


IVA KYURKCHIEVA / Ива Кюркчиева  
 Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies  
 with Ethnographic Museum –  
 Bulgarian Academy of Sciences /  
 Институт за етнология и фолклористика  
 с Етнографски музей –  
 Българска академия на науките  
 6a Moskovska Str. / Московска № 6А  
 BG–1000 Sofia, Bulgaria /  
 1000 София, България  
 iva.kyurkchieva@iefem.bas.bg  
 [orcid.org/0009-0007-1440-622X](https://orcid.org/0009-0007-1440-622X)

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This study aims to acquaint the academic community with the complex amalgam of relationships that arose from the case of a football player from Nigeria, who competed for a Bulgarian provincial team. He was attacked and severely beaten by a group of skinheads in the centre of Sofia in 2007. These events provoked interactions between the official state authorities, the non-government sector, and various representatives of Bulgarian society. This situation creates conditions for posing contentious questions to society and provides an opportunity for some solutions. The study of the degree of sensitivity and commitment of the mentioned actors can help to understand the issues related to discrimination in Bulgarian society. My research is primarily based on in-depth interviews. I have also used various written data from the official websites of state and non-governmental institutions and media publications to apply the comparative anthropological approach.

Keywords: *discrimination, sport, football*

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to present the case of a black football player from Nigeria, who played for a provincial Bulgarian football team. I became familiar with this incident during my work on the European project “The use of racial antidiscrimination laws: Gender and citizenship in a multicultural context” (GENDERACE).<sup>1</sup> Sport was not the focus

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<sup>1</sup> The research received funding from the European Community’s Seventh Framework Programme

of our research, but the colleagues from the international team recognized my interest in sport, and for football in particular, and acknowledged that the connection between this popular game and discrimination, including the issue of double discrimination, could be of special research interest.

The idea of the project, which was carried out between 2008 and 2010, was to improve the understanding of the “double discrimination” phenomenon in order to support legislative and administrative practices, civil organizations and specialized institutions in relation to combating discrimination occurring on more than one basis. In addition, the study emphasized the ways in which the victims experience the discriminatory incidents. Six member states of the European Union took part in it: Great Britain, Germany, Spain, France, Sweden, and Bulgaria. The Bulgarian team of scholars was under the auspice of the International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR). The head of the research team was Prof. Maja Grekova (sociologist), Orlin Avramov was the legal expert, and Maya Koseva and myself were engaged in the anthropological aspect of the research.

Over the course of the project, we encountered some obstacles and issues when trying to conduct interviews with respondents who had suffered from discrimination. It was not easy to convince them to agree to the interviews, and sometimes the very recollection of the traumatic experiences made the interviews challenging. The project participants had agreed in advance to ask the respondents to sign a specially written confidential letter, which is why I am not going to mention the names of the interviewees. It is no coincidence that I am presenting this case nearly 15 years after the completion of the project. Time is an important agent in the field of anthropological studies, which are normally meant to analyse events from our present-day reality. Nevertheless, time-distancing contributes to a more critical view of those events.

With this article, I would like to introduce and recount the complex amalgam of relationships that was generated by the case of the football player. On the one hand, it provoked interactions between state institutions and the non-governmental sector in Bulgaria. Some painful questions were raised regarding society as a whole, while at the same time opportunities to find solutions arose. On the other hand, the incident provoked reactions from various social circles, for example, the footballer’s teammates, local people who knew him, journalists, etc. Studying the degree of sensitivity and commitment of these different actors can help us understand the issues related to discrimination in the Bulgarian society. The fact that the victim of the discriminatory act was a sportsperson prompted a

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(FP7/2007-2013) under the agreement N 217237. Project “The use of racial antidiscrimination laws: Gender and citizenship in a multicultural context”, URL: <https://genderace.ulb.ac.be> (accessed November 1, 2022).

wider public response and helped the incident gain more publicity.

