

THE ROLE OF THE POLICE IN THE PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN COVID PANDEMIC CONDITIONS IN THE REPUBLIC NORTH MACEDONIA

Special review of the Covid pandemic

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Abstract

The main feature of the modern world is the technical-technological expansion in all spheres of social life, including the institutions of the system. Along with the technical-technological development, the sources of risks and threats, i.e. the way they act, are also changing.

Conventional weapons are no longer the primary threat to the Republic of North Macedonia, but sophisticated malicious attacks on critical infrastructure, COVID 19 pandemic pose a real challenge to the security sector and are the highest national priority of the Government.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, the police is a basic pillar that guarantees the safety of citizens, their property and the property of the state. Having in mind the security function of the police, it is included and guarantees the security of many state facilities that are of national interest and is also facing the challenge of providing the necessary level of security for the normal functioning of the state or citizens in conditions of COVID 19 pandemic.

Keywords

critical infrastructure, police, security sector, covid pandemic, risks and threats

INTRODUCTION

The Corona virus COVID 19 is a virus infection that first appeared and it was registered as an epidemic in the city of Wuhan in the People's Republic of China, and then spread to many countries around the world, which is why the World Health Organization declared it a pandemic. Corona virus is an infectious disease caused by a new virus that has not been previously identified in humans and is an absolute enigma for the medicine.

The occurrence of this pandemic, has found almost all the countries in the world unprepared and entered a high level of confusion in the undertaking of operational procedures and the performance of basic security tasks by the competent institutions.

In this kind of circumstances, a global problem arose in taking the necessary measurements and activities by the police because for the basic police work and taking measures and activities to prevent the spread of the virus was a real challenge. In addition to this, there was a need to restrict and suspend the basic human rights, which in experience means closure of entire cities, districts, countries around the world, imposition of strict rules for the movement of citizens in public places, or in other words, change the conventional way and life of the population around the world.

The police globally, as additional task was to be support of the healthcare workers and implementation of the Legal measurements and decisions taken by the Governments in order to reduce the spread of the disease. In many countries around the world, there have been protests and disturbances of public order and peace, initiated by the dissatisfaction of the population caused by the suspension of fundamental rights and freedoms. The problems that faced the states around the world, in terms of health, gained a psychological-social and security dimension.

1. CONCEPTUAL DETERMINATION

The legal framework in the Republic of North Macedonia regulates the crisis situation within the Law on Crisis Management, which conceptually defines the following aspects (Law on Crisis Management, Official Gazette of RM no. 29/05):

- Endangering the security of the state is endangering from risks and danger to the goods and the environment, the health and the life of people and animals and plants, the property and other material goods of greater scope, the stability, the functioning of the state and its order established by the Constitution, for which there are no conditions for declaring martial law or a state of emergency;
- A pandemic is a condition of spreading a contagious disease over a wide area, multiple countries or continents, and especially when there is a spread of a new unknown disease over a larger area;
- Risks and dangers are possible manifestations of nationalism and religious intolerance and hate; forms and activities related to international terrorism, organized crime, illegitimate trafficking in drugs, weapons and people, consequences of the means of mass destruction; possession of large quantities of illegal weapons; corruption; urban terrorism; serious crimes, including blackmail, murder and assault on citizens and their property. Also there were the activities of foreign special services aimed at deteriorating the security situation; consequences of conflict of interests for the use of sources and roads of strategic energy, as well as obstruction and blocking of their import into the country; natural and other disasters, technical-technological disasters, epidemics of quarantine and other infectious diseases in humans and animals, as well as large-scale degradation and destruction of the environment;
- Resources are the citizens, the facilities, the motor vehicles, the material and technical means, the equipment and the financial means available to the state.;

- Crisis is a phenomenon that endangers the basic values, permanent and vital interests and goals of the state, ie the constitutional order and security of the state are endangered;
- A crisis situation is a situation caused by risks and dangers that may endanger the goods, health and the life of people and animals and the security of the state, the prevention and / or management of which requires the use of a larger volume of resources and
- Prevention is a set of planned, organized and institutionally guided activities aimed at reducing or completely avoiding the adverse effects of risks and dangers and the related accidents, disasters, crises and crisis situations.

2. THE ROLE OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA IN PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

The Law of internal affairs in article 2 gives the following operational competencies to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Official Gazette of RM no. 42/14):

- Realization of the system of public and state security;
- Prevention of violent overthrow of the democratic institutions determined by the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia;
- protection of the life, personal security and property of the citizens;
- preventing the inducement of national, racial or religious hate and intolerance;
- prevention of committing criminal acts and violations, detection and apprehension of their perpetrators and taking other measures determined by law to prosecute the perpetrators of those acts;
- Civil works and – other works determined with this special Law.

The Ministry, within its competence, provides professional assistance to citizens, legal entities and state bodies in exercising the prescriptive rights and obligations, protection of life and personal safety of citizens and property.

The security function is generally performed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs through its operational segment, the Public Security Bureau, i.e. the Police.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs, especially the members of the police as the holder of police powers and duties for the protection of citizens and the state, were faced again with serious temptations that required an increased level of preparedness and prompt action. Adapting to the new situation and respecting the national decisions, the Ministry intensively cooperated with the competent institutions and continuously undertook all the necessary activities for preservation of public safety in emergency conditions. The compliance with the health regulations and the implementation of national decisions related to the protection and prevention of the Covid-19 virus were a top priority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but at the same time, the overall security situation was continuously monitored and analyzed, including crime trends. The mobilization and directing of resources has given positive results, ie adequate support is provided to the health system, and the general security situation in conditions of declared state of emergency is stable with declining trends of registered crime (Department of Criminal Intelligence and Analysis, 2020).



