

**AUGUST 2000 ACTIVITY REPORT  
OF THE GHM ROMA OFFICE**

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**1. Racial Discrimination and Violence Against Roma in Greece. Statement submitted for consideration by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its 57<sup>th</sup> Session, on the occasion of its Thematic Discussion on Roma, August 15-16, 2000**

**GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR (GHM)  
MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP – GREECE (MRG – G)**

**Address:** P.O. Box 60820, 15304 Glyka Nera

**Telephone:** (+30-1) 347.22.59. **Fax:** (+30-1) 601.87.60.

**e-mail:** [office@greekhelsinki.gr](mailto:office@greekhelsinki.gr) **website:** <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr>

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**RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST ROMA IN GREECE**

**Statement submitted for consideration by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its 57<sup>th</sup> Session, on the occasion of its Thematic Discussion on Roma, August 15-16, 2000**

July 31, 2000

**Executive Summary**

We are aware of the efforts undertaken by the Greek government to comply with its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (the “Convention”). To date, however, these measures are insufficient to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention, particularly in regard to Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, and with respect to the Roma population.

*Article 2:* Discrimination and violence against Roma are widespread in Greece. Legal protection against discrimination and racially motivated violence is rather inadequate. However, more acute problem is the failure to ensure the effective implementation of existing laws.

*Article 3:* As in several other countries in Europe, governmental policies towards Roma, most notably in the fields of housing and education but also in other areas, have proven to this date ineffective to reverse racial segregation. No other segment of the Greek population is subjected to the same conditions of living as the Roma.

*Article 4:* Some public officials in Greece have made racist speech or have taken racist decisions targeting Roma, thereby encouraging racism rather than combating it in the society they govern. No one has been sanctioned or punished for such statements.

*Article 5:* The Greek government has failed to ensure Roma (as well as other minorities or migrant group) equal protection of the law. Roma suffer widespread discrimination in the justice system, and are the victims of violence at the hands of law enforcement authorities. In addition, Roma are commonly discriminated against with respect to a broad range of rights, like employment, housing, health care, education, and access to public goods and services.

*Article 6:* Widespread breaches of the Convention perpetrated against Roma in Greece, are facilitated by pervasive impunity. Protection of the Roma is lacking or ineffective, and remedies non-existent or inadequate.

*Article 7:* Promotion of racial tolerance, through educational and media campaigns to familiarize the public with the Convention and its standards, is entirely absent in Greece.

Two inter-governmental agencies have released in recent months reports that come to similar conclusions about the problems of racism in Greece in general or specifically towards the Roma: the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (**Report on the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area**, April 2000) and the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, (**Second Report on Greece**, adopted on 10 December 1999, Strasbourg, June 2000). Specific excerpts from these reports are quoted below.

On 23 July 2000, on the occasion of the commemoration of Greece's 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of democracy, our organizations issued a public statement recalling that

*"We wish to point out that the quality of democracy is judged by how it treats the weakest groups of its population. Among Greek citizens, there are more than 100,000 Roma (Gypsies) who live in destitute settlements, 'enjoying the democratic state of law' as permanent victims of institutionalized racism by state agencies. Not only do the perpetrators usually go unpunished, but also they are indirectly encouraged by governmental statements that downplay, if not arrogantly negate, the undisputed violations of Roma rights."*

We then cited the following **indicative (but not exhaustive) list** of violations of Roma rights, noting that, for those cases referred to the Ombudsman, the latter had confirmed the charges made by the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). These events, covering the period 1996-2000, took the form of a "tally" of the supposed implementation of the governmental "Policy Framework on Greek Gypsies," launched in July 1996. The detailed report below provides additional information on these cases.

**A. Racist Decisions by Municipal Councils Explicitly Referring to Roma Evictions (3)**

*Localities:* **Rio** (1999), **Ano Kios**, Argolida (2000) and **Ano Tiryntha**, Argolida (2000)

**B. Illegal Evictions With No Resettlement Provisions (7)**

*Localities:* **Evosmos**, Salonica (1998), **Ano Liosia**, **Attica** (1997, 1999), **Anatoli**, Ioannina (1999), **Makryianni**, Patras (1997), **Phoinikas**, Salonica (1997) and **Trikala**, Pyrgos (1997).

**C. Attempted Evictions Averted By Protest (10)**

*Localities:* **Halandri** (1999), **Aspropyrgos** (Nea Zoi 1999, Homateri 2000), **Aghia Paraskevi**, **Attica** (1997), **Trikala** (Kokkinos Pyrgos, 1998), **Larissa** (Neapoli, 1998), **Nea Alikarnassos**, **Crete** (1999), **Spata** (1997), **Kalamata** (1997) and **Phoinikas**, **Salonica** (2000).

**D. Destitute Settlements (15)**

*Localities:* **Riganokampos/Kato Souli** Patras, **Damaria** Lamia, **Alan Koyu** (Andrianoupoleos) Komotini, **Halastra** Salonica, **Nea Zoi** and **Homateri** Aspropyrgos, **Nea Tiryntha** Argolida, **Gallikos River** Salonica, District Hospital and Kato Kastritsi **Rio** Achaia, **Sageika** Achaia, **Aetoliko** Aetoloakarnania. Supposed "model organized settlements" [according to the government, "appalling

models” according to NGOs] with substandard infrastructure: **Menemeni** Salonica, **Makryianni** Patras.

#### **E. Police Raids With No Public Prosecutor Present**

*Localities:* **Gallikos River** Salonica (2000), **Aspropyrgos** Attika (2000).

#### **F. Police Violence (Verbal to Fatal) Against the Roma**

*Death of Individuals:* **A. Mouratis** (Livadia 1996) and **A. Celal** (Partheni Salonica, 1998).

*From Degrading Treatment to Torture of Individuals:* **L. Bekos** – **E. Kotropoulos** (Messolonghi 1998), **N. Katsaris** (Nafplio, 1999), **Z. Cemiloglu**, **Y. Cemiloglu**, and **Y. Alioglu** (Xanthi, 1998).

#### **G. Bureaucratic Harassment**

No response to naturalization application made in 1990 by the stateless **Sezgin Durgut** (Komotini). His application for a stateless identity document has been repeatedly refused since 1998. Since 1999, the Komotini Hospital refuses to provide his wife **Songiul Durgut** with an official answer as to why her uterus was removed during a miscarriage procedure.

**Specific detailed information available at:** <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr>

### **PROFILE OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**Greek Helsinki Monitor** (GHM), since 1993, is the Greek member of the **International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights** (IHF). In 1998, GHM became a member of the **International Freedom of Expression Exchange** (IFEX); and in 2000 of the **Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network** (EMHRN). GHM monitors, publishes and lobbies on human rights issues in Greece and, occasionally, in the Balkans. It has participated and often coordinated the monitoring of Greek and Balkan media for stereotypes and hate speech. It has co-published: **“Hate Speech” in the Balkans** (ETEPE, 1998) and **Greece Against its Macedonian Minority: the Rainbow Trial** (ETEPE, 1998). Since 1997, in cooperation with the **European Roma Rights Center**, it runs a **Roma Office** for Greece.

**Minority Rights Group - Greece** (MRG-G) was created as the Greek affiliate of **Minority Rights Group International** in 1992. MRG-G focused mostly on the studies of minorities, in Greece and in the Balkans. It has prepared detailed reports on ethnonational, ethnolinguistic, religious and immigrant communities, in Greece; and on the Greek minorities in Albania and Turkey. In 1998, MRG-G, along with GHM initiated the **Center of Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe – Southeast Europe** (CEDIME-SE) with a web site covering human rights issues and comprehensive and comparable presentations of all minorities in the region.

**Address:** P.O. Box 60820, Glyka Nera 15304, Greece.

**Tel.** 30-1-3472259; **fax** : 30-1-6018760;

**e-mail** : [office@greekhelsinki.gr](mailto:office@greekhelsinki.gr)

#### **Internet Addresses:**

**Balkan Human Rights Web Pages:** <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr>

**The Balkan Human Rights List:** <http://www.egroups.com/group/balkanhr>

**The Greek Human Rights List:** <http://www.egroups.com/group/greekhr>

**Dikaiomatika!** [monthly human rights review in Greek]: <http://www.egroups.com/group/dikaiomatika>

**Alternative Information Network (AIM) - Athens** [articles in Greek]:

<http://www.egroups.com/group/aimgreek>

**GHM and MRG-G, through CEDIME-SE, co-founded, in May 2000, the Consortium of Minority Resources (COMIR).** Other founding members were **Balkan Academic News (BAN)**, **Constitutional and Legal Policy Institute (COLPI)**, **European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)**, **European Roma Rights Center**, **The Forum Institute**, **Human Rights Watch**, **International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights**, **LGI Managing Multiethnic Communities Project**, **MINELRES Project**, **Minority Rights Group International**. COMIR web site:<http://www.osi.hu/lgi/comir>.

**GHM Board:** Dimitris Angelidis, Panayote Dimitras, Dionysis Gousetis, Dimitrina Petrova, Christina Rougheri, Gregory Vallianatos.

**MRG-G Executive Committee:** Mehmet Dukkanci, Nafsika Papanikolatos, Christina Rougheri.

**International Advisory Committee:** Savvas Agouridis, Teuta Arifi, Ivo Banac, Vladimir Bilandzic, Marcel Courthiade, Loring Danforth, Fernand de Varennes, Eran Fraenkel, Henri Giordan, Krassimir Kanev, Will Kymlicka, Remzi Lani, Theodore S. Orlin, Dimitrina Petrova, Alan Phillips, Aaron Rhodes, Patrick Thornberry, Stefan Troebst, Boris Tsilevich, Tibor Varady.