The presented analysis is primarily based on in-depth interviews, conducted during the project in accordance with a previously established methodology. The semi-structured interviews with the football player, who was the victim of discrimination, and the NGO representative were conducted by Iva Kyurkchieva and Maya Koseva in 2009. From a methodological point of view, it is important to note that the interview with the footballer was in the presence and in the office of the NGO representative who facilitated our contact with the respondent. This circumstance might have influenced the opinions he expressed. The representative was very involved both with M.'s case and with various problems that refugees and migrants had been encountering in Bulgaria. She sometimes joined the conversation to clarify the situation and the facts. It can also be noted that at the time of the interview, a decision on the case from the court of last resort, the Supreme Court of Cassation, was outstanding.

For a better application of the comparative anthropological approach, I have also used various information from official governmental institutions websites, as well as from non-governmental organizations websites, and finally, from media publications.

Some research in the anthropology of sport has been devoted to the connections between football fans and racism/xenophobia (for more, see Giulianotti et al. 1994; Back et al. 2001; Krassimeris 2007). The authors mentioned here try to look at this social aspect of the game from different perspectives. The anthropological approach to the issues enables the introduction of the football culture bearers' perspectives and creates the conditions for an in-depth analysis of the relationships between the fans, the policies of the club management and the intervention of the state in these interactions. The fans' perspective is also represented in a study done by Croatian researchers on the topic of sport, discrimination, and violence, using the example of a local fan club (Šantek et al. 2020). In the case of the Nigerian football player M., I have no data that the attack was carried out by football fans or hooligans. This leads me to consider the relationships that are created at different levels between individuals, social organizations, and state institutions in relation to his case.

A study based on interviews with more than 80 refugees, asylum seekers and local community organizations is essential for clarifying the situation in Southeastern Europe, as it presents significant scholarly interpretations from recent years in relation to the ambiguous integrative potential of sport (see Jurković and Spaaij 2022:637–640, and the literature cited therein). The authors contribute to a more critical view of the relationship between integration and football by applying the anthropological approach. My observations in recent years, concerning refugees and asylum seekers in Bulgaria, are similar: Bulgaria is often just a stopover on their way to Western European countries, and some of them participate in local amateur teams situated in the neighbourhoods near their temporary

accommodation facilities. In their interactions with the locals, they encounter both positive attitudes and understanding of their situation, as well as many manifestations of ethnic stereotyping, racial prejudice, and negative attitudes towards the “Other” in general.<sup>2</sup> The case of the professional football player M., who is a legal resident in the country with a work permit, dates back 15 years and creates a premise for academic interpretations of the issue of racial discrimination, which continues to be part of public discussions in Bulgaria.

## THE CASE OF M.

In 2007, M. who was a football player in the town of Svoge, 42 km from Sofia, was attacked and severely beaten in the centre of Sofia by a group of youths identifying themselves as skinheads. The connection between skinheads and racism has been widely discussed in social sciences (for more see Borgeson and Valeri 2017). In the case of the Nigerian football player M., I have no data suggesting that the attack was carried out by football hooligans. According to media reports based on information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, he had multiple stab wounds to his head and chest, which were bleeding profusely. A passerby called an ambulance, which took M. to the Military Medical Academy Hospital in a life-threatening condition. He was operated on immediately, and in two days he came out of the coma.

In his interview,<sup>3</sup> he stated that the violence was unprovoked, it happened only because he was African. The group of young men approached him and knocked him to the ground without saying a word. After the beating, he was in a very serious condition and was placed in the intensive care unit of the hospital. His recovery was long and complicated, he underwent multiple operations. He claimed that even before this incident, he had had problems on the streets, such as being the target of slurs and insults. He had developed a tactic of not paying attention and not responding in such situations: “You can get used to this, when you are not in your own country, this could happen. You are a foreigner, you have to take it.”<sup>4</sup>

The footballer said that he had also encountered instances of humiliating attitudes when visiting various restaurants or cafes, but he had never been denied access. According to him, this was because he went out with friends, other Africans, and people did not dare

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<sup>2</sup> This is data from my interview with S. I. (19 years old, National Sport Academy student). My research on the matter is yet to be completed.

