

PRESS RELEASE

7th April 2013



Lynch mob enters private property and beats defenceless disabled dog while TV-reporters film the scene

After years of selfless dedication to helping hundreds of stray Bulgarian dogs, Dr Georgi Litov has become the victim of persecution from Bulgarian Government officials because he is protecting strays.

Caring Doctor faces Eviction from his home

In 2007 Bulgaria joined the European Union. One of the criteria for its acceptance was to implement Animal Welfare laws. In 2008, Bulgaria passed its Animal Protection Act protecting animals from cruelty. Now, in 2013 and despite hundreds of cases of severe animal abuse being brought to the attention of the authorities, NO-ONE has been prosecuted. Now this unabated abuse has moved on to persecuting animal welfare people and abusing their disabled pets. This is one animal rescuers story....

It was 7am 12th March, and Bulgarian Doctor, Georgi Litov, was busy chopping wood in his basement to make the morning fire. He heard a commotion in the street and his dogs were barking, yet thought nothing of it as it was not unusual while the busy morning traffic passed the house. He then heard a knock at the door, and went to answer it. He was shocked to see an angry mob and TV cameras outside of his house. Not realising one of his dogs was still outside and unaware of what had gone on before he quickly closed the door, to avoid any confrontation with the man with the baseball bat.



It was like the scene from a movie, yet for Doctor Georgi Litov it was a nightmare that had become a reality.

After the mob left, Dr Litov discovered his disabled dog Borko was in pain and very distressed, yet it was not until he watched the news on Television that evening that he realised exactly what had happened to him. In an interview with K9 Rescue today, Dr Litov said “When I heard Borko screaming, I still did not suspect what was going on, thinking that maybe some other dog had sneaked in through a hole in the fence and that they ‘argue’ as often happens. Despite his disability, Borko will often scare off healthy bigger dogs.” Dr Litov continued “Not for a moment did I suspect that Borko was fighting for his life, being attacked by a human animal, trespassing on my property with a huge baseball bat in his hand. Fortunately, he survived this ordeal and now he is safe and comfortable.”

Dr Litov described today how it all started last year after he found Borko as a puppy in the street, dragging himself on his belly, crying from pain, hunger and fear, his spinal column severed. Appalled how someone could beat a puppy and fracture his spine, leaving him to suffer in this way, Dr Litov filed a Petition to the Regional Public Prosecutor's Office (see Appendix 1) yet did not even receive an acknowledgement from them.

“From that moment, Borko became a part of my life forever”, Dr Litov said “I've been nursing and caring for him as my own child ever since. He made friends with my other dog Danny, also rescued from the streets in 2008 and later Jacko, who I found on the streets limping after having been abused and one of his front legs badly injured.” Dr Litov continued “Borko has made significant progress with his condition since then - at the beginning he was paraplegic, yet slowly, as the time went by, he started moving his legs and now he can even stand up with very little support. That is a miracle. The vets believed he would never be able to walk again and humane euthanasia seemed for them the logical solution. Yet Borko proved them wrong.”

In his own words, Dr Litov describes what happened on 12th March, when mobsters came into his home later that day... “That same day, in the afternoon, two brutes from the "lynch mob" filmed by TV7 crew, entered my office and started shouting, kicking and forcing some of the locked doors in the building. They were shouting "where is the crippled dog". I knew then that they were coming back for Borko. I called the police and after they arrived, the two brutes were forced out. Then a woman and another man appeared out of nowhere, saying they were from the Municipality of Devin. They had no identification on them to prove who they were, nor could they provide a logical reason for being in my office. Understandably I was suspicious. Then they demanded that I should open the doors of all the rooms in the building. I knew that for some reason they were also looking for Borko. I declined firmly and said a few times in front of witnesses that I am the tenant and they have no right to enter any of the rooms without my permission. Then I was threatened that they would smash the locked doors and go in. Then the man, who turned out to be the Deputy Mayor of Devin, Vladimir Rosenov Daskalov, said that he would speak to a lawyer on the cell phone. He was furious. Minutes later he said that they had every right to go in. By that time the two brutes were back inside my home again, creating havoc. It was a nightmare. Finally I succumbed to their threats, especially when the two police officers also turned against me and advised me to comply. What followed was degrading and humiliating. They searched the premises and found little Borko in his room, shaking and trembling. He was horrified to see the faces of the same people who had attacked him in the morning and he wet himself from fear. Photographs were taken of him as “evidence” and of a few feral cats in the basement, who sometimes find shelter there. The mobsters were triumphant. On his way out, the Deputy Mayor said that I should leave the village immediately, because ‘it was not safe for me to stay’. The two policemen heard that and then I asked them for permanent police protection, but they declined and left”.

