

North Macedonia-bound bus crashes on Struma motorway, killing 46 people



46 people have died in a [road accident on Struma motorway](#). A passenger bus with North Macedonian plates travelling from Turkey to North Macedonia crashed and caught fire shortly before 3 am on November 23. 7 passengers leaped from the burning bus. They were taken to Pirogov Hospital for Emergency Medicine with non-life threatening injuries. 52 people traveled on board the bus, including 51 nationals of North Macedonia and one Belgian citizen. Most victims are residents of Skopje. Many young people, including 12 children, are among the victims.

Relatives and friends of passengers in the bus that crashed on the Struma highway have gathered in front of Pirogov Hospital in Sofia. Some of them shared that they found out about the incident from the media and spontaneously departed for Bulgaria hoping of getting more information about their relatives. They are calling for more information from the Embassy of North Macedonia on the actions that will be taken from now on. Shaban Rashitovski is among those who arrived to Sofia. Four of the victims are his neighbors. As soon as he found out about the tragedy, he went to Sofia. "I have come to help as much as I can," he told BNR reporters.

In Sofia, citizens laid flowers and lit candles in front of the Embassy of the Republic of North Macedonia as a sign of sympathy for the victims. Tomorrow, November 24, a Day of National Mourning will be declared, Deputy Prime Minister Galab Donev announced in Varna, BNR's correspondent Daniela Stoynova reported.

Bulgaria's caretaker Premier Stefan Yanev and this country's caretaker Minister of Interior Boyko Rashkov called the bus crash a tragedy. This has been the worst road accident in Bulgaria with the highest number of victims.

The bus was travelling together with three other buses of the same travel company, and was last in the motorcade. The first three buses crossed the border checkpoint Gyueshevo-Deve Bair around 5 am today.

The responsible institutions are yet to establish the cause of the tragic accident. North Macedonia's Premier Zoran Zaev arrived urgently in Sofia. He spoke with one of the survivors who said there was a blast onboard the bus.

Bulgarian Prime Minister Stefan Yanev rejected the possibility that the road surface was the cause of the serious accident. At a press conference with the Prime Minister of North Macedonia Zoran Zaev, Yanev said: "I would not accept speculations that the section of the highway, potholes or bumps were the cause of the accident."

The tachograph recording the movement of the bus has burned, the head of the Executive Agency "Automobile Administration" Boyko Ranovski has told BNR. The agency's cameras did not register any violations of the rules or speeding of the bus. All mandatory stops for rest had also been observed," Ranovski added.

Vasko Pirgov, who witnessed the tragic accident on Struma motorway, told the BNR that the four buses had a twenty-minute break before the accident. "I don't think that the driver fell asleep. The road was wet. In my view, the driver got confused. A cut on the front right tire caused an explosion and then the accident happened. The sparks came from the damaged traffic barrier. The front side of the bus caught fire first", Vasko Pirgov went on to say.