## Overview

In September 1999, during the **OSCE Implementation Review Meeting** in Vienna, the official Greek delegation, responding once again to a related presentation by NGOs, described and explained the Roma situation in Greece with remarkable candor and accuracy (Permanent Mission of Greece to the OSCE, **Statement made by the Greek Delegation on Roma and Sinti**, Vienna, 22 September 1999):

*“Last year, when I spoke on the subject of Roma and Sinti at the Warsaw Human-Dimension Implementation Review Meeting, I made two main points: (a) that the situation of the Roma in Greece is, in the eyes of the Greek Government, unsatisfactory and indeed unacceptable, and (b) that the Greek Government is determined to do everything in its power to remedy the situation.*

*I wish to assure this forum, and in particular those with more direct interest in the matter, that the determination of the Government of Greece has not changed. As for the first point mentioned above, namely, the real situation of the Roma in Greece, I wish I were in a position to say that it has changed dramatically for the better (...).*

*As I said earlier, the Government’s efforts proceed at a slower pace than we would have liked and encounter various impediments. I have already mentioned bureaucratic sluggishness as one of the latter. Another important, but not unexpected, reason for the slow progress achieved is the fact that the Government programs must, at all stages, be inclusive of those concerned, i.e., the Roma themselves, and not be carried out in their absence. Consensus is therefore vital; and building it -a time consuming exercise under all circumstances- is particularly arduous when dealing with a social group composed of smaller groups, scattered around the country, which do not easily speak in one voice.*

*Another serious obstacle to the Government efforts is prejudice toward the Gypsies, which, bred over many long years, is still widespread among large segments of the population and is hard to eradicate. Such prejudice, which finds expression in everyday life, takes on more alarming and dangerous character when it is displayed by police officers or by elected officials at the local administration level. We regret -and condemn- the incidents of racist remarks by elected officials and violent acts by police officers mentioned earlier by the representatives of two Greek NGOs.”*

Unfortunately, the above text only reflects the sincere will of a few middle-level staff from the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** and the **Prime Minister’s Office for Quality of Life**. By themselves, they can do little to help solve the problems. As it is stated in the recent OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, **Report on the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area**, *“the experience of Roma settlements in Greece highlights a problem that has salience in many countries. The effectiveness of any policy vis-à-vis Roma can turn upon the cooperation of multiple layers of government. But responsibility for inadequate policy implementation cannot be laid solely at the doorstep of local authorities. In some countries that have undertaken initiatives to develop comprehensive Roma policies, national officials appointed to implement those policies operate without adequate support at the most senior levels of government. In order to be effective, public servants require the support of national leaders and local officials”* (OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, **Report on the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area**, p: 116-117).

This high-level support is missing in Greece, hence the middle-level officials’ declarations are usually of little value. For example, the manager of the Prime Minister’s Office for Quality of Life Mr. Angelides recently stated that *“before the first autumn rainfalls, all Roma tent-dwellers would have been relocated to prefabricated houses. We have already allocated more than 500 of them”* (daily

“**Eleftherotypia**”, 24/6/00, p. 17). Keeping such a promise is highly unlikely when even the first project of relocation in Gonou, near Salonica, (see below) is overdue already by 18 months.

The competent Ministries, first and foremost among them the Ministry of Interior and Public Administration, continue to give the impression that they lack the necessary will for the implementation of the declared policy as well as of the respect for Roma rights. As the effort of the Ministry has been so far solely confined to the unscrutinized commissioning of programs and the giving away of subsidies of a total worth of several billion drachmas, it is not surprising that since 1996, all attempts made as part of the government’s Policy Framework for Roma have been abandoned half-way through. According to a lengthy “Implementation Review for 1996-1999” provided by the Ministry of Interior to Progressive Left Coalition MP Maria Damanaki in February 2000, as an answer to the latter’s parliamentary question, it seems that the only part of the program that had been completed in the past three years was a survey of the housing needs of the Roma.

The Ministry’s double standard to the homeless and destitute Roma becomes even more evident when considering its immediate mobilization in September 1999 for the victims of the Athens earthquake. Free space was found instantaneously to locate temporary housing for an earthquake-stricken population larger than the total number of destitute Roma in Greece. Infrastructure works were completed almost overnight and pre-fabricated houses were allocated to all homeless victims. Ironically, there was an abundance of land for earthquake victims in municipalities near Athens, where the scarcity of land had been the primary excuse for the inability to relocate the Roma living there.

On the contrary, when Roma are in question, works are progressing at an extremely slow pace. The former military barrack of Gonou has been selected to become the first Roma self-managed settlement in Greece. The infrastructure works for the settlement, which is expected to accommodate over 2,500 Roma tent-dwellers evicted from Evosmos (Salonica) in August 1998, have not yet been completed. The government had announced that the army would clean up the barracks by November 1998 and the infrastructure works would be completed within three months after that, i.e. by February 1999. In 24 May 1999, the government stated to the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities that the work will be completed by September 1999 (*op.cit.*, p. 115). Today, work is still in progress: the government had announced a 30 July 2000 deadline (**Macedonian Press Agency**, 19/7/2000), which it did not respect either. For almost two years, the Roma of Evosmos have in the meantime been living in the bed of the river Gallikos, in makeshift homes made of wood and plastic, under the threat of floods.

In theory “*government efforts in housing concentrate on finding permanent solutions, through the construction of houses, the allocation of land, and the granting of housing loans, and on creating settlements of a transitional nature until permanent solutions are found*” (Permanent Mission of Greece to the OSCE, *op.cit.*). Yet, up to now there has been no example of a destitute Roma settlement relocated satisfactorily. On the contrary, numerous communities of Roma tent-dwellers were evicted or threatened with eviction, or, worse still, relocated in allegedly “model settlements” which are merely “models of deception of the government” by local authorities in collaboration with other public agencies. In its recent report on Greece, the **European Commission against Racism and Intolerance** (ECRI), makes specific reference to the Roma’s housing problems and destitute living conditions:

*“Roma/Gypsies living in camps often face extremely harsh living conditions. In recent years, including 1999, some municipal authorities have expelled communities of Roma/Gypsies from the camps in which they had lived for many years, in certain cases without providing alternative accommodation. This has sometimes resulted in Roma/Gypsies being repeatedly expelled from each new place they attempted to settle. These expulsions were sometimes accompanied, apparently unhindered by the police, by the destruction and arson of houses, and by threats and humiliating treatment by local authorities and municipal employees. ECRI urges the Greek authorities to devote immediate attention to these problems (...)*

*Roma/Gypsies are also reported to experience discrimination in various areas of public life. They face discrimination when attempting to rent accommodation”* (Council of Europe, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, **Second Report on Greece**, adopted on 10 December 1999, Strasbourg, 27 June 2000, pp. 15-16).

It is also worth mentioning that a great number of evictions have taken place in Greater Athens, that will host the **2004 Olympic Games**. The local authorities almost always decide to evict Roma from a site or to refuse their transferring to another area when there is the -real or alleged- need to build sports facilities. Will the international community and the **International Olympic Committee** tolerate a “cleansing” of Athens similar to that of Mexico in 1968? Even more, where housing is concerned, Roma in Athens -especially those living in its western periphery- -- are being abandoned completely. Greater Athens and vicinity has the largest Roma population in Greece outside Greater Salonica. Yet, in the Minister of Interior’s “Implementation Review for 1996-1999”, no housing projects are mentioned for the Roma residents of the capital. The capital is hosting the Olympic Games and undertaking all the massive construction efforts necessary for the event; but to date it has not provided adequate housing for the approximately 3,000 Roma tent-dwellers of Aspropyrgos and Ano Liosia in the suburbs of Athens. These people live without any infrastructure in the wider area close to a garbage dump. On the contrary, in July 2000, the two municipal authorities started what they called “cleaning operations,” in fact “cleansing” the area from its Roma inhabitants. Roma were evicted and shacks were leveled without any legal decisions: the Ombudsman’s urgent summon of the Aspropyrgos municipality to prove the legality of its action (25/7/2000) was ignored by the latter.

What exemplifies the absence of will of competent authorities to deal with the Roma tent-dwellers in question and with the non-governmental organizations promoting solutions to these Roma’s problems, is the arbitrary decision of the Ministry of Interior to call off -in an anti-democratic fashion- the formation of a **Committee for the Problems of the Roma Tent-Dwellers**. The creation of the committee was decided in mid-June 1999 after a meeting, in that very Ministry, with the parties concerned; it would have been made up of government officials, non-governmental organizations and Roma organizations. Instead, in January 2000, an inter-ministerial body was set up by the government so as to better coordinate its action for Roma. This body was put under the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior. It included only the state-launched Inter-municipal Network ROM and Panhellenic Federation of Greek Roma Associations (two groups the Greek delegations to the OSCE in 1998 and 1999 had held responsible for Greece’s poor achievements regarding Roma’s resettlement). However, it ignored Roma Associations and NGOs active in promoting the tent-dwellers’ rights.

In spring 1999, NGOs in collaboration with the **Coalition** party submitted to the Prime Minister’s Office for Quality of Life a comprehensive draft bill -the end product of their long experience with settlements- for the creation of self-managed Roma settlements meeting all requirements as to improve the living conditions of the Roma and their smooth integration in society. Providing shelter to homeless Greek citizens is a constitutional mandate (article 21, paragraph 4): the state ought to have -but for 25 years has not had- introduced laws to ensure the implementation of this article as well as the implementation of **Article 11(1) of the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**.