Violating someone else's property by force and deception is a criminal act, according to the Bulgarian Penal Code, yet not only was this condoned by Government Officials and Police, it was orchestrated and filmed by Bulgarian news channel TV7, owned by Alegro Capital of London.

Dr Litov consulted an attorney and on the 27th of March an official complaint was sent to the Regional Public Prosecutors office in Smolyan and another to the District Police Department in Smolyan, asking for Police protection. Neither the Public Prosecutors nor the Police Department have responded and when approached last week, they have both declined comment.

Dr Litov continued to describe his ordeal “The last threat on my life was on the 4th of April. Walking my dog in the morning I was stalked by one of the mobsters, a man named Nikolai Zonev, who directly said to me that they would beat us (meaning me and my dogs) to death with iron bars. He even repeated the threat, to make his point. There were witnesses. I called the emergency line and asked for the Police to come and investigate. They said they would come yet never showed up. I live alone in my clinic and I fear for my life and the life of my dogs.”

Not content with terrorising Dr Litov and his dogs in their home, the Municipality saw fit to persecute him further by serving an Eviction Notice last week on the 5th April. Dr Litov told K9 Rescue “It was the logical outcome of these events. This was revenge. The Empire struck again, only to prove that humanity is dead in Bulgaria and that people's rights are a myth. The eviction

notice was served by the Head of the Municipal Property Department in Devin. I have 7 days to appeal in court and my lawyer will do it on Tuesday. The Mayor of the Devin Municipality is called Mr. Cvetalin Vasilev Penkov, and basically it is his decision to evict me. His deputies are: Mr. Georgi Stefanov Saveev, who signed the eviction notice, and Mr. Vladimir Rosenov Daskalov, the man who illegally violated my home on the 12th of March”.

Dr Litov explained “You see, what people do not understand, they fear. And what they fear, they hate. My experience is not an isolated case. Thousands of people in Bulgaria are constantly being harassed for caring and feeling compassion towards stray animals. So this is not about me or Borko. This is about all those silent heroes who suffer daily in fear of persecution and revenge, those who look upon all sentient beings as equal and defend them, regardless of the consequences.”

Bulgarian law says that all stray dogs should be captured, neutered and returned to the streets. “Of course very few of the strays have such luck” Dr Litov said.”Bulgaria has a very good Animal Welfare Act, yet fails to enforce it. Sadly, in a country eaten by corruption, populism and greed, hatred prevails. The Government, accustomed to solving all political, economic and social problems by murder, not only failed to enforce the Act yet actively sabotaged it. Barb wired death camps, called "isolators", especially designed for mass murder, have been operational all over Bulgaria, where millions of innocent, defenceless souls have perished in the most despicable, cruel ways, tortured and killed by sadists and perverts, employed by the State. With the death machine pounding, the State propaganda has been engaged in ‘rationalization of murder’ and disengagement of the moral standards of society, by portraying such inhumane behaviour toward sentient beings as socially acceptable and even desirable, by degrading and dehumanizing homeless animals, portraying them as vicious, dangerous beasts preying on humans. Moreover under such conditions of low moral standards and displaced responsibility, bloodthirsty morons, vigilantes and ‘concerned citizens’, encouraged by the Media’s declared ‘War on Strays’, have been engaging systematically in animal "hunts" and various barbaric acts of animal torture and abuse, portrayed by the Bulgarian media as ‘solving the problem’.”