<sup>3</sup> The interview was conducted in 2009 r. by Iva Kyurkchieva and Maya Koseva.

<sup>4</sup> Respondent's interview, p. 8.

to stop them: “When we are more black people – 3, 4, 6, they can’t do anything. They do try to attack you in the nights. It never happens in the day light, always in nights.”<sup>5</sup>

He believed the assault was racially motivated, but at the same time he tried to forget it, because the experience was too traumatic. During his stay in the hospital, he was contacted by people from the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee. However, he did not trust them. He was convinced that they would not solve his problem: “They came to me in the hospital. Said ‘bla-bla-bla.’ I have a problem before with them. Because I don’t trust them. Because for me, they are not doing what they are supposed to do. They bring more problems to your life. This is what they do.”<sup>6</sup> A certain lack of institutional support for refugees and asylum seekers can also be observed in other countries in Southeast Europe (for more details see Jurković and Spaaij 2022:649–650). Similarly, in Bulgaria there is also a distrust of institutions to resolve issues related to discrimination (Grekova et al. 2010).

Soon after he arrived in Bulgaria, M. contacted the local evangelical church, since he belonged to this denomination. Together with other Christians from Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Republic of South Africa, and the Congo, who were living in Bulgaria, M. attended services in the “Prelom” Christian Centre in Sofia. Church representatives advised him to file a lawsuit, and that is what he did:

“And before she came to me, my church was already telling me (it was the pastor of the church), he already came to me and say ‘we wanna have a case, we can handle it, to sue them.’ I didn’t want anything from them. So it was the idea of my church – E. and the pastor. They actually decided it to go to court. They spoke to me about it and I said, ‘I agree with you because it is good to take the case to court for people to know they are not amnestied from justice.’ So, that is how the case started.”<sup>7</sup>

Because of the lawsuit, the case was widely publicized in the media. Various people started to press him to give more details about his horrid ordeal. It placed a considerable amount of psychological strain on him, since he was often anxious and unable to forget the incident:

“Oh, I don’t like people asking me what happened to me. It was in the past and it was a bad experience and I don’t want to keep this in my memory. Don’t like to talk about this every time. Every second to think about this, it doesn’t feel good. I believe that the only way to continue with life is to

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<sup>5</sup> Respondent’s interview, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Respondent’s interview, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Respondent’s interview, p. 3.

forget. Because more I think about what happened to me more it breaks me down. I want to go back to my life, my career. I don't like to talk about this. And people do ask me what happened, how I survived... I don't want to talk about it because it was really bad experience.”<sup>8</sup>

M. had the constant support of the members of “Prelom” Christian Centre. They covered his lawyer's fees, helped him extend the validity of his documents, assisted him in finding a GP, paid for his medical examinations, organized transport and accommodation, and provided translation services into Bulgarian when it was necessary to communicate with lawyers, the police, doctors and the authorities. Most of the help was through voluntary work and donations. The support he received helped him to overcome the trauma, since he was far from his family, friends, and home country. His belief in God also greatly helped him to forgive the perpetrators of the vicious attack, as he relied on God's mercy and retribution. The doctors who treated him told him that his survival was a miracle. His religion was an important aspect of his life; it gave him mental resilience and contributed to his feeling of gratitude to all the people who sympathized with him. He found strength to continue with his life and career:

“I don't want these things to happen. I don't' want to hate people generally. I have to forgive people because at the same time I am a Christian. So, before, what happened to me, God knew it would happen. So I believe whatever happens in life, God knows about it. He is who really saved my live. Who am I not to forgive? So I do forgive and just continue with my life, continue with my career.”<sup>9</sup>

The case of the football player M. laid bare many problems that still exist in Bulgarian society. On the one hand, the extreme street violence, perpetrated by groups of young people identifying themselves as skinheads, was brought to light. Their aggressive behaviour is directed primarily against the Roma minority (see Grekova et al. 2010:95–97). In this case, their attack against a foreigner had the same obvious racial footing. On the other hand, the events provoked a reaction from state institutions, non-governmental organizations and various individuals and communities. The relations between them, which came forth in response to this case, turned out to be an important basis for further anthropological analysis of the degree of sensitivity and readiness of society to stand against unequal treatment.

