

NORSK GROTTFORBUND
NORWEGIAN SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Postbox 1301
N-8602 MO
NORWAY

Medlem av: **UIS, Union Internationale de Spéléologie**
attaché à l'UNESCO, cat. B

Medlem av: **FORF, Frivillige Organisasjoners**
Redningsfaglige Forum

Bankkonto 4516.12.77650

Org.nr. 983 664 423

<http://www.speleo.no/>

ngf@speleo.no



HE Ms. Nona Karadjova
The Minister
Ministry of Environment and Water
22 Maria Luiza Blvd.
1000 Sofia
BULGARIA
email: nnps@moew.government.bg

Jnr: Devetashkata-2011-1/AW Date: 26.12.2011

Serious disturbance and destruction at Devetashkata Cave caused by a movie production

My name is Anders Westlund. I am vice-president of The Norwegian Speleological Society (NGF, www.speleo.no). I am also international contact and I am responsible for our work of nature conservation.

§3 AIMS in our statutes says:

NGF aims are:

- *Safe caving.*

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- *Cave conservation.*

§4 CAVING ETHICS in our statutes says:

NGF and the members of NGF are committed to:

- *Protect all caves from non-environmental visits, and to limit visits to vulnerable caves.*

- *Obey the laws of protected caves. These laws are to be guidelines in all caves, whether they are protected or not.*

The Norwegian Speleological Society is very concerned about the information we have received about the extensive activities related to the production of the movie *Expendables 2* at Devetashkata Cave in Bulgaria. We would like to bring to your attention that this cave is one of the three most important and biggest hibernation sites in Europe, in particular for several highly vulnerable bat species. The reports NGF has received indicate serious disturbance to the bats in the cave, so they wake up from their hibernation and start flying around, which is very dangerous for them at this time of the year.

After a visit of a bat team 16.11.2011, a noteworthy decline of the *Miniopterus* colony was observed. From about 35.000 bats the last 5 winters, today there are only 8.000 to 9.000 bats left in the cave.

The Norwegian Speleological Society therefore respectfully request Your Excellency to provide official information on:

1. The present number of bats in Devetashkata Cave after the launch of the production *Expendables 2*.
2. What measures have been recommended by the Regional Inspectorate of Environment and how they were taken into account during the construction?

3. What will be the future of the heavy metal bridge, which will allow access of thousands of tourists and motor vehicles?
4. Who will take care of the further management of Devetashkata Cave and how will its international importance to bats be kept and observed?

With our deepest respect, we kindly request Your Excellencys intervention in order to take appropriate conservation measures of Devetashkata Cave, to restrict the future access to the cave, allowing only research and exploration activities. A management plan including a risk assessment should also be prepared in order to restore the cave environment.

On behalf of The Norwegian Speleological Society

Anders Westlund
Vice-President