*“The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in interpreting Article 11(1) of the ICESCR regarding the right to housing has emphasized in particular that ‘instances of forced eviction are prima facie incompatible with the requirements of the Covenant and can only be justified in the most exceptional circumstances, and in accordance with the relevant principles of international law.’ While not all involuntary evictions violate the ICESCR, they generally are incompatible with the right to adequate housing when individuals are removed against their will from the homes they occupy ‘without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal and other protection.’ The Committee has also admonished that*

*evictions 'should not result in individuals being rendered homeless or vulnerable to the violation of other human rights. Where those affected are unable to provide for themselves, the State Party must take all appropriate measures, to the maximum of its available resources, to ensure that adequate alternative housing, resettlement or access to productive land, as the case may be, is available'” (OSCE, op.cit., p. 114-115).*

At the same time, abuse of violence on Roma by police officers continues: even in cases when policemen have been indicted for homicide or torture, they have not been suspended or even transferred, let alone disciplined by their department or tried in a court of law. Sworn Administrative Investigations and legal proceedings against them advance at a snail's pace. The relevant findings of the ECRI are quite revealing:

*“There have been consistent reports that Roma/Gypsies, Albanians and other immigrants are frequently victims of misbehaviour on the part of the police in Greece. In particular, Roma/Gypsies are often reported to be victims of excessive use of force -in some cases resulting in death- ill treatment and verbal abuse on the part of the police. Discriminatory checks involving members of these groups are widespread. In most cases there is reported to be little investigation of these cases, and little transparency on the results of these investigations. Although most of these incidents do not generally result in a complaint being filed by the victim, when charges have been pressed the victims have reportedly in some cases been subjected to pressure to drop such charges. ECRI stresses the urgent need for the improvement of the response of the internal and external control mechanisms to the complaints of misbehaviour vis-à-vis members of minority groups on the part of the police. In this respect, ECRI notes with interest the recent establishment of a body to examine complaints of the most serious cases of misbehaviour on the part of the police and emphasises the importance of its independence and of its accessibility by members of minority groups” (ECRI, op.cit., p. 13).*

As far as education is concerned, few Roma of compulsory schooling age (between 6 to 15) attend school owing to indifference, if not racist attitude of state officials (municipal counselors, schoolteachers and directors). Even if the claim of the Greek authorities to the ECRI regarding a recent 30% increase in the number of Roma pupils is true, Romani school attendance is still very low, especially when it comes to tent-dwellers. Moreover, the promotion of cultural diversity, despite relevant recommendations by international institutions such as the UN, the Council of Europe and the European Union, is not among the priorities of the Greek educational system, which in essence, remains ethnocentric and assimilationist. The existing Educational Program for Roma, run by the University of Ioannina under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Education, seems to be undermining the importance of the Roma's cultural and linguistic identity, and the program's director has repeatedly publicly criticized multiculturalism (eg. A. Gotovos, “Democracy and Otherness” in **To Vima**, 23/7/2000 Book Review Supplement, pp. 8-9). In that he is in line with the official Greek rejection of the multicultural character of Greek society in the government's answer to ECRI, appended in the latter's report.

*“ECRI considers, however, that there is a serious need to educate the Greek public to the benefits of a multicultural society. (...) Specific courses focusing on issues of tolerance and respect for differences should be offered and teachers should be trained in this area. In addition, in its general policy recommendation N° 1 on combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance, ECRI recommends member States 'to ensure that school-curricula, for example in the field of history teaching, are set up in such a way to enhance the appreciation of cultural diversity'” (ECRI, op.cit., p 9). “The policies of the Greek Government in the fields falling in the purview of the ECRI (...) of course ... do not imply adherence by the Greek Government to the notion of a multicultural character of the Greek society.” (ibid, p. 26).*

Moreover, international and national surveys by the **Doctors of the World** and the **Doctors of the World-Greece** show that the health problems of Roma tent-dwellers in Greece are among the worst in Europe. According to the aforementioned organizations, the living conditions in many of the settlements that will be mentioned hereafter are worse than refugee camps in different areas of Asia and Africa where they have visited. ECRI concurs:

*“Roma/Gypsies are reported to be excluded from many normal citizenship rights and benefits. The integration of Roma/Gypsies in the social security system is low. The vast majority of Roma/Gypsies living in camps are not insured by the public social security system, since they are unable or unwilling to make the required contributions. Like all Greek citizens, indigent Roma/Gypsies are entitled to free health care. However, it is reported that most Roma/Gypsies are not aware of their rights” (ibid, p. 15).*

## **Abandoned or Often Persecuted Destitute Roma Settlements**

### **A. Settlements from where Roma were evicted (5)**

#### **Evosmos (Salonica)**

By a court decision, after an appeal by the local authorities and the owners of the land, in 1997, 3,500 tent-dwellers were ordered to leave an area with zero infrastructure where they had been living for 30 years. After the intervention of non-governmental organizations, the state undertook to transfer them to a properly arranged area at the former military barracks of Gonou and the eviction was postponed. One year later, construction had not begun, while the adjoining municipalities issued a resolution that they would prevent such relocation even if they had to resort to violence; no authority punished them for this illegal and certainly racist action. At the same time, following action taken by the municipality of Evosmos, Roma were threatened with imprisonment, fines, as well as police violence unless they leave. When neighboring municipalities turned them away, they ended up in the dried-up bed of Gallikos river after a month's wandering, in August 1998.

After continuous pressure by NGOs -pressing charges against competent authorities, publicizing the case in Greek and international media, securing repeated parliamentary questions by Coalition MPs- and after the Roma had found themselves in serious danger because of the river floods, the Prefecture of Salonica in cooperation with competent ministries started the works at the Gonou barracks. Nevertheless, the work has been proceeding at a very slow pace and with considerable delay. By May 2000, the barrack was connected to the electricity and water supply but had no sewage system yet. In March and April 2000, because of the upcoming elections, 69 prefabricated houses -originally used for the earthquake victims in Athens- were transferred to the settlement, while the remaining 190 reportedly were on the way. After the parliamentary elections of April 9<sup>th</sup>, construction work was halted. The new deadline for the transfer of Roma to the settlement had been set for 30 July 2000, but it was not met by the authorities. As a reminder, the first deadline for this transfer had been set for February 1999.

This relocation will be the first one ever carried out by a Prefecture in accordance with the draft bill for the creation of self-managed settlements of the Cooperating Organizations, and is implemented under the supervision of the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life in collaboration with the Cooperating Organizations.

In the meantime, on July 6, 2000, around 6 a.m., police raided the settlement by the river Gallikos in search of drugs, weapons and suspects. Approximately one hundred people were brought to the police station. Against some of them, police found pending warrants for unpaid fines for trading or driving without license. Neither weapons nor drugs were found during the investigation. In an unprecedented action, the Prefecture of Salonica denounced the absence of a Public Prosecutor and the racist character

of the police action. Nevertheless, the state Macedonian Press Agency (MPA) covered the incident (6 July) in a way that stigmatized the Roma: it reported falsely that among those taken into custody there were fugitives and suspects of robberies, frauds and other unlawful acts, as well as illegal immigrants. When GHM asked the authorities to investigate and punish both the irregular police raid and the slandering state agency coverage, MPA attributed the initial “exaggerated” information to the police, but did not apologize (10 July). The local association of Roma tent-dwellers, with the help of GHM, filed a report to the Ombudsman denouncing their racist and improper treatment.

#### **Ano Liosia (Attica)**

In October 1996, under the pretext of a search for drugs, police burst into the Roma camp. Rumors about drug trafficking paved the way for the local authorities to evict the Roma in April 1997. 25 out of 70 families -municipal citizens- were transferred to metal prefabricated houses in a near-by area. The rest of the tent-dwellers were given an ultimatum to leave. The new site was quite isolated, lacked infrastructure (the houses were never connected with a water supply or a sewage system) and was fenced with barbed wire. The new camp had been one of the deceptive “models” until December 1999 when it ceased to exist. At that time, history repeated itself; the local authorities split the population into two once more, transferring the municipal citizens (10 out of the 20 families) to prefabricated houses for earthquake victims and “velvety” evicting the rest. Most of them found resort at the garbage dump.

#### **Ioannina (Epiros)**

In August 1999 the local authorities evicted 30 Roma families (both Greek and Albanian) from an area lacking infrastructure (Anatoli), which they had been renting for 7 years. Roma were not serviced with protocols of eviction. The first threats of eviction started in May 1999. After an intervention of the researchers of the University of Ioannina Program for Roma, in which the camp had been included, the authorities withdrew and undertook to look into the possibility of relocation. That promise was never kept.

#### **Phoenikas (Salonica)**

In May 2000, there was an attempt to evict three Roma families and demolish their houses. The latter were accused of trespassing private land and building illegally. Protocols of eviction were serviced to them by a legal functionary at the presence of the police and municipal employees. Following the Roma’s strong reactions, the eviction was postponed. The families in question have been living in the constantly developing region for more than 30 years. The attempted eviction took place even though the case from the legal point of view was still pending. Roma families claim to have rights on the land too and their recourses have so far not been examined.

#### **Trikala - Pyrgos or Agroviz area (Thessaly)**

On 29 May 1997 local authorities, in the presence of the police, evicted 20 Roma families from the area of Pyrgos or Agroviz after they had been pressed upon by owners of near-by nightclubs. These Roma had been evicted from another area in Trikala 8 years ago and were being evicted again.

### **B. Settlements threatened with eviction (11)**

#### **Rio (Patras, border between Continental Greece and the Peloponese)**

In October 1999, the municipal council of Rio voted in favor of the eviction of the Roma for their alleged criminal activities, poor hygiene standard, and trespassing of public property. Most of them had settled in the region at least five years ago, in an area belonging to the **University of Patras**, having moved there from other parts of the county. The local university has showed so far no real interest in finding a solution to the problem. On the contrary, in a meeting with GHM, MRG-G and the Prime Minister’s Office for Quality of Life, on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999, the Rector of the University, Professor S. Alahiotes, made racist anti-Roma comments, and offered absolutely no evidence for his charges when probed:

*“Gypsies know that they are entitled to certain rights and they play the fool... They constantly rob, there have been people arrested. (...) The University is an international forum. What kind of sensitivity can there exist towards people who are trespassing private property, embarrassing the institution internationally when their goats show up in the amphitheaters? (...) We want to protect the reputation of the University, it is an international forum, a showcase. We cannot tolerate that someone drives by it and a Gypsy throws stones...”*

Other families, living on municipal land in Rio, in autumn 1999 were also threatened with eviction. A traffic policeman had asked them to leave the place but they refused to obey. In December 1999, GHM, MRG-G and the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life visited the settlements and had meetings with representatives from the local and prefecture authorities and the Rector of the University. The result of the visit led to a commitment of the prefecture authorities -but not the municipal authorities nor the university- that they would not allow an eviction to take place unless the Roma were provided with satisfactory alternative housing solutions. On May 27, 2000, a meeting on the local Roma took place at the Prefecture of Achaia with the participation of the municipalities concerned, the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life and the President of the Public Estate Company. The Mayor of Rio did not attend this meeting, demonstrating his lack of interest. The official position of the municipality is that it acknowledges the need for housing initiatives only for three local Roma families who are municipal citizens.