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<sup>8</sup> Respondent's interview, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Respondent's interview, p. 1.

## INTERACTIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT ACTORS

The case of M. provoked many reactions at different levels. It created a basis for various interactions between official government institutions and non-governmental organizations. According to the football player, the moral, psychological, and financial support from the people of his church was essential for his decision to turn to the judicial authorities. The people from the "Prelom" Christian Centre hired a lawyer and established a non-governmental organization called Civil Initiative "Justice 21" to support M. and other people who could find themselves in a similar situation. They made an effort to publicize the case and to set a precedent for similar cases.

A respondent from the church, who was involved in M.'s case and an active participant in the non-governmental organization attached to the church, had witnessed other discriminatory actions against foreigners in Bulgaria, for which he claimed the victims were afraid to file complaints due to a lack of trust in the system. With M.'s lawsuit, the representatives of "Justice 21" wanted to demonstrate that foreign citizens (migrants and refugees) in Bulgaria can protect their rights. According to the respondent,<sup>10</sup> many of the employees in state institutions were not sufficiently committed to this kind of cases involving foreigners.

During the period when the interview was conducted, representatives of the NGO created in light of this incident were waiting for the case to pass at the last instance and were considering filing a complaint with the Commission for Protection against Discrimination.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, they were aware that this institution could only provide psychological consolation and moral support:

"We will file a complaint with only one goal – moral satisfaction, because they (the Commission) do not have judicial power. They can only recommend, so how does that matter? Even if there is a fine, it is not paid to the plaintiff, like in a civil action, but instead goes to the state."<sup>12</sup>

Other people, who have suffered from discriminatory actions but with fewer or less

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<sup>10</sup> The interview was conducted by Iva Kyurkchieva and Maya Koseva.

<sup>11</sup> The Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD, established in 2005) is a state administrative institution. The procedure does not include any fees and is quickly resolved. The cases are investigated by CPD commissioners, and there is also a public hearing. The decisions of the Commission are subject to appeal within 14 days before the Supreme Administrative Court under the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Code. The Commission review the cases in specialized panels (for more, see Grekova et al. 2010:108).

<sup>12</sup> Respondent's interview, p. 10.

severe consequences, have filed complaints mainly with this Commission (for more on this, see Grekova et al. 2010:134–137).

At the time of the interview, the decision of the Supreme Court of Cassation was outstanding and the football player hoped that his legal action would end in his favour. This would serve as a positive signal and demonstrate that the system was working. During our conversation, he expressed satisfaction with the procedure and with the decisions made so far. He expected a positive decision at the last instance as well. The indictment was for attempted murder with extreme cruelty and in a way that was painful for the victim. At the first two instances – the Sofia City Court in October 2008 and the Sofia Court of Appeal in April 2009 – the decision was in favour of the respondent. The perpetrator was sentenced to five years of imprisonment and was obliged to (partially) cover the costs of the legal case and the civil claim filed against him for the non-pecuniary damage. News agencies in Bulgaria emphasized that for the first time a criminal case was finalized in the Sofia City Court as a result of an act of violence against a black foreigner, and that the conviction was upheld by the Court of Appeal.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that news outlets described the incident as a “racist attack on a football player”.<sup>14</sup> The last instance was the Supreme Court of Cassation, where the sentence was also upheld in December 2009.