Dr Litov continued “The Government has a legal obligation not only to trap, neuter and return stray dogs and cats, yet also an obligation to "care and look after" (Art. 47 Animal Welfare Act) those animals, which means to treat the old and the sick, to vaccinate, deworm, feed, water and eventually re-home them. Yet because the Government has long ago abandoned its obligations, compassionate, caring people have to do their job, which is what I have been doing. There is no shelter or animal rescue centre in my village of Selcha, or in the town of Devin or even in the town of Smolyan. That spells disaster for stray dogs and cats”.

Dr Litov explained “My own persecution for ‘protecting strays’ all started about five or six years ago, when I began feeding a few stray cats in the neighbourhood. I would put some food in the backyard to provide relief. My neighbours didn't like it at all. I started to receive direct threats that they would poison the cats or shoot them. And they did. I have a cat, still alive, that was shot with a pellet gun and the pellet is still embedded in her spine. Other cats were shot dead and the people who did it still brag about it. This is the mentality in Bulgaria - murder is socially acceptable in all its forms. I've also found quite a few dead cats, apparently poisoned, through the years. Others simply disappeared. And it got worse. In early November 2011, I found 11 dead cats, apparently poisoned, dumped in my garden in one single day. Dozens of Bulgarian newspapers wrote about it yet no one condemned this barbaric act. I complained to the Police and the Public Prosecutor yet no one has yet been found responsible or charged. Instead they blamed me for feeding those cats”

As for the TV7 news footage with the libellous title ‘Doctor Incites Dogs Against Patients’ Dr Litov had this to say “It is absurd! During Surgery hours my dogs are always shut in private quarters with zero contact with patients. I have been visited regularly by inspectors from the Regional Health Board. They have never found violation of any regulation in my clinic. In 2012 I sent a complaint to the District Directorate for Food Safety who are responsible for enforcing the Animal Welfare Act, regarding the inhumane treatment of a dog, chained outside the village, without food and water. After they checked it out the owner was fined. Then the owner threatened me that he would shoot me with his hunting rifle. Indeed the man is a hunter, so I took the threat very

seriously. I called the Police and he was cautioned, yet this is an example of the daily struggle if you are an animal lover in Bulgaria.”

Whilst this news footage, with its libellous caption "Doctor Incites Dogs Against Patients" was first released by TV7 on 13th March, it was not until 28th of March that it came to the attention of British K9 Rescue's founder Michelle Jones... "I was absolutely horrified at what I saw" Michelle says "Such a heinous crime on so many levels, not just by the arbitrators yet also the British owned TV7 news crew who were complicit in this crime, and then by the Municipality officials who have not only condoned the actions of these mobsters and media, yet compounded them with an Eviction Notice to remove Dr Litov from his home." Michelle continues "Having lived in Bulgaria for 5 years, in a small mountain village similar to that of Selcha, I am familiar with the mentality and ignorance that has lead to this crime – Animal Lovers everywhere in Bulgaria experience recrimination for their protection of the strays, and if this Eviction is allowed to proceed, it will spell disaster for animal lovers across the country – who will be next?"

Michelle, together with her team, immediately set about to publicise this atrocity, starting with an online Petition to the Bulgarian Government and other selected officials, which has gathered in excess of 40,000 signatures in one week, and growing daily.

"I have been heartened by some of the comments we are receiving from concerned citizens around the world" Michelle says "People are understandably horrified by the event, yet even more shocked that both the British owned TV7 news crew and the Government Officials of a European Union member country have supported the mobsters, and they are rightfully asking that it ends now and the perpetrators are prosecuted"

"Bulgaria was a communist country up until 1990" Michelle said "and the scars of communism are still there – people, particularly the older generation, have been indoctrinated not to question what they are told by the media and the Government, so the Bulgarian media's long standing declared 'War on Strays' which openly incites cruelty and killing of the strays is what is holding the country back from being more compassionate towards the stray populations. The strays are in fact there of the people's own making, since the majority of street dogs and cats have been dumped as offspring from their own animals. If the media started to support NGO's such as ourselves and promote Spay/Neuter initiatives and proper Animal Welfare, the country would instantly become a better place for animals and could start classing itself as a law abiding EU country" Michelle continued.

