
MACEDONIA: PROTEST OVER POSSIBLE GREECE NAME COMPROMISE

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Thousands of people rallied in the Macedonian capital of Skopje on Sunday, waving flags and chanting "We are Macedonians" to demand that the government halt talks with Greece over the decades-long naming dispute.

Protesters gathered under the statue of Hellenic ruler Alexander the Great in Skopje's main town square as part of the "We are the Macedonia" demonstration.

"We are here because questions about the name, the identity, the constitution (and) language are issues over which we must adopt a (strong) position," rally organizer Evica Stojanova-Kamberova told the crowd.

The latest protests come after Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev said last month he would reopen negotiations with neighboring Greece to solve the long-running dispute over its name.

Greece objects that its neighbor's constitutional name, simply Macedonia, arguing that it implies a territorial claim to its own northern region of the same name.

The issue has grown to become ongoing political dispute, and even hampered Skopje's ambitions to join the European Union and NATO.

After splitting from the former Yugoslavia in 1991, Macedonia was admitted into the United Nations two years later under the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Protesters have also demanded that the UN recognize the country under its constitutional name.

Announcing plans to seek a resolution with Greece, Zaev said he would accept a "geographical qualifier" as a compromise in the talks with Greece □ such as "Vardar," "upper," or "north." However, it insisted that any compromise must "respect the dignity" of the Macedonian people.

<http://www.dw.com/en/macedonia-protest-over-possible-greece-name-compromise/a-42823150>

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