#### **Halandri (Attica)**

13 out of 30 families of the settlement received court-ordered evictions in a case judged in abstentia in an area lacking infrastructure where they have been living for about 20 years. They were charged with trespassing. After strenuous negotiations with the District Attorney and the police that would enforce the decision, they were granted an extension until the end of April 1999. As a result of repeated negotiations of the Cooperating Organizations, the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life and the Coalition with the local authorities, it was agreed that proposals would be made to the owners that the Roma would lease the site for a period of 6-12 months until a permanent site for relocation was found. During a parliamentary debate over the matter initiated by the **Coalition**, the government promised to subsidize the lease. This idea was never put into practice and the eviction remained pending. In addition, the owners of the site resorted to the **Ombudsman** to claim their property. The Cooperating Organizations initiated a housing scheme with the Office for Quality of Life and the Ombudsman's support. Plots of land in the wider area are to be purchased and allocated to the local Roma population. As the scheme is still in its initial phase, the eviction exists as a possibility.

#### **Aspropyrgos-Nea Zoe (Attica)**

In February 1999, local authorities escorted by the police, set fire to 5 Roma lodgings of the Nea Zoe settlement in Aspropyrgos, where 100 families have been living since 1990. The operation took place in the absence of a District Attorney and without protocols of eviction; it was based only on a discriminatory decision of the Service of Town Planning to pull down Roma shacks because the whole residential area -inhabited by both Roma and non-Roma- lacks town planning. The Cooperating Organizations and the **Coalition M.P. Ms. Stella Alfieri** pressed charges against the local authorities, while international organizations protested to the Greek government for violation of international treaties and agreements binding for Greece. This, however, did not prevent the **Deputy Minister of Interior Mr. Florides**, in an answer to a relevant parliamentary question, from trying to justify the use of violence by the municipality, arguing that the Roma had taken possession of the area illegally. A few days later, there were threats that the operation would be resumed. Pre-election promises of the municipality that living conditions in the settlement would be improved remained empty words. In the meantime, the Cooperating Organizations and the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life proposed a site for the creation of a self-managed Roma settlement of the whole precinct; it is a forest area within the limits of the adjoining municipality of Ano Liosia. **The Mayor of Ano Liosia, Mr. Papademas**, rejected this solution while his superior, the elected **Prefect Mr. Papapetros**, has shown no interest

whatsoever. The excuse in this case is the alleged construction of Olympic sports facilities both in Nea Zoe and in the forest area. The arson of Roma shacks has been the second traumatic experience for the Roma of Aspropyrgos after the violent police raid of 1996 -with machine guns and knives in front of TV cameras which sent out the images of Roma being held at gun-point by policemen. It was these scenes that had triggered the announcement of the **1996 Framework Policy on Roma**. A third traumatic experience came afterwards; in May 2000, local residents started to collect signatures in favor of the expulsion of the Roma from their region. In July 2000, following the eviction of the Roma from the neighboring site of the garbage dump (see just below), in the borders of Aspropyrgos with the municipality of Ano Liosia, the Roma residents of Nea Zoe were once more threatened with eviction. By July 26<sup>th</sup>, half of the shucks in the Nea Zoe settlements were demolished by the municipal bulldozers.

### **Aspropyrgos-Ano Liosia/ Garbage dump**

On July 14, 2000, a municipal bulldozer, in the presence of the Mayor of Aspropyrgos and the police, entered the settlement and demolished most of the huts. The huts belonged to Greek and Albanian Roma tent-dwellers and were full of family equipment. Around 7-8 [Greek] Roma families, with sick members and without possibility to move, were given an ultimatum to leave the site by July 17. The operation took place without the necessary prior municipal decisions, nor was eviction protocols being given to the Roma families; no Public Prosecutor was present. According to the police, that was a “cleaning operation” of the municipality which emptied the site from vacant shucks belonging to “Albanian Gypsies.” Greek Helsinki Monitor countered that what happened was in fact a “cleansing operation”, violating the asylum and property rights of the tent-dwellers. Following these developments, local Roma, with the help of GHM, filed a complaint to the Ombudsman. The latter summoned the Municipality to immediately justify its action and provide the necessary legal documentation (25 July), but the municipality ignored the request. A few days prior to the operation, the Mayor of Ano Liosia proceeded with a “velvet” eviction of the Roma tent-dwellers in the upper part of the dump by offering 100,000 drachmas per family to leave the area, and then leveling their huts. The site around the garbage dump has been existing for years in a semi-legal way. Following the police raid of 1996 in Aspropyrgos, the municipality allowed Roma tent-dwellers to camp in the region, also making promises for water supply and garbage collection. None of these promises were kept. Roma kept on living among the garbage and the rats, in a remote area with zero infrastructure.

### **Agia Paraskevi (Attica)**

In July 1997, the municipality of Agia Paraskevi tore down 10 out of 28 shanties belonging to the local Roma who had been living in the area for up to 30 years. The latter were charged with trespassing private property and building without a license. A few days later, the mayor attempted to destroy the rest of the shanties with the presence of the police. However, it failed to do so owing to the intervention of non-governmental organizations. For a long time, the matter had been pending as there were protocols of eviction serviced to the Roma. The municipality persistently claims that there is no available land for relocation, while the adjacent 35 acres of land are intended for the building of sport facilities. In November 1999, the mayor of Agia Paraskevi agreed to provide each Roma family with 3 million drachmas for the purchase of land in the greater district of Geraka and Agia Paraskevi. The housing scheme of the municipality, in cooperation with the Prime Minister’s Office for Quality of Life and the Cooperating Organizations, was underway. It aimed at enabling the local Roma to acquire land and to purchase houses by means of loans. The scheme has not yet been implemented and, in this light, the eviction exists as a possibility.

### **Trikala - Kokinos Pyrgos area (Thessaly)**

Roma tent-dwellers, who camped near a Rudar (Romanian-speaking people sometimes considered as Roma) settlement on a site lacking infrastructure were threatened with expulsion twice by the local authorities in May 1998. It, however, did not service them with protocols of eviction. The first time, municipal workers accompanied by numerous police officers tore down Roma tents, which were put up again later. Reportedly, Roma were finally evicted from the place some time later by orders of the

mayor. Eventually, it was reported that in July 2000, they were transferred to a municipal site in prefabricated houses allocated by the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life. The new site in the area "Kipaki-Agroviz" is close to the main city with reportedly comprehensive infrastructure.

#### **Larissa - Neapoli area (Thessaly)**

In May 1998, Roma (about 50 families) were threatened with eviction by the police in the orders of the mayor. The majority of these Roma were citizens registered in the municipality and had been living in the area for 30 years.

#### **Tyrnavos (Thessaly)**

400 Roma families, owners of the land they live on, dwell in tents because of the authorities' refusal to include the area in the city-planning scheme, in hope to discourage their permanent settlement. There is no water or electricity supply, nor a sewage system. Roma have attempted to build lavatories or rooms in order to improve their living conditions themselves, but in vain. Local authorities pulled them down and imposed high fines on the Roma.

#### **Tarsina Corinthias (Peloponese)**

There had been a similar attempt to coerce the Roma as in Tyrnavos. Even though local Roma were owners of the land, they had been living for years with zero infrastructure. In 1999, local residents bought off Romanies' land in order to make them leave the area.

#### **Nea Kios (Argolida, Peloponese)**

The local authority claimed that the presence of Roma had contributed to the high crime rate in the area although the allegation was groundless, according to police reports. The municipal council issued a decision on 20 May 2000 to evict all Roma from the region. Police was asked to take action and implement the decision within 48 hours. The Roma's presence, even in transit, in that municipality was officially characterized as undesirable. On May 25, 2000, police raided the local Romani settlements to find guns and drugs but in vain: it only found suspects for stealing electricity. Even though the municipal authorities received a letter from the Ombudsman, on June 1<sup>st</sup> pinpointing their possible criminal liability, the prohibitions and abuses went on. A group of leftist party-members, human rights and ecological associations, who visited Nea Kios on June 8 to express solidarity with the local Roma, were denied entrance to the city. "Indignant" citizens had blocked the streets while police stood by idly. Local residents, gathered outside the town hall on the mayor's instructions, abused a delegation attempting to meet with the municipal authorities, including journalist Panos Lambrou of the weekly **Epohi**. The following day, on June 9, a Romani hut was burned down. Roma attributed the arson to a group of non-Roma citizens who had threatened the residents of the hut prior to the fire. On June 15, 2000, a 17-year-old Rom, Christos Demetropoulos, was shot at and lightly wounded in the arm. Based on his testimony, the perpetrators were non-Roma citizens of Nea Kios who shot at him without any reason. The police did not investigate his allegations, instead it immediately accused Demetropoulos of perjury and arrested him and his mother. The police had arbitrarily concluded that Demetropoulos was shot by an unknown Rom. However, during arraignment, the Public Prosecutor released the Roma and ordered a preliminary investigation, obviously having considered the supposition of the police rather unsubstantiated. In the meantime, international reaction to the preceding harassment of the journalist and the arson of the hut led to the Minister of Justice's June 16, 2000 decision of having a preliminary investigation by the local Public Prosecutor on the NGO's allegations. On June 30, a complaint signed by 15 people, including members of political parties and human rights associations, was also filed for the whole series of events.

#### **Nea Tirynta (Argolida, Peloponese)**

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2000, the municipal council of Nea Tirynta unanimously decided the eviction of local Roma from the area of the former agricultural jail. The Minister of Justice allocated part of this area to the municipality for the widening of the main city street in September 1999, setting one of the prerequisites for the expulsion of the Roma settlement. The Roma were given a three months' deadline,

they have until August 2000 to leave the place. Roma families in Nea Tirynta had settled down in the region about 20 years ago, following their eviction from another part of the municipality. They have been living without any infrastructure in one of Greece's most destitute camp. The Mayor had publicly admitted that the municipality never took action to improve the Romanies' living conditions on the ground that the camp was illegal.

