

## **Bulgaria: EPP Group denounces double standards employed by Socialists. Manfred Weber MEP and V?ronique Mathieu MEP**

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European Socialists are turning a blind eye to glaring breaches of human rights. Montesquieu and his theory on the separation of powers have gone out the window.

"Human rights can be violated for the European Socialists if they are violated by a Socialist government", said Vice-Chairman of the EPP Group, Manfred Weber MEP, referring to the Bulgarian Socialist-led government.

"I am mystified by the S&D Group's refusal to debate the political situation in Bulgaria, this week, in the European Parliament. Mr Swoboda, what's your take on Bulgaria? Because, if you said something, we didn't hear you", said the EPP Group Coordinator in the Civil Liberties Committee, V?ronique Mathieu MEP.

"If Mr Swoboda can't answer, perhaps the Bulgarian party leader of the European Socialists, Sergei Stanishev, can", added Manfred Weber.

Despite the S&D Group's multiple attempts to block a parliamentary debate during this plenary session, the EPP Group forced this debate on the plenary agenda by winning a vote in the hemicycle. The debate will take place today.

For the 18th day running, Bulgarian citizens are staging massive protest rallies in Sofia and in many other big cities. They are demanding the removal of this government over ties with oligarchs, an end to back-handed deals leading to controversial appointments, and amendments to the election rules to ensure a better representation of citizens in government. This is happening in the wake of a highly manipulative campaign conducted by the Bulgarian Socialists before the early general elections.

The Bulgarian Socialist-led coalition government, which includes the so-called 'Turkish Party' (MRF, ALDE), does not have sufficient numbers to command a majority in Parliament and is relying on the parliamentary support of the ultra-nationalist, xenophobic and anti-EU party, called 'Ataka'.

Last Friday the Ataka Party leader Volen Siderov predicted civil war in Bulgaria and asked the Bulgarian Minister of Interior to arrest all those protesting in the streets, calling them "aggressive, barbaric hooligans".

With the support of the Socialists, Mr Siderov was appointed Chair of the Committee on the fight against corruption, conflict of interest and parliamentary ethics. Mr Siderov regularly criticises the media and physically bullies them.

On 26 June, the President of the Bulgarian Parliament, Mihail Mikov, attacked the Bulgarian media for their "inappropriate reporting" of the on-going protests.

On 27 June, Mr Siderov, together with a number of well-built men, stormed the building of the Bulgarian national television with accusations that it is broadcasting false information.

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"During the past year or so, we have seen the S&D Group consistently trying to morph the European Parliament into a judiciary and an executive with the deliberate aim of humiliating EPP-led governments. But when it comes to Socialist-led governments, they block attempts to hold a parliamentary debate, which is after all the most basic function of any legislative body. The level of hypocrisy never fails to astonish us. The term double standards, in these instances, is almost an understatement", said Manfred Weber and V?ronique Mathieu.