This is 2013 in a Westernised Democratic country still acting as if it is the late 19th century. Bulgaria needs to show the world that its animal rights laws actually mean something otherwise it makes a mockery of the freedoms and liberties that the European Union is so proud to claim it upholds.

For further information please contact Dr Litov's official representative:

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Notes to editor:

- K9 Rescue is a UK registered Non-Profit Organisation whose roots began in Bulgaria in 2005 to help save dogs destined for culling and find them new homes worldwide. Now, the charity collaborates with other NGO's in Bulgaria to find both foster and adoptive homes abroad as well as managing the rehabilitation of sick and injured dogs together with the accompanying essential fundraising.
- Dr George Litov, is a medical doctor and well respected advocate for strays in Bulgaria, successfully running the information website www.freewebs.com/pawsbg on behalf of his group PAWS - Plovdiv Animal Welfare Society.

- K9 Rescue's Petition and Video can be viewed and signed here: <https://www.change.org/petitions/justice-for-disabled-borko-punish-the-man-who-savagely-beat-him-in-his-own-home> (Appendix 2)
- Occupy for Animals (www.occupyforanimals.org) Petition to Alegro Capital London / TV7 can be viewed and signed here: <https://www.change.org/petitions/disabled-borko-s-story-part-ii-tv7-broadcast-the-truth> (Appendix 3)
- Alegro Capital London's TV7 news footage: <http://bulgaria.tv7.bg/news/9670202.html>

Appendices 1 to 3:

Appendix 1 – Petition to Regional Public Prosecutor's Office

*To the Regional Public Prosecutor's Office
Devin*

*PETITION
from D-r George Litov
citizen of the Republic of Bulgaria*

*regarding
inflicted heavy injury upon a vertebrate animal*

24th of May 2012

Dear Sir,

I've been practicing medicine as a General Practitioner in the village of Selcha for the last 11 years. On the 11th of May 2012, I was walking my dog in the village, when I saw a male puppy dog, maybe 3 or 4 month old, dragging itself on its belly, crying from pain, hunger and fear. I picked it up with my bare hands and took it, as a matter of emergency, to the "Provet" veterinary clinic in Plovdiv, where the doctors made tests and took care of his wounds and bruises. The X-rays showed that the spine had been fractured badly and dislocated, severing the spinal column. The puppy's hind legs were paralysed with no chance of recovery.

Under article 325b of the Bulgarian Penal Code, inflicting heavy injury or death upon a vertebrate animal is a crime. Please do all that is necessary to investigate this matter and find the person/s responsible.

Yours,

D-r George Litov

Appendix 2 – Petition Letter to President of Bulgaria, European Parliament, and Associated Officials

After watching the Bulgarian TV 7 news footage with the libellous caption "Doctor Incites Dogs Against Patients" (<http://bulgaria.tv7.bg/news/9670202.html>), we, the undersigned, are absolutely outraged to learn of the barbaric crimes against animals in Bulgaria that go unpunished. Not only is it socially acceptable in Bulgaria for this Lynch Mob to trespass onto Doctor Litov's property and brutally beat his disabled family dog publicly, in full view of TV 7's cameras, the Police are not even interested in prosecuting the perpetrators, refusing to attend the property when called.

This Lynch Mob and the media staged this shameful act in order to force Dr. Litov out of his home and work, only because he is helping the strays in the village, where there is no vet and no shelter. The news article in no way criticised the mob for their actions, they only blamed Dr Litov for helping strays.