### **C. Settlements having to date narrowly escaped eviction (3)**

#### **Nea Alikarnassos (Crete)**

In March 1999, the municipality initiated the eviction procedure of the Roma by making use of a town council resolution dating from 1997, arguing that the area was going to be reconstructed. Protocols of eviction were serviced to 102 families living for months with the threat of expulsion. In the meantime, older requests for basic infrastructure at the settlement remained unanswered. In addition, Roma relocation was very difficult to proceed as none of the neighboring municipalities wanted tent-dwellers at their precincts. Their transfer to a former military barrack and the creation of a self-managed settlement, according to the proposal of the Cooperating Organizations with the collaboration of the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life, faced the stubborn opposition of the mayor who had declared his intention to evict the Roma from his town. It was only due to much of NGO pressure that this relocation scheme could go under way. The **Heraklion County Court's** ruling had decided that the municipal eviction order was abusive. This facilitated the progress of the scheme. The latter was put under the responsibility of the Regional Governor of Crete. In November 1997, a violent police raid had taken place in the settlement after persistent rumors of Roma involving in drug trafficking activities.

#### **Spata (Attica)**

In November 1997, there was an attempt to evict 100 Roma from an area where they had been living since 1992. The reasoning behind the attempt was illegal building and was based on a court verdict in absentia. The attempt was carried out in the presence of the police and was supported by the local residents who did not want the settlement to be near a newly built nursery school. Following NGO reactions, the eviction was suspended. The local authorities promised to look into the possibility of relocation in another area. Currently, in cooperation with the Prime Minister's Office, the municipal authorities have initiated a relocation scheme. Land was allocated to Roma by the municipality while the Office for Quality of Life will secure prefabricated houses for all 20 families. Infrastructure works will be conducted by the municipality.

#### **Kalamata (Peloponese)**

In 1997, the municipality filed a suit against 70 Roma families in the industrial quarter of Kalamata where they had been living for about 5 years. The reasoning for the eviction was that the area was going to be reconstructed. Roma won the case only after strenuous pressure from local non-governmental organizations. In the end, a proposal for the purchase of building plots in another area was adopted. Following a public bidding, the land was to be bought by the **Prefecture** and subsidized by the **Ministry of Environment**. The dossier of the case was delivered to the **Secretary General for the Region** and by November 1999 the committee to realize the bidding was formed. The bidding took place but did not yield any results as no landowner offered to sell his/her plots to the Prefecture. The idea to proceed with compulsory expropriations of land has been suggested. Yet, it is likely that compulsory expropriations will raise reactions on behalf of the concerned local residents. After overcoming the problem of land, the scheme, in its second phase, provides for the construction of houses to be taken over by the state-run Organization of Workers' Houses. According to the existing plan, Roma would be temporarily transferred to the public areas of the future settlement -with full infrastructure- till the construction of houses is over. Reportedly, local residents are negatively predisposed towards the Roma, gathering signatures and sending letters to the authorities to evict Roma from the region; for the time Roma live in a destitute camp in the region, lacking basic infrastructure.

### **D. Destitute Settlements (6)**

### **Aetoliko (Continental Greece)**

600 people live in 3 settlements in the area. Only two of the settlements have water. The prefecture promised a settlement with all necessary infrastructure, but progress has been slow. In spring 2000, prefabricated houses were allocated to local Roma residents, following initiatives of the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life.

### **Patras - Kato Souli or Riganocampos area (Peloponese)**

Near the rubbish dump, 30 families have been living for more than 20 years without any infrastructure, in an area belonging to the University of Patras. During the last three to four years, around 10 families of Albanian Roma joined the camp. The municipality refused to clean up the area for a fee and supply the camp with water. Right next to it, part of the dump that has been planted with saplings is watered by an automatic irrigation system. Until mid-2000, the municipality had neglected the settlement. Following a persistent campaign by GHM and MRG-G, echoed in an unprecedented series of helpful articles in the local press, things started to change. In its June 2000 proposal to the Prefecture, the municipality had at least vaguely proposed the allocation of prefabricated houses to all families in the camp, although without offering any possible sites for relocation. The finding of sites was left to the University of Patras, which, on various occasions, has made clear that it will not allocate the land to the Roma. In July 2000, the municipality made a first step to improve the Romanies' destitute living conditions by providing them with external water tabs. The initiative was strongly opposed by the University of Patras and its Rector, Professor Alahiotes, who argued that it may lead to semi-legalizing the Romanies' presence in the region. As a result, the municipality reportedly installed the water tabs on the public road outside the settlement, rather than near their huts.

### **Lamia - Damaria area (Continental Greece)**

At the old quarry of the town, near a stream, about 100 families -60 members of which are locally registered citizens- live in huts, surrounded by rubbish, with hardly enough water and no other infrastructure.

### **Komotini - Alan Koyu (Andrianoupoleos) (Thrace)**

350 Muslim Roma families have lived in tin huts for more than 70 years. The scant public lavatories are in bad shape. The decision for their relocation to another area with the help of the Organization of Workers' Houses has been pending for many years. So does the improvement in the Roma's destitute living conditions.

### **Halastra (Salonica)**

38 Muslim Roma families have camped on a stretch of land belonging to the municipality since 1989. These Roma have lived in the area for 35 to 40 years. Their living conditions are squalid, as there is no infrastructure except for one water pump.

### **Sagaiika (Peloponese)**

Roma tent-dwellers have been living in an area neighboring a Roma settlement without any infrastructure for more than 30 years. Since 1998, there has been no improvement to their squalid living conditions despite the fact that their problems were reported to the competent municipal and prefecture authorities.

## **E. Settlements which are minimally supported by the local authorities (5)**

### **Argostoli Kefalonia (Ionian Islands)**

After they had been turned away from an area near the sea, 11 families -about 100 people- moved to the slaughterhouse ground, under the initiative of the local authorities. The stink of the slaughterhouse and the sandy soil that absorbed the sun's heat in summer made life in the tin huts insufferable. When the municipality took over the slaughterhouse, the stink was considerably reduced. Meanwhile, minor

efforts were made to improve other aspects of their living conditions. There are lavatories, two main water pumps and electricity. Nevertheless, the situation remains unpleasant. The mayor never responded to the NGOs' call for a meeting with representatives from the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life to discuss possibilities to relocate the Roma. Since 1999, there has been no improvement to the Roma's living conditions.

#### **Sofades, Karditsa (Thessaly)**

500 families --2,500 people in total-- live in a built-up area where, apart from 100 detached houses, there are huts and tents. The roads have been paved with asphalt, water, electricity, lavatories and rubbish bins are available. Provision has been made to let the tent-dwellers have the ground of the rubbish dump as soon as this area is closed down. The relocation scheme is already under way. The houses are to be built by the Organization of Workers' Houses.

#### **Chios (Aegean Islands)**

In early 1997, on the mayor's initiative, 10 Roma families were allotted land by the island's ecclesiastical authorities. The local people and the Police Commissioner reacted negatively to the settlement of these Roma in the area.

#### **Gastouni and Amaliada (Peloponese)**

Both municipalities initiated a housing scheme for all local Roma in cooperation with the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life. Tent-dwellers are to be temporarily transferred to prefabricated houses with full infrastructure. In the long-term, Roma will be enabled to acquire their own house through the Organization of Workers' Houses or the loan scheme.

### **F. "Official Ghetto" Settlements (3)**

#### **Trikala - Raxa area (Thessaly)**

Roma from various parts of Trikala were moved to the Raxa area with the promise that the site would function as an organized camp. In May 1998, the water was cut off without warning. For much time, local authorities neglected to restore water supply, which in all probability was cut off by local people who wanted to send the Roma away. There was no lavatories or sewage system. In 2000, half of the residents of the site were transferred to prefabricated houses with full infrastructure in the area "Kipaki-Agroviz." The remaining 37 families are to be transferred to prefabricated houses as soon as a new series of houses is allocated to the municipality. Most of them object to their removal from Raxa, arguing that the site in Kipaki is not large enough to host all Roma tent-dwellers in the region. The Roma's local association in Raxa has proposed to the mayor that they would stay in prefabricated houses in Raxa. The municipality has not officially rejected this proposal.

#### **Patras - Makriyanni area (Peloponese)**

In November 1997, local authorities with the consent of 25 Roma families -registered citizens of Patras- pulled down 23 shanties and built up the settlement again after they had evicted all Roma who were not registered citizens of the area. Roma had to put up with a small plot of land, which confined them considerably, even though there were lavatories and water supply. In May 1998, the settlement was full of rubbish and dead rats. A year before, 15 cases of meningitis had been reported in the settlement. By May 2000, the prefecture authorities had made efforts to provide the Roma with alternative housing solutions. 8 out of the 15 families of the camp left the site by making use of the prefect's rent subsidies scheme.

#### **Menemeni (Salonica)**

A "model" settlement was built in an area full of chemical plants and besides an oil pipeline. 24 Roma families -about 120 people- were moved with promises by the authorities that they would be offered the means for a decent living. Initially the settlement had two lavatories and water but no electricity, forcing

the Roma to steal power from a nearby pole. From 1996 until today, there has been no improvement despite the dramatic increase in the settlement's population.

### **Police Violence**

(1) Police officers indicted by the prosecutor's office of ill-treating two Roma youth -**E. Kotropoulos** and **L. Bekos** who were arrested for attempted ice-cream theft at the Mesolonghi police station (5/1998)- were not removed from their job, nor have they been transferred. Instead, they have exercised pressure to the victims to stop the proceedings against them. There was an unambiguous forensic report, charges pressed by the victims, and the active involvement of Greek and international non-governmental organizations with letters of protest and memos to competent authorities. Even more, the Public Prosecutor indicted three police officers "for torture and other deeds that are offensive to human dignity," However, not even a day in court has been set. While the police and the Ministry ordered a Sworn Administrative Investigation for Public Order after much NGO pressure, it is not known to have reached any conclusions.

