

## Open Letter to Prime Minister Zoran Zaev

My name is Vasilios Tsartsanis, I was born at Pontoeraklia and live in Polykastro (Kilkis), right next to the borders of our two countries.

I am and always has been your neighbor.

I am not a civil servant, nor a politician, I consider myself a peaceful activist who tries to alleviate human pain whenever possible.

I remember our border since my childhood, when as a kid I was riding my bicycle to the border line. At that time, your country was still part of "Yugoslavia".

In the last few years, since 2014, I have actively witnessed the refugee problem exploding in Eidomeni. I have witnessed the pain, despair and misery of tenths of thousands of refugees trying to go to Northern Europe.

And I have actively helped them all these years, not only because my grandparents also were refugees (from Turkey), but most and for all because they are, just like us, human beings.

For me it did not make – and still does not – make any difference whether someone is classified as a "refugee" from Syria or a "migrant" from Afghanistan. For me they are all human beings.

There was a time when the borders between our two countries had to be closed, because of the overcrowded Eidomeni, the violence that erupted and in order to stop organized crime exploiting all these poor souls.

The EU and many organizations and NGO's did not stand up to the occasion. The only possible way to try to give solution to some of the emerging severe problems of Eidomeni was to meet our neighbors.

It was at this point that I met Chief Leader of Special Forces of your country **Mr. Mitko Peshov**.

Necessity was the reason that urged us to meet and be in contact as there seemed to be lack of communication between our two countries.

Necessity was the leading force that urged us to encounter incidents of extreme violence some nights close to the border.

But there was no necessity for me to immediately recognize in the face of Mr. Peshov a true human being, an officer of true humanity and compassion for all the refugees.



During the time he served at our border line, he has asked for my help to try and pacify the desperate refugees and I have asked for his help in order for his men not to react out of proportion to verbal and other attacks they received from the hungry and cold refugees.

On several occasions I had the chance to observe Mr. Peshov's calmness and determination in front of thousand screaming and angry refugees by the border line. He made sure that the situation did not escalate, that no one got hurt, that no one got inhuman treatment. He was always able to see clearly and to listen to what his colleagues and the refugees had to say to him. He treated everybody in respect.

At all times he proved to be a humble and able civil servant, a person with dignity and respect for others and ready to serve law and order.

Mr. Peshov was imprisoned, due to the occurrence of violent incidents in your Parliament. I asked my friends in Skopje if he did something illegal. They answered negatively. He was off duty that day. He was not even in the city of Skopje.

I want to believe that he is not guilty. And I stress that by no means I want to interfere in the procedure of Law and Justice as I fully respect both.

But having met this man, having joined forces with him, having observed him on duty, either on a cold night or hot day, having seen his human quality, I find very difficult to believe what he is accused of.

Dear Prime Minister, I urge you to look upon his case and make sure Mr. Mitko Peshov receives fair Justice, considering his effort for humanity on migration crises.

Sincerely

Vasiljos Tsartsanis