We the undersigned, require the Bulgarian Authorities to uphold the law by:

- 1) Ensuring Dr. Litov, his family and his animals are left in peace. Having pets is not a crime. In fact, Dr Litov does the municipality's job by rescuing and treating the strays in the region.
- 2) Providing strict guidelines for the out of control media. The media should not incite hatred towards the stray animals and the animal lovers as they are currently doing. This is stipulated in the Animal Protection Act and the media's brutal so called "War on Strays" anti-animal and anti-animal-lovers ongoing campaign should be prosecuted.
- 3) Prosecution for the savage man, who publicly beat with a baseball bat Dr Litov's family disabled dog, Borko.

We further ask the Government of Bulgaria, how can this be, in the 21st Century, that a member state of the European Union does not prosecute crimes against animals?

Bulgaria has very good, modern Animal Welfare Law (APA 2008) that forbids inhumane handling of animals and places strays under special protection. On 14 April 2011, Bulgarian Parliament passed an amendment in the Penal Code, which criminalizes Extreme Cruelty to Animals. That came onto force on 27 July, 2011. So, what is the problem then?

The problem is that Bulgaria has no enforcement body to implement the new law and therefore change cannot take place. Bulgaria has no legitimate Zoo police with powers and Bulgarian police officers do not want to bother to investigate and take animal abusers to justice. Since 27 July 2011 we witnessed a number of extreme animal cruelty cases in Bulgaria and no criminal was caught and punished with jail term, or even with a fine. Our complaints go unnoticed and in some cases we've been told to "shut up or else".

Bulgarian animals live and die in agony! Criminals never get investigated and punished! In most cases Police laugh it off or simply do not accept their duty to protect animals.

The link between animal abuse and crimes against humans has been well documented over several decades. Many studies in psychology, sociology, and criminology during the last 25 years have demonstrated that violent offenders frequently have histories of serious and repeated animal cruelty.

Given it is proven that people who can commit crimes against animals rarely stop there and that they are very likely to harm other humans, especially children or other vulnerable people, we are calling upon the Government of Bulgaria to Criminalise and Prosecute ALL Acts of Animal Abuse.

Sincerely,

Appendix 3 – Open Letter from Occupy for Animals to Alegro Capital, London, owners of TV7 News

To Mr Patrick Martin
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SUBJECT: Disabled Borko's Story Part II: TV7, Broadcast the Truth!

Dear Mr Martin,

Following recent events with regards to the Lynch Mob that persecuted Dr Litov and his 3 dogs in Selcha, Bulgaria, accompanied and filmed by the TV-crew of your newly acquired Bulgarian TV-station, TV7, which prompted international outcry, over 40,000 people have now signed the "Justice for Disabled Borko" petition with the story having reached hundreds of thousands more via the internet and growing.

Dr. Litov has now gained 6 figure support worldwide, and much within Bulgaria. Contact has been made to the Bulgarian President's Office as well as the offices of José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, the European Court of Human Rights, and many others, with the international condemnation now reaching such high level places as UK Government Officials, International Media, several celebrities and other European Commission Members.

We thought we should therefore inform you of recent events which have now taken a more sinister turn where, not only the doctor's livelihood is at risk, yet also serious threats to both his and his animals' lives. The local municipality have sent him an eviction notice which on top of all the mob threats, now leaves him and the animals homeless.

As TV7 were eager to have a good story about the doctor, his 3 dogs and the protesters that don't like him helping the strays, we ask that you now also film and broadcast "Part II" of the story: That the doctor has been the victim of a "Witch Hunt" purely because he helps the strays on the street, and as a result he is now to be evicted from his home, meaning he will lose his livelihood, and doesn't know how to feed his family, nor where he will go.

Will you broadcast that, too?

We believe that TV7 have been complicit in this tragedy, and we believe it is only just and fair that you now assist in sorting this situation out to a happy conclusion. We WILL win this fight, and TV7 can either be part of the solution for this story, or part of the problem.

We trust you will do the right thing.

Sincerely,