(2) A Rom, **Angelos Celal**, was killed by policemen in Partheni, Salonica, on 1 April 1998. A Sworn Administrative Investigation was ordered by the competent Police Directorate and the Ministry for Public Order only after much of NGO pressure. The father of the victim pressed charges against the responsible police officers. In May 1998, the District Attorney's office announced that three policemen were being prosecuted for murder, attempted murder, illegal possession and use of firearms, among other offenses. However, on March 29, 2000, the Council of First Instance Judges of Salonica issued an order to dismiss all charges against the police officers. The reasoning behind this decision was that they were acting in legitimate self-defense. Angelos Celal was unarmed -even according to the police- and was shot at the back as he drove away from the scene of a police ambush. According to police investigation, seventeen used cartridges originating from firearms of the police were found at the scene of the shooting, while an additional one, possibly originating from a non-police weapon, was recovered. Such evidence can hardly justify legitimate self-defense. A request to the Office of the Prosecutor of the Appeal Court of Salonica to challenge the Court's ruling, lodged on April 24, 2000, by GHM and MRG-G has been disregarded. The appeal lodged by the father in May 2000 was reportedly rejected in July 2000, due to a technicality concerning the initial pressing of the charges. Angelos Celal was 29 years old, married and is the father to a child.

(3) In November 1996 during a police control on a public road in Viotia, Rom **A. Mouratis**, father of 6 children, was murdered in cold blood. While he was lying on the ground at gunpoint, Mouratis raised his head to take a look at his children who were also on the ground. This movement was considered as "threatening" by a policeman who shot and killed him. The officer was suspended while the Sworn Administrative Investigation was in progress. He was indicted by the District Attorney, but was released pending his trial. No date is known to be set for the trial.

(4) On 12 September 1999, **Nikos Katsaris**, a 23-year-old Rom living in the Chalandri camp was in a car heading towards Nafplio with his father, his underage brother and a cousin. On this Sunday, they wanted to have a look at three open-air markets, without having to deal with the sellers immediately. All three open-air markets were surrounded by barbed wire. When leaving the third market, three police officers stopped the Roma at gunpoint, telling them to get out of the car, and to put their hands up. The officer did a body search -swearing, kicking and beating them. The Roma claimed that they had only come to look at cars to buy, and not to steal, as the police suspected. To prove this, they even showed the officers the notes with names and mobile phone numbers of the owners of the cars to prove their intention to buy a car. Nevertheless, they were taken to the police station and kept in two separate cells with ten other people, mostly immigrants awaiting deportation. They were detained because the police found court decisions against Nikos Katsaris and his father involved unpaid fines. The two underage

youths were released the same day while Nikos Katsaris and his father were only released after their relatives paid the bail the next day. On 27 October, Nikos Katsaris, with the help of the GHM and MRG-G, pressed charges against the policemen involved and subsequently filed a complaint to the Ombudsman's office. The police did not even deem the case worth of a "sworn administrative investigation," stating that an internal review in that police station showed that none of the allegations were well founded.

(5) In May 2000, **Dimitris Panayotopoulos**, Rom resident of Rio, while driving towards Zefyri in Athens was stopped for police inspection. The police officers were pointing at Panayotopoulos and his wife with their guns, telling them to put their hands up and to get out of the car. In the course of the inspection, the officers in question were addressing the couple as "dirty-Gypsies" and "bloody-Gypsies".

(6) In April 2000, **Christos Tsirikos**, Rom, also resident of Rio, visited a house in Trikala together with three friends. Local residents who thought of them as suspects for robbery called the police. Tsirikos and his friends were stopped by plainclothes officers while driving towards Ioannina. Swearing and pointing at them with their guns, the policemen asked them to lie down on their stomach. While in this position, they were beaten with truncheons. They were then brought to the police station of Trikala where they were also beaten while the aforementioned officers were looking for pending warrants against them. They were detained, spending the night in different cells, with water only from the toilet tab, without regular meals and blankets. They were not allowed to make phone calls. They were not informed of their rights and were never explained the reason for their detention. Most probably they were considered suspects of robbery. Police reportedly confiscated 500,000 drachmas they had been carrying with them as the alleged product of the robbery. Tsirikos was subsequently sentenced to 2 months in prison, for charges he did not quite understand.

(7) During the police raid of May 25, 2000 in the Romani settlements of Nea Kios, Rom **Kostas Demetropoulos, his sons and his nephews** were ill-treated by police officers. At around 6.30 a.m., police entered his hut with guns to conduct searches. K. Demetropoulos addressed himself to the Public Prosecutor and the officers, asking the reason for such an investigation. He was then drugged outside the hut and kept into a police car. His sons, Gerasimos, 16 years old and Thanasis, 17 years old, followed the police officers outside the hut, asking for the proper treatment of their father as he was ill. They were both being ill-treated. They were kicked and beaten with truncheons, and insulted. Together with three of his nephews, his two sons and his son-in-law who was just paying a visit to his fiancée, K. Demetropoulos was brought to the police station accused of stealing electricity. Around 15 people were kept in a small stinking cell. Demetropoulos invoked the police to take account of his illness and to put him in a less crowded cell, but it was in vain. Even when he fainted, the police officers denied him medical treatment and he was simply kept outside the cell with an old Romani woman. According to Demetropoulos, none of the detainees was informed of his/her rights and no one was allowed to make phone calls.

Christos Demetropoulos, nephew of Kostas, (17 years old, who was also resident of Nea Kios) was beaten once with a truncheon in the back when he protested against the ill-treatment of his uncle. Christos was brought to the police station together with his two brothers Thanasis and Kostas. They were set free when no pending warrants were found against them. Police officers had also entered his hut in the very morning of May 25<sup>th</sup>, with guns, swearing and pointing at him and his family.

**Niki Karagounis**, a 59 years old widow, was the Romani woman who was kept separately, outside the cell of the other 15 detainees of Nea Kios. She was also accused of stealing electricity. Karagounis had her foot wounded and could hardly walk. When relatives of hers brought food and blankets, police officers did not accept them. Her neighbor, Vasilis Theodoropoulos, 25 years old and was one of the

aforementioned detainees, confirmed that the cell was very small and it was overcrowded. He also mentioned that no telephone calls were allowed and no food and blankets were distributed to them.

(8) In October 1998, **Ziniye Cemiloglu**, her father **Yasar Ali Oglu**, and her daughter-in-law **Yasariye Yasaroglu** were ill-treated by police officers in Xanthi, Thrace. Her son, Ceivan, and her pregnant daughter-in-law, Yasariye, driving their new motorcycle that still lacked some of the certificates, were asked to stop for police inspection. They tried to escape and the police chased after them until Ziniye's parents' house where their relatives were commemorating an uncle's death. The police entered the house beating and swearing at the family members, Ziniye and her parents. As the officers were plainclothesmen and did not reveal their identity to Ziniye from the very beginning, the latter tried to prevent them from entering the place. She was arrested together with her father for resistance and was brought to the police station in Xanthi with her pregnant daughter-in-law. In the police station, they were being beaten, threatened and insulted by police officers who were trying to make them reveal where Ziniye's son was. Ziniye and her father spent the night in jail. Due to the lack of women officers, body search was performed on Ziniye by a man in a humiliating way. Her father, who was sick, was not allowed to see a doctor. They were asked to sign testimonies which were never read to them (both Ziniye and her father are illiterate in Greek). Despite the obligation stated in the Lausanne Treaty, *inter alia*, that an interpreter of the Turkish language must be present, Yasariye who speaks no Greek was interrogated ... in German (as confirmed in her related sworn statement). They were not informed of their rights and they were totally ignorant of the reasons for their detention. The police was persistently asking for Ziniye's son, accusing him of drug trafficking. The accusation was allegedly based on a denunciation made by a family friend and friend of Ziniye's friend. Their trial for resisting arrest has already been postponed many times. The state hospital refused to certify her and the father's wounds from the ill-treatment, therefore, they had to resort to a private doctor's certificates.

### **Bureaucratic Harassment**

(1) The case of a stateless Rom, **Sezgin Durgut**, presented by GHM and MRG-G in their September 1999 Report to the OSCE dealing with stateless people in Thrace, remains pending. In answering a relevant question posed by the Progressive Left Coalition MP, Maria Damanaki, on July 17, 1999, the **Minister of Public Order** had replied the following:

*"In general all cases regarding aliens are being examined thoroughly by the competent authorities. When it comes to the case of Durgut Sezgin, in particular, to his request to be provided with an identity card for stateless people, it should be stated clearly that issuing such a certificate presupposes giving him the status of a stateless person. Mr. Sezgin has no such status based on the documents that the competent authorities possess. He is a Bulgarian citizen, therefore an alien. It should also be stated that, indeed, the latter has received permission to stay in Greece as a person with undefined nationality. In order to be able to seek treatment as a stateless person, Mr. Sezgin was advised to provide the Greek authorities with a valid certificate stating that he is not a Bulgarian citizen. In case he was unable to do so, he was asked to submit a valid travel document from the Bulgarian authorities for his application, regarding permission to stay in Greece, to be considered under law 1975/1999."*

But as far back as in 1997, Sezgin Durgut had provided the Greek authorities with a certificate saying that he was not a Bulgarian citizen. Resubmitting the same document, on February 2000, Sezgin Durgut applied for a second time to obtain a stateless identity card, but has not received any answer. At the same time, his application for the Greek citizenship has been pending and unanswered since 1990. His case was submitted to the Ombudsman who initiated a dialogue with all competent authorities, investigating the ground for such delay and bureaucratic harassment. For the Greek administration, Sezgin Durgut does not exist; he cannot travel abroad, have his driving license extended for his work

and get a family allowance.

(2) **Songiul Durgut**, wife of Sezgin Durgut, on March 11, 1999 miscarried twins. She went to the public hospital of Komotini where she was told that she had to stay there for at least one day to allow for the necessary medical tests. Being afraid that the doctors in the public hospital would not take care of her, Songiul Durgut went to her private gynecologist. The latter told her that the embryos were dead, adding that she needed to undergo an operation, which required anesthesia. To her great surprise, Songiul Durgut woke up in the public hospital of Komotini. During the surgical intervention of the private doctor, some complications had occurred, so the doctor himself took his patient to the hospital in a state of shock. The doctors in the hospital explained to her that, since she had a perforated womb, they had to take out the vital organ. It took her a few seconds to realize the implications of this operation: she would never be able to give birth again.