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHK) was also involved in the case. In a special declaration on their website, it was pointed out that the decision of October 31th, 2008 was a precedent in Bulgarian criminal justice, because the Sofia City Court considered racial hatred as a motive for committing a serious crime - attempted murder, for the first time. According to representatives of BHK and other NGOs in Bulgaria, this was a watershed moment, because until that point, the judicial practice had not considered a racist motive as an aggravating circumstance. This was also confirmed by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). At the time, the Penal Code did not include racial hatred as a circumstance providing for the imposition of a more severe punishment. The prosecution referred to the perpetrator’s “beliefs” to emphasize that racial hatred dictated his intent to cause the victim suffering and painful death. The BHK believed this line of the prosecution deserved admiration (Ovcharov<sup>15</sup> 2008). It must be noted that after about two years, changes to the Penal Code were introduced and promulgated in the State

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<sup>13</sup> Blitz newspaper, April 14, 2009, URL: [https://blitz.bg/sport/bg-futbol/prebit-nigeriets-ot-sportist-svoje-specheli-novo-delo\\_28809.html](https://blitz.bg/sport/bg-futbol/prebit-nigeriets-ot-sportist-svoje-specheli-novo-delo_28809.html) (accessed April 20, 2023).

<sup>14</sup> BTV News, October 28, 2009, URL: [https://btvnovinite.bg/143736-Aleksandar\\_Ginchev\\_objalva\\_prisadata\\_si\\_za\\_rasistko\\_napadenie\\_nad\\_futbolist.html](https://btvnovinite.bg/143736-Aleksandar_Ginchev_objalva_prisadata_si_za_rasistko_napadenie_nad_futbolist.html) (accessed April 20, 2023); 24 Hours newspaper, October 28, 2009, URL: <https://www.24chasa.bg/sport/article/265> (accessed November 1, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> Svilen Ovcharov, a lawyer, wrote the article “The footballer’s colour”.



Gazette. Since May 2011, in chapter 2, "Crimes against persons", the sections "Murder" and "Causing bodily harm" were amended to include the provision that there are acts committed "with hooligan, racist or xenophobic motives".<sup>16</sup>

The football player found himself at the centre of many stakeholders' interactions. As I have already noted, the "Prelom" Christian Centre started the Civil Initiative "Justice" 21, which was registered as a non-governmental organization. Its aim was to draw the attention of the general public to some issues regarding the attitudes to people of colour, migrants and foreigners in general, and to initiate a discussion on these matters. They hoped that the response to the successful actions in defence of M.'s rights would lead to a change in the perception of discriminatory acts in our country and would lead to corresponding changes in the legislation. The goal was to secure justice for people and communities who face racism, xenophobia, and persecution on racial, ethnic, and religious grounds.

From 2007 on, people from "Justice 21" started to visit the "Special Home for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners" on a monthly basis with the aim to offer humanitarian aid and moral support. The coordinator and main driving force behind this initiative was E.D., with whom we conducted an interview. She was dedicated to finding solutions to various problems faced by refugees and immigrants in Bulgaria. At the time, she was engaged in creating an integration centre in Sofia, whose purpose was going to be helping refugees and immigrants by providing translation or securing social mediators to assist their interactions with various authorities and institutions. She emphasized that their efforts were "more focused on foreigners of colour, towards whom Bulgarians are clearly intolerant".<sup>17</sup>

E.D. shared that there was another man in their church, an Ethiopian, who had been a victim of street violence.<sup>18</sup> According to her, it was of crucial importance that a finalized court case, articulating that the convicted perpetrator's motive was racial hatred, caused such a public response. In her opinion, it was an important signal, especially for young people, that such deeds would not go unpunished. She believed that the judicial panel was extremely impartial and objective towards both sides. The case received extensive media coverage and various radio and television channels discussed it. The fact that the victim was a football player sparked additional interest in the case, as the story appeared in sports pages and programmes.

