
MACEDONIA PRESIDENT URGES BOYCOTT OF NAME-CHANGE REFERENDUM

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Macedonia's President Gorge Ivanov has decried an agreement that would change the country's name to end a long-standing dispute with Greece, calling on his compatriots to boycott the vote on the deal that takes place on September 30.

President Ivanov said he would not vote in the referendum, saying the deal with Greece is "harmful and defeating" for Macedonia, according to a statement released by his office on Sunday.

Ivanov made the comments during a speech to members of the Macedonian diaspora in Detroit, Michigan, on Saturday.

The agreement would see Macedonia, which currently bears the official title of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, change its name to the Republic of North Macedonia, taking into account disagreements with its southern neighbour, Greece.

Many Greeks are opposed to Skopje's use of the name Macedonia, as, according to them, it appropriates Greek history and fails to distinguish itself from the Greek region with the same name.

The historical region of Macedonia includes the modern Greek region, in the north of the country, and some land within what is now the sovereign state of Macedonia.

The dispute has been a roadblock on Macedonia's ascension to the European Union, of which Greece is a member.

Macedonian legislators agreed to the referendum in July with 68 of the parliament's 120 legislators voting in favour.

Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and his Social Democratic Union of Macedonia party support the referendum.

Polls indicate Macedonians will likely back the deal, but it remains unclear whether turnout will meet the required 50-percent threshold for the vote to be valid.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/09/macedonia-president-urges-boycott-change-referendum-180923142638198.html>

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