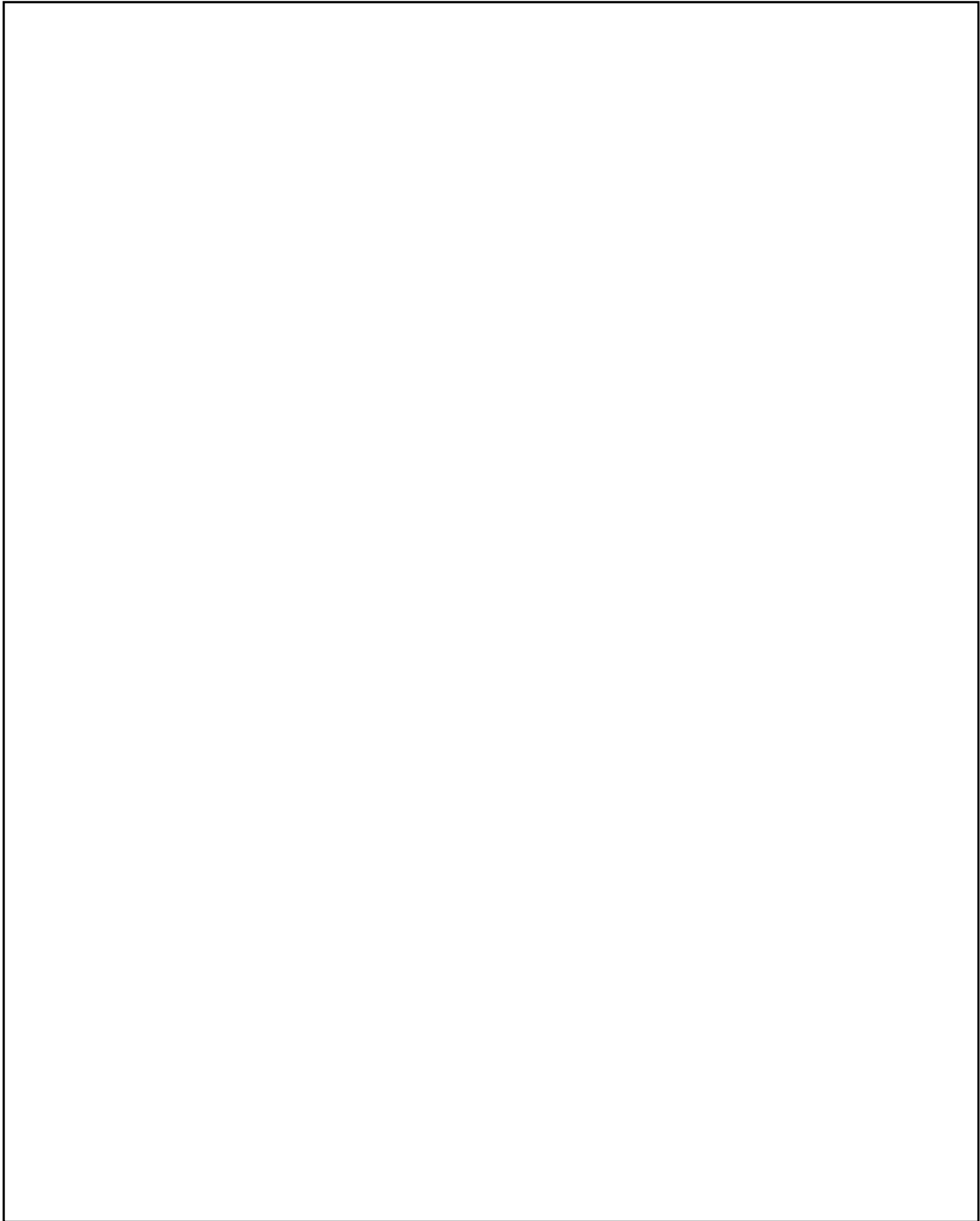
The ban on using carts in Sofia violates the rights of Roma

The Commission for Protection against Discrimination ruled on 24.07.2007 that the Sofia Municipality's ban for carts to move along several of the Sofia's main boulevards violates the Roma's right to move freely in the city. The areas surrounding the mentioned boulevards are populated mostly by Roma and carts are also used mostly by Roma. According to the Commission, the road safety decree issued by the Sofia Municipality may lead to ethnic segregation in these regions. It has recommended to the municipal authorities to partially repeal the ruling so that it could allow the Roma cart drivers to move to other districts of the city. In response, the Sofia Municipal Council informed that it would not remove the ban since using carts is an issue of safety and it does not concern the Roma population only.