The footballer found support among foreigners living in Bulgaria. During his stay

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<sup>16</sup> URL: <https://justice.government.bg/home/normdoc/1589654529> (accessed April 20, 2023).

<sup>17</sup> Interview with E. D., p. 19. The interview was conducted by Iva Kyurkchieva and Maya Koseva.

<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, I have not been able to find additional data on this case.

in hospital, the sports press reported a visit from a colleague from Nigeria, who was also a footballer in a provincial team. He shared: "M. needs me...I hope he will recover soon." (Kyuchukov 2007). Right after M.'s was discharged from hospital, a consul at the embassy of the Republic of South Africa took him into her home for about a month to help him recover and overcome his shock. M. was also apprehensive about another possible attack.

At the same time, the footballer received support from his Bulgarian teammates and from the people of Svoge. "Justice 21" efforts were assisted by the coach of the Svoge team. The empathy shown by his teammates and the people of the town was appreciated by M. and made him feel more comfortable during this ordeal. The team collected donations for him, and in 2007, at the end of the season, he was invited to attend the medal ceremony: "there was a medal for him too... It was a very kind gesture."<sup>19</sup> M. felt that there was genuine moral support and a willingness to help him. In media publications, it was noted that at the end of the season, the injured football player was symbolically welcomed on the field (Dimitrov 2007). The mayor of Svoge and veterans of the football team issued a statement in which they condemned racial hatred, adding that "in the history of our football club, there was not a single case of such cruel treatment against a player"<sup>20</sup> The regional governor also publicly condemned the inhumane display of racism.

In the interview, M. emphasized the support he received from the "Prelom" Christian Centre and from the NGO "Justice 21", and in particular the assistance from the representative of both organizations, the woman who put us in contact with him. She showed great commitment to the respondent's case. It may be that the gratitude he expressed during the interview was partially due to the fact that she was present at the conversation, because it took place in her office. She joined the conversation to clarify the situation and the facts. At the time of the interview, a decision on the case from the Supreme Court of Cassation was outstanding. It was essential for M. that people from the church helped him every day, even while he was in intensive care:

"People from the church were real friends – wonderful people. Even my mother and father, my brother, my relatives didn't do more than they did for me... And they were wonderful about the case. Especially E. – she worked very hard about this case."<sup>21</sup>

The football player was also glad with how other actors tried to help him in his ordeal; for example, he was thankful to his lawyer for her hard work and for the fact that

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with E. D., p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with E. D., p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Respondent's interview, p. 3–4.

she supported him not only professionally but also morally: "...she was really wonderful about the case. And about myself, how do I feel."<sup>22</sup> The judge and other people involved in the trial showed a good professional and personal attitude in regard to his case. According to the woman from the Civic Initiative "Justice 21", it was important to work towards improving the attitude of employees in various state institutions. She urged government officials to treat the problems of migrants and refugees with more "respect of them as persons and more understanding of their predicaments." She was convinced that Bulgarian society should strive for a more tolerant attitude towards people from other races, and that, with this aim in view, it was particularly important to implement various educational initiatives.

The interactions between the different actors in M.'s case serve as an important indicator of the level of maturity in civil society and the ability to show empathy on an individual level. They illustrate the readiness of the public to tackle important issues related to discrimination. The case triggered actions on the side of state authorities, as well as non-governmental organizations.

## CONCLUSION

At the time of our research, the main international and European legal instruments aimed at countering discrimination had come into force in Bulgaria. Without doubt, they represent a solid basis for fighting discrimination. Nevertheless, it seems that they are not enough and cannot work on their own, because the fight against discrimination is manifested mainly at the individual level, through the actions of individuals. Another key player in the field of protection against discriminatory actions are some non-governmental organizations, which work to increase understanding and to encourage practices regarding the equal treatment.

