



**Sofia, January 2016**

## **A DECLARATION**

**By the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom"**

The Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria Shalom finds the recently renewed campaign by the Bulgarian National Union to organize a series of events under the slogan "Lukovmarch", which will culminate on February 13, 2016 with a demonstration rally, extremely worrisome and degenerative. The past few years presented our civil society with hardships which it had to overcome in a way characteristic of a democratic and constitutional state. Unfortunately, manifestations like the so-called "Lukovmarch" contribute nothing to the perception of our country as having a clear and firm stand against all displays of racism and anti-Semitism, following of Nazi ideology and preaching hatred towards different minority groups. On the contrary, through its ghastly symbolic of Nazi salutes, fire torches, uniforms and strict rules, the demonstration rally is reminiscent of some of the darkest periods in human history – the time of the Third Reich.

The more distant the years of the Bulgarian pro-Nazi government become, the more possibilities present themselves to rewrite the history and glorify persons like Gen. Hristo Lukov, who played a key role to the Bulgarian Kingdom joining the criminal block of Hitler's Germany during WWII. Leader and activist of the Union of the Bulgarian National Legions, Lukov was an adamant supporter and ideologist of fascist and national socialist principles and models. Today's followers of Lukov and his likeminded cohorts tend to hyperbolize his actions and merits, thus presenting a skewed image of historical figures. Many young people readily and with excitement take in and disseminate slogans propagating unification and forceful fight against the "national enemies", turning themselves into instrument for polarization, extremism and instigation of racial and ethnic bigotry among the Bulgarian society. It is inadmissible to tolerate such Nazi practices as the desecration of the memory of millions of Holocaust victims, and to deny the humiliations and repressions tens of thousands Bulgarian citizens of Jewish descent suffered during the period 1921 – 1944 as a direct result of the anti-Jewish legislation. Members of groups, following extreme ideologies of anti-Semitism and xenophobia, never learned the lamentable lessons taught by the greatest human tragedy in recent history.

We live in an era of paradoxical contradictions between the level of development of the human civilization, the achievements of science and medicine, on one hand, and the terrifying radicalization and constant violation of human rights, on the other. All this is happening in the merciless shadow of international terrorism, which knows no borders and is ready to use all and any resources in its war against the democratic and free society. We are witnessing changes in the geopolitical map of the world, colossal migration flows from East to West, comparable in their scale and nature to the influx and settlement of the Eurasian tribes, including the proto Bulgarians, on the territory and around the outer borders of the Roman Empire. In contrast to Late Antiquity, in the modern globalized world of perpetual communication, mobility and easy access to information, these processes develop extremely fast and could have fatal consequences, if we do not apply the humanist and moral principles, fundamental to the UN community.

The Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria “Shalom” strongly supports the notion that the law should be observed equally by all citizens within the borders of a constitutional state, including foreigners. Every attempt to violate it, to infringe upon the commonly accepted norms and rules of a society, leads to weakening of the state immune system and creates malignant tumors, which feed on the fears and unrest of its population. Therefore, all attempts of reviving Nazism and its political programs through propagating racist and xenophobic ideas in the heart of Sofia in the rally called “Lukovmarch”, should not be allowed by the authorities of a European city with history of ethnic tolerance dating back thousands of years.

We address with appreciation all institutions, organizations and persons who supported our protest against Lukovmarch 2015. Today the Bulgarian society needs again to state loud and clear that it condemns the manifestations of anti-Semitism, xenophobia and race-based hatred. We call out to all institutions, political parties and their leaders, NGOs and honorable Bulgarian citizens, to not bear idly the violation of pan-European ideals such as dignity, equal rights and unity. The same values which lay the very foundation of the resilient position in favor of rescuing the Bulgarian Jews seventy-three years ago, and transformed the actions of the larger part of the Bulgarian people into a simply human cause, beyond ethnicity and nationality.

In order for us all to be proud of Bulgaria’s future tomorrow, we need to state today our willingness to counteract this undemocratic demonstration, using all legal means. In the name of Bulgaria and the spiritual legacy we leave to our children.