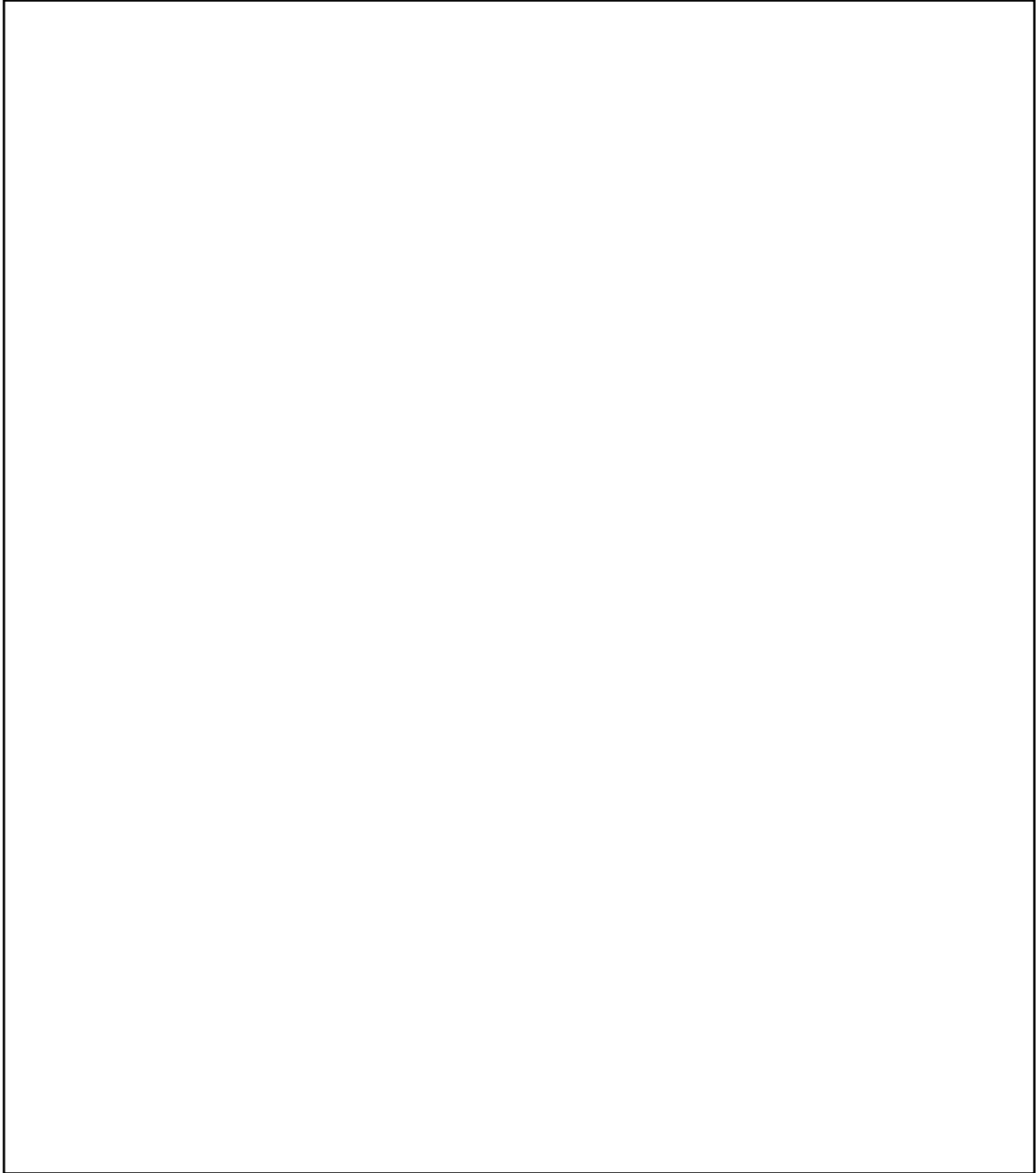
<http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/>

<http://www.sofia.bg/>

3. RESEARCH



4. Official / unofficial statistical data



5. Upcoming events