Figure no.1.

Retrieved from: Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Department for Criminal Intelligence and Analysis, Tendencies and Challenges for Dealing with Crime and Maintaining Public Security in the Republic of North Macedonia in the Period 13 April-12 May 2020.

2. COMPETENCE OF THE POLICE IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The police, as an integral part of the security system, base their competencies on the legal framework that practically constitutes the police forces. Article 5 of the Law on Police clearly states the actions of the police officers that refer to (Official Gazette of RM, no. 114/06):

- Life protection, personal safety and property of the citizens;
- Protection of freedom and human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of The Republic of North Macedonia the laws and the ratified international agreements;
- Prevention of committing criminal acts and violations, detection and apprehension of their perpetrators and taking other measures determined by law to prosecute the perpetrators of those acts;
- Identification and search for direct and indirect property gain obtained by committing a criminal act;
- Maintenance of public order and peace;
- Regulation and control of road traffic;
- Control of movement and stay of foreigners;
- border checks and border surveillance;
- providing assistance and protection to the citizens in case of necessary need;
- provision of certain persons and objects and
- Other works determined by Law.

3. THE ROLE OF THE POLICE IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA IN CONDITIONS OF COVID 19 PANDEMICS

The police is a complex organization with wide range of competences in order to maintain normal public peace and order and internal order. The very fact of maintaining a stable public order, goes in favor of the safe functioning of the critical infrastructure. In the conditions of the COVID 19 pandemic, the police is the main bearer of the measures and recommendations of the health institutions for prevention of the spread of the disease.

The COVID 19 pandemic imposed the need for a state of emergency and crisis to be declared in the Republic of North Macedonia, where part of the Army was involved in supporting the police by performing police work and provided the necessary support to the police.

The police, in accordance with their scope of competencies, implements preventive, investigative and repressive measures and they refer to citizens who do not respect the measures and recommendations of the Ministry of Health and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Preventive measures refer to the presence of police officers at certain points or checkpoints to control compliance with the ban on movement or movement at certain times of the day or by launching prevention campaigns through the national media services. In the Republic of North Macedonia, through prepared Operational Action Plans, the police implements the stated measures and restrictions, but also provides certain facilities designated as facilities of special interest for the security of the state or the Ministry of Health.

The police, in accordance with their scope of responsibilities, undertakes special investigative measures against certain individuals, groups and formations that with their behavior can endanger the critical infrastructure of the state. The police in such cases is in close correlation with the competent state prosecutor's office.

In case the legal conditions are met, the police carry out their repressive function by legally suspending certain human rights and freedoms, ie depriving persons for whom there is relevant evidence that they are perpetrators of crimes against human life and health, but also the critical infrastructure and files criminal charges against them.

Namely, analyzing the data in a period of two months during 2020, according to the type of acts, the most common are the criminal acts related to the respectation of the health regulations and the prohibitions related to the prevention of Covid-19, which are decreasing from 8%, followed by aggravated theft, theft and attempted aggravated theft, which compared to the previous period also decreased and acts with elements of violence that increased by 7.5% (Department of Criminal Intelligence and Analysis, 2020).

	13.04.-12.05.2020	12.03.-12.04.2020
Total crimes	2035	2194
More characteristic crimes		
Theft	138	164
Severe theft	448	515
Domestic violence crimes	85	79
Severe attempted theft	70	73
Failure to comply with health regulations during an epidemic	952	1034
Crime rate per 100,000 inhabitants	94,2	105,6

Table no.1.

Retrieved from: Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Department for Criminal Intelligence and Analysis, Tendencies and Challenges for Dealing with Crime and Maintaining Public Security in the Republic of North Macedonia in the Period 13 April-12 May 2020

In the reporting period, a total of 1,610 criminal charges were filed by the Departments of Internal Affairs, most of which were filed in connection with compliance with the health recommendations for the prevention of the COVID 19 epidemic, followed by the area of classic crime, for which a total of 463 (642) criminal charges. Analogous to the decreasing trends that are noted in the normally present crime which is represented in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia, in the reporting period, a decrease in the number of criminal charges was registered in the areas of classic crime, as well as in the areas of illicit trade. and other types of organized crime (Department of Criminal Intelligence and Analysis, 2020).

In the part of complaints, filed by persons against members of their family, we note an increase of 44.6%, ie, a total of 373 (258) complaints were filed, for which 388 (268) perpetrators were reported, which is an increasing trend. An increase is also evident in relation to the attacks on police officers where in the analyzed period 10 attacks were carried out on officials while performing security duties (Department of Criminal Intelligence and Analysis, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS:

Taking into consideration the main police task, the general conclusion is that the COVID pandemic has defocused the police in the Republic of North Macedonia from its basic function and that is the security function. In such conditions, the police made themselves fully available to the health system, but still the focus remained on the safety of vital facilities and other state interests. In this context, the role of the police in a pandemic can be viewed through the prism of the following facts:

1. The police have the legal competence to provide all vital facilities or other facilities defined by the Ministry of Health as facilities where infected persons are accommo-

dated or treated, or facilities that are essential in dealing with the pandemic and are related to the health system.

2. The police are just a segment of the security system that has the power to prevent the spread of the pandemic.
3. The effective response of the police in support of the health workers and implementation of the health measures and decisions made by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia has positive results in the fight to prevent the spread of the infection.
4. The police have a legal obligation to provide the necessary level of internal security in the Republic of North Macedonia in conditions of COVID 19 pandemics; and,
5. The police in the Republic of North Macedonia is ready to deal with all direct or indirect security challenges in conditions of Covid 19 pandemics.

Variation is determined in relation to the indicators and there is an increase / decrease of the crimes committed in the period of the introduced ban on the movement of the population.

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