Songiul Durgut decided to investigate the matter and find out what the gynecologist's share of responsibility was. Once again, she addressed the hospital of Komotini asking for a certificate stating the reasons why her womb had been taken out. At first, she was told that for such a certificate to be issued, she would have to wait for at least one month, while the organ is being examined in the hospital's laboratory. The second time she was told to wait even longer. Yet, she discerned that it was an effort made by the personnel to discourage her from pursuing the case. After consulting with the GHM, Songiul Durgut addressed the hospital for the third time. She was told that the organ was never examined, nor was there any possibility for that to be done in the hospital. Songiul Durgut stated that it was her indisputable right to know what had really happened and that it was the hospital's responsibility to provide her with an explanation. Following this development, with the help of GHM, in February 2000, she filed a complaint to the Ombudsman asking for a proper investigation of the matter. In its first answer to the Ombudsman, the director of the hospital failed to provide the Ombudsman's Office and the victim with a concrete answer regarding the reasons for such an operation. However, the director acknowledged that when she arrived the hospital, her life was in very serious danger. The case remains pending.

(3) **The Directorate of the Town Planning Service in the Prefect of Lesvos (Aegean Sea) fined the municipality of Mytilini for illegally constructing a Roma settlement two kilometers outside the main town of the island.** In 1997, the municipal authorities took the initiative to resolve the housing problem of the Roma and provided them with some decent living conditions. The Association of Merchants in Mytilini, however, filed a complaint with the Directorate of the Town Planning Service accusing the municipality of Mytilini of illegal construction. The reason behind this complaint was due to the fear of the non-Roma merchants to their Roma business competitors. The buildings were pronounced illegal and the municipality got a 2 million drachmas fine. In the last few years, old buildings in Mytilini proclaimed as "national treasures" have been reconstructed without the necessary permits and without any intervention from the Town Planning Service.

## Education

*“In education, a 3-year project is now in progress, carried out by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the University of Ioannina, which aims at providing continual education to teachers of Roma children, publication of teaching materials, strengthening intercultural schools, helping high school students, etc. Also, in order to facilitate pupils who move frequently from one place to another, the system of the individual transit-pupil card has been introduced” (Permanent Mission of Greece to the OSCE, op.cit.).*

In Greece, most Roma and almost all tent-dwelling Roma speak the Romani language. Yet, the aforementioned Education Program on Roma provides for preparatory classes and teaching material solely in the Greek language. Unlike similar education programs in other European countries, the Greek one seems to undermine the Roma identity of the children. On various occasions, Professor A. Gotovos -the director of the program- and his associates have argued that, in the name of diversity, ghetto policies in education have many times been legitimized. In Mr. Gotovos' own words, during the third annual meeting of the Program's associates in January 2000, the aim of this program is “to minimize the importance of cultural background as a contributing element to the organization of a class.” Despite the billions of drachmas allocated to the program, the percentage of illiteracy among Greek Roma, especially among tent-dwellers, remains at extremely high levels -80%, reaching 90% occasionally. From comparative data of the **Doctors of the World** it becomes apparent that the percentage of Roma tent-dwellers who can write and read is 6% in Athens and 60% in Montpellier, France. On January 13, 2000, **Doctors of the World-Greece** gave a press conference at which they presented the scientific results from their research in four camps in Athens: Agia Paraskevi, Chalandri and Aspropyrgos (in Nea Zoe and the garbage dump). The overall population in the aforementioned settlements is estimated around 1,800. Based on this research, one in five children begs in the streets. Only 14% of the Roma have some sort of education. 91% of them have a primary school degree, 7% were registered at the high school level and only 2% at the college level. Literacy seems to be higher whenever there is a school near the settlement.

In addition, as a result of diffused prejudice among state officials (schoolteachers, directors, municipal and prefecture leaders) as well as common people against the Roma, their children's education is seriously impeded. On May 22, 2000, the daily “Eleftherotypia” reported that Roma children in the municipality of Velo (Corinthia, Peloponese) were not allowed to attend classes in the local primary school, following the reactions of non-Roma residents and teachers who locked the school. As a result, the children missed more than one year of preparatory classes under the Educational Program for Roma. The municipality and local society's behavior towards the children's parents was not much different. In one case, a resident even asked the exhumation of a Rom who was lying in peace (he thought...) next to a non-Rom... The aforementioned Roma children were victims of similar racist reactions in a near-by municipality in 1997. Under the pretext of lack of space, the school authorities in Tarsina refused to accept Roma children for morning preparatory classes under the Ministry's program. Evening classes were not allowed either; the school was used by non-Roma children as a playground in the afternoons, and apparently football and classes could not coincide. The municipality helped the local residents to buy off the land where the camp was established, in order to force the Roma to leave. The settlement seized to exist and Roma were scattered around in neighboring sites.

As a rule, non-Roma parents react negatively at the idea of their children's coexistence with Roma schoolmates under the same roof, arguing that the level of education will be downgraded. Non Roma parents try to prevent Roma children's enrollment in schools. When they fail to do so, they take their children from the mixed schools. The third primary school of Zefyri (Western Attica) and the Christian school in Evlalo -an ethnically mixed village in Western Thrace populated by Muslim Turks and Christian Roma and Greek families- are indicative examples of previously mixed schools turned into “Roma schools.”

Another discrimination is observed in Xanthi (Thrace). Muslim Roma children in the district of **Drosero** attend the Greek school program even though Greece is obliged to offer them Muslim minority education like every other Muslim, according to the Treaty of Lausanne. These children are not exempted from attending the morning prayer or the subject of (Orthodox Christian) religion. They have to parade on national holidays wearing Greek national costumes (*foustanela* -- a kind of Greek kilt).

## **Health**

An international survey by the **Doctors of the World** (ROMEUROPE Program, Medecins du Monde, Juin 1999) directly associates the odious living conditions in the settlements with the poor health of Roma tent-dwellers. The results of hepatitis tests in Nea Liosia and Aspropyrgos are significant: 99% of the population has been exposed to hepatitis A. The same percentage for Hepatitis B is 50%: 18% are carriers while the healthy remainder of 32% are adolescents aged 10-18, most of which go to school. These percentages are high in comparison to the rest of the population. Comparative data from other European cities show that percentages of Roma tent-dwellers in Greece with health problems are higher (42% for the women, 32% for the men). The Roma's access to the health system is insignificant. The **Doctors of the World** have found the Roma were living completely lack of first aid, vaccination and medical information. Roma do not trust hospitals and First Aid Services, and they find it impossible to follow the pace and procedures in practice in these institutions (except for cases when the doctor has created an atmosphere of trust). Only 15% of them receive benefits. Out of the 40% of Roma who have social security, only 30% are fully covered. These percentages are less than half of the equivalent average for Roma in other European cities. Based on research conducted by the **Doctors of the World-Greece** in Athenian camps, the average age of the Romani woman who gives birth for the first time is 16 years old. The average monthly income of a Roma family in these camps is estimated to be around 76,000 drachmas, approximately half of the minimum salary in Greece.

**2. Racial Discrimination and Violence Against Roma in Greece. Statement made before the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its 57<sup>th</sup> Session (Thematic Discussion on Roma, August 15, 2000).**

**GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR (GHM)  
MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP – GREECE (MRG – G)**

**Address:** P.O. Box 60820, 15304 Glyka Nera

**Telephone:** (+30-1) 347.22.59. **Fax:** (+30-1) 601.87.60.

**e-mail:** [office@greekhelsinki.gr](mailto:office@greekhelsinki.gr) **website:** <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr>

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**RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST ROMA IN GREECE**

**Statement made before the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its 57<sup>th</sup> Session (Thematic Discussion on Roma, August 15, 2000)**

August 15, 2000

When the government of Prime Minister Costas Simitis came to power, in January 1996, many hopes were raised that Greece will finally engage in a modernist course that will include full respect of human and minority rights. Mr. Simitis was in fact given an opportunity right away, in February 1996, to justify such expectations. A televised live police raid of a destitute Roma settlement in Aspropyrgos, near Athens, with police using excessive violence, made him order heavy sanctions against the instigators and damages to be paid to the victims. In his speech inaugurating the EU's campaign against racism a year later, in February 1997, he mentioned that police action as an example of racism in Greece. In the meantime, upon his instructions, three ministers launched in July 1996 an ambitious "Framework Program" of 3 billion drs. through the end of 1997. It included, *inter alia*, the "immediate, within 1996" setting up of five temporary but adequately equipped settlements (in Menemeni, Messini, Thebes, Karditsa, Rhodes) and the resettlement of two other communities in Antirrio and Serres.

Regrettably, the implementation of that policy to fight institutionalized racism and provide decent living conditions to the Roma failed dismally. The government's own "**Implementation Review for 1996-2000**" mentions that the aforementioned (re)settlements are still in the implementation phase. Moreover, not only no Aspropyrgos Romani family received any funds for the 1996 damages, but the government's "Review" does not even mention any plans to provide that community with decent living conditions. So, the local authorities have interpreted that silence as a go ahead for its "divide and cleanse plan" it has been implementing since 1997. The few Roma living in the Aspropyrgos-Ano Liosia settlements who are registered in these municipalities have been offered money or supposed better conditions to move away, while the vast majority of the other Roma, who had migrated from the rest of the country, have been summarily, brutally and illegally evicted. Four such evictions have occurred since 1997. The most recent is going on this summer. All efforts to prevent these evictions –as well as similar ones in Greater Athens- or find alternative sites to house these Roma have failed as local authorities claim they want the land on which Roma are or can be settled to build sports facilities for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. **Will the international community, including the International Olympic Committee, tolerate a cleansed, Roma-free, Greater Athens as the host of these Games?**

The **Executive Director of the European Roma Rights Center, Dimitrina Petrova**, after her field mission in Greece, stated to the **French News Agency** (12 May 1998) that:

*«Roma are not treated and do not live like humans, they exist outside society, their situation is totally unacceptable.» Education for Greek [Roma], of whom 80 percent are illiterate*

*according to local NGOs, is at the root of many of their problems, Petrova noted. "In this field, Greece is the worst country in East and Central Europe," she said. Petrova described as "stupefying" the poverty in which many [Roma] exist and the level of police violence to which they are subjected. "In many regions, it seems routine to badly treat and subject arrested [Roma] to brutality," Petrova said, adding that these incidents were never taken up by the authorities.»*

The Vice-President of "Doctors of the World - Greece" Yannis Boukovinas said (to state television station ET-3 on 24 October 1998) about the largest Roma settlement near Salonica, near the Gallikos river: "It is worse than the refugee camps I have visited with our organization in occupied Palestine or war-torn Irak ."

The government's "Review" does mention that Gallikos Romani community. It claimed (when submitted to Parliament, in response to a question by MP Maria Damanaki, in February 2000) that its relocation to a fully-equipped settlement, in Gonou, was being completed. But, in September 1998, answering another parliamentary question by MP Stella Alfieri, the government had already promised that the mine-sweeping of the former barracks of Gonou would have been finished by November 1998, which meant that the infrastructure would have been ready by February 1999. While, when probed by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), in May 1999, the government had promised that the resettlement would be completed by September 1999 (OSCE HCNM "Report on the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area," April 2000, p. 115). Before the April 2000 elections, work was temporarily speeded up for the local politicians –like Minister of Defense Akis Tsohatzopoulos- to be able to boast in front of television cameras that completion was imminent, so as to be able to gather votes. Today, in mid-August 2000, work is still in progress: the government had in the meantime announced a 30 July 2000 deadline (Macedonian Press Agency, 19/7/2000), not honored either. Had it not been for the continuous pressure by the local DROM and other national NGOs (which had even brought charges against the state for negligence in 1997), the Gonou project (not included in the original 1996 Framework Program) would not have existed or would have been abandoned, as implicitly acknowledged even by the OSCE HCNM (*ibid*, p. 115).

The Greek government proved beyond any doubt that it lacked the political will to house Europe's most destitute Roma when it mobilized the administration in September 1999 for the victims of the Athens earthquake. Free space was found instantaneously to locate temporary housing for an earthquake-stricken population larger than the total number of destitute Roma in Greece. Infrastructure works were completed almost overnight and pre-fabricated houses were allocated to all homeless victims. Ironically, there was an abundance of land for earthquake victims in municipalities near Athens, like Ano Liosia and Aspropyrgos, where its scarcity had been the primary excuse for the inability to relocate the Roma living there.

Greece's disheartening reality was aptly described by the OSCE HCNM:

*"The experience of Roma settlements in Greece highlights a problem that has salience in many countries. The effectiveness of any policy vis-à-vis Roma can turn upon the cooperation of multiple layers of government. But responsibility for inadequate policy implementation cannot be laid solely at the doorstep of local authorities. In some countries that have undertaken initiatives to develop comprehensive Roma policies, national officials appointed to implement those policies operate without adequate support at the most senior levels of government. In order to be effective, public servants require the support of national leaders and local officials" (ibid, p. 116-117).*

And not only of them, it could be added. Even the Rector of the University of Patras, Professor S. Alahiotis, (in a meeting with GHM, MRG-G and the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life, on 1

December 1999, to discuss ways to help Roma squatting on or near university property) states, without offering even a shred of evidence when probed, that:

*“Gypsies know that they are entitled to certain rights and they play the fool... They constantly rob, there have been people arrested. (...) The University is an international forum. What kind of sensitivity can there exist towards people who are trespassing private property, embarrassing the institution internationally when their goats show up in the amphitheaters? (...) We want to protect the reputation of the University, it is an international forum, a showcase. We cannot tolerate that someone drives by it and a Gypsy throws stones...”*

When, after a sustained NGO and –unprecedented for Greece- local media campaign, the mayor of Patras finally acknowledged in July 2000 his responsibility for the welfare of the Romani community of Riganokampos (university property but far away from its campus), and decided to provide it with running water as a first step, the Rector opposed the measure. He argued it may lead to semi-legalizing the Roma’s presence in the area. So the water tabs were put instead alongside the adjacent road... The government’s “Review” has no provision for this settlement.

The Greek government has recently been seen to encourage explicit municipal decisions branding all Roma criminals and asking for their eviction, even banning –in one case- their presence within town limits. Such unanimous decisions were taken in May and July 2000 by the municipal councils of Nea Kios, Nea Tyrintha and Midea (all in Argolida): in Nea Tyrintha, in fact, the eviction had been requested also by the Ministry of Justice... They helped create an explosive climate in the area that led, in June 2000, *inter alia*, to the burning of one Romani hut, the shooting of a Romani youth, the harassment of one journalist, and the ban of an anti-racist group from entering Nea Kios. When asked to condemn these openly racist and cleansing actions, the **Government Spokesman Minister Dimitris Reppas** rejected such suggestions and described these actions as “personal disputes, instances of “vendetta” that often break out in certain areas” (**Press Briefing**, 28 June 2000).

The **Greek Ombudsman’s Office** has repeatedly warned of the illegal and sometimes racist character of eviction decisions or actions, and “blanket” police raids of Romani settlements in search of possible crime suspects, usually without the presence of a Public Prosecutor. In its 1 June 2000 letter to the Nea Kios Mayor and Municipal Council, it called parts of the text of the eviction decision as “*characteristic manifestations of hate speech and –especially- incitation of others –and specifically your citizens- to racial discrimination and actions of racial hatred.*” It also reminded these authorities that their decision, including the creation of citizens’ guards, were leading to actions punishable by articles 1, 2 and 3 of the anti-racist law of 927/1979 on incitation to racial discrimination and hatred; on forming groups and organizing propaganda or activities aiming at racial discrimination; and on refusal to serve people on racial criteria.

Moreover, in a letter to the Salonica Police (11 August 2000), it pointed out that Romani huts are covered as homes by article 9 of the constitution; “*contrary opinion would discriminate in an unequivocally racist –and hence unconstitutional- way the dwellings of these groups of Greece’s population on the basis of their nomadic way of life*”. It has also urged them to “*avoid the creation of the stereotype of ‘usual suspects’ at the expense of racial minorities like the Roma*” and called a blanket police raid of the Gallikos Romani community, on 6 July 2000, a possible “*indication of the stereotypical view that links Roma with serious criminal offenses.*” While, in a 25 July 2000 “extremely urgent” letter to the Aspropyrgos Mayor and City Council, it reminded them that evictions from municipal property required “protocols of administrative eviction” issued by municipal authorities after a decision of the city council, which are to be served to the squatters first. It asked for prompt information on whether the late July 2000 police “cleaning” of the Romani settlements –in reality “cleansing” them including the leveling of Romani huts- was covered by such documents. If not, the

police and municipal operation was in breach of article 241 (violation of the security of the home) and 331 (self-adjudication) of the Greek Penal Code.

The Ombudsman will probably be once again ignored. No Public Prosecutor will seriously investigate these cases, even when charges are pressed, if we judge by recent practice. Nor will there be an internal investigation. As the Ombudsman wrote in its **“Annual Report 1999:”**

*“Human rights violations by the administration (...) can be codified with the words arbitrariness-indifference-bias-impunity; they take their most acute form when applied on vulnerable social groups (p. 18). Often the administration arbitrarily uses public interest as an excuse to restrict individual rights or shows illegal idleness when there is a constitutional obligation to protect human rights. These phenomena will not be eliminated as long as existing disciplinary procedures remain idle. (...) The administration, reproducing the most backward reflexes of our society, often shows its worst face when dealing with members of minority groups (p. 70). The pathology of human rights in our country is mainly a problem of implementing existing constitutional and legal provisions rather than lack thereof (p. 69). It is common wisdom that in the administration prevails a feeling of impunity, that in some cases favors occasional illegal actions, or in other cases it perpetuates a status of generalized anomy and corruption (p.70).”*

Finally, the Council of Europe’s **European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)**, in its **“Second Report on Greece”** –released on 27 June 2000- comes to similar conclusions with the OSCE HCNM and the Greek Ombudsman, and adds:

*“There have been consistent reports that Roma/Gypsies, Albanians and other immigrants are frequently victims of misbehavior on the part of the police in Greece. In particular, Roma/Gypsies are often reported to be victims of excessive use of force -in some cases resulting in death- ill treatment and verbal abuse on the part of the police. Discriminatory checks involving members of these groups are widespread. In most cases there is reported to be little investigation of these cases, and little transparency on the results of these investigations. Although most of these incidents do not generally result in a complaint being filed by the victim, when charges have been pressed the victims have reportedly in some cases been subjected to pressure to drop such charges. ECRI stresses the urgent need for the improvement of the response of the internal and external control mechanisms to the complaints of misbehaviour vis-à-vis members of minority groups on the part of the police.”*  
(p. 13).

In our detailed report previously submitted to the UN CERD (GHM & MRG-G **“Racial Discrimination And Violence Against Roma In Greece”** 31 July 2000), there are many examples of such negligence of the judicial and disciplinary authorities. Even in cases where there was conclusive and incriminating forensic and other evidence of torture (**Bekos and Kotropoulos** case) or murder (**Celal** case) of Roma at the hands of the police, that had led initially to serious indictments of police officers. The reports offers also ample documentation for the failure to implement the ambitious Framework Program mentioned before, as well as short references to the grave health problems of the tent-dwelling Roma and the assimilatory educational program with no respect for Romani language and culture of the Greek government.

We will agree with the Greek Ombudsman that for Greece to stop violating the human rights of the Roma (as well as of the other minorities and of the migrants), and to be in breach of Articles 2 through 7 of the UN ICERD, it takes one thing. As an early 20<sup>th</sup> century satiric columnist wrote, a new law with one article and one sentence: “We order that all existing laws” –and international conventions we would add- “be implemented strictly and without any failure.”

Our NGOs have also produced extensive reports on the Roma of Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia. Others will probably report today on Roma problems there. Though in some cases there is a need for legislative reform in these transition countries, most Roma problems reflect there as well the lack of political will to implement already existing laws, regulations and programs, as well as to actively and systematically fight widespread prejudice against Roma. All UN countries should be motivated to realize that a major yardstick by which their democracies will be judged must be the respect of the rights of the most vulnerable minority, usually the Roma. Then, and only then, will the Roma stand a chance to be treated