

Ref: CommHR/DM/sf 042-2022

Mr Galab DONEV

Acting Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria

Mr Ivan DEMERDZHIEV

Acting Deputy Prime Minister for Public Order and Security
and acting Minister of Interior

Strasbourg, 13 December 2022

Dear Prime Minister, dear Minister,

I am writing to you in relation to several recent media reports regarding pushbacks at your country's land borders. I am concerned about the grave allegations made in this connection, including with respect to the unlawful detention and ill-treatment of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, and to situations which have led to the death or injury of some of those trying to cross the border into Bulgaria.

I have also received information that your authorities have launched investigations into these incidents. I would therefore be grateful if you could provide me with further information on these on-going investigations and other measures taken by your authorities.

In addition, I am concerned about the growing [practice](#) of pushbacks at Bulgaria's borders in the past years, as documented in the framework of the border monitoring mechanism set up in your country since 2010. I use this opportunity to draw your attention to my [Recommendation](#) on urgent action to end pushbacks and the human rights violations they entail, which highlights member states' obligations to safeguard the right to life of asylum seekers and migrants, to protect them from torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, and to put in place guarantees against collective expulsions. In particular, I reiterate the importance of ensuring that no person is being forced back across the borders without an individual assessment of their human rights protection needs, which, among other things, is a crucial safeguard against *refoulement*.

I also take this opportunity to express my concern about the reported anti-migrant rhetoric used by politicians, including those in governmental positions in Bulgaria. As I have often stressed, such rhetoric feeds negative sentiment against those trying to enter Bulgaria, and increases the risk of xenophobic violence, including among law enforcement agents. I therefore wish to underline again the necessity to refrain from stigmatising speech and generalisations about refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and persons belonging to minorities and marginalised or vulnerable groups.

I look forward to receiving your reply and to continuing our constructive dialogue.

Your sincerely,



Dunja Mijatović