Nowadays, the important steps in the normative regulations of issues related to discrimination have already been taken, both at the state level and in the non-governmental sector. Unfortunately, in the last 15 years, an active public debate on the problems of discrimination against foreigners of colour has not taken place since refugees and immigrants are a relatively new problem for the country (Mancheva and Troeva 2011:44–67; Kamenova 2005:74–88; Krasteva 2005:7–18, 2006). The institutions that work on their admission, for humanitarian aid and legal assistance, as well as for their integration, have already been established, but they work relatively slowly and inefficiently. At the same

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<sup>22</sup> Respondent's interview, p. 4.

time, various associations, civil initiatives, and voluntary organizations are more proactive and more efficient. This is especially clear in the current situation, with the many refugees from Ukraine in Bulgaria. It is mostly voluntary organizations and some non-governmental organizations that are actively involved and adequate to facilitate the processes of their accommodation and adaptation.

The present study illustrates how the interactions in this case helped in formulating important questions, related to the protection against discrimination in the practices of society. Sport turned out to be an essential factor for the popularization of this particular case. The articles in sports newspapers and websites and the great public interest in the case were spurred by the fact that the victim was a football player. Thus, the most popular sport in the world became an important agent in resolving an issue related to unequal treatment. The popularity this sport enjoys indirectly influenced the engagement of the non-governmental sector, as one of the organizations that functions to this day was created in connection with M.'s case. Individuals, as well as different communities, were also involved and supported the victim in different ways. Compatriots and other foreigners, his teammates from Svoge, representatives of the evangelical church to which he belonged, all of them participated in the many initiatives in his support.

Another point worth mentioning is that the court procedure achieved its objectives, as the case was adjudged in favour of the plaintiff. The position of the prosecution that the actions which threatened M.'s life were racially motivated was articulated and accepted in court. This contributed to the claim being resolved in favour of the injured football player. All in all, the case demonstrated how sport can be an important driver in the development of attitudes and sensitivity in regard to discriminatory practices. Moreover, the trial became a cause for openly raising unresolved public issues, while at the same time it opened a path towards looking at ways of gradually resolving them.

Two years after the case was adjudged in the court of last instance, the State Gazette published an amendment to the Penal Code where the definition "committed with hooligan, racist or xenophobic motives" was added to the crimes against the person, such as murder and causing bodily harm. This case clearly demonstrates how sport can induce positive changes in society, encourage the discussion of socially sensitive topics, and help solve vital issues. The fact that the victim was a football player contributed to the publicity of the case and helped in resolving it; however, it cannot be concluded that racial hatred in Bulgaria has been overcome. To this day, the issue of racial discrimination continues to be relevant in Bulgarian society. It is unlikely that one such case can change attitudes in society, but it is a step towards bringing the issue to the centre of public discourse, which could lead to important legal and institutional changes.

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## Nogomet i diskriminacija – studija slučaja iz Bugarske

*Iva Kyurkchieva*

Cilj je ovoga istraživanja upoznati znanstvenu zajednicu s kompleksnim spojem odnosa koji su proizašli iz slučaja nogometaša iz Nigerije koji se natjecao za bugarsku lokalnu momčad. On je napadnut i brutalno pretučen od skupine *skinheada* u središtu Sofije 2007. godine. Događaji su potaknuli kontakte između službenih državnih tijela, nevladinoga sektora i različitih predstavnika bugarskoga društva. Ova situacija stvara uvjete za postavljanje bolnoga pitanja pred društvo te pruža priliku za neka rješenja. Istraživanje stupnja osjetljivosti i predanosti navedenih sudionika može pomoći u razumijevanju pitanja vezanih uz diskriminaciju u bugarskom društvu. Moje istraživanje temelji se, prije svega, na dubinskim intervjuima. Također sam se koristila različitim pisanim podacima sa službenih mrežnih stranica državnih i nevladinih institucija te medijskih publikacija kako bih primijenila komparativni antropološki pristup.

Ključne riječi: *diskriminacija, sport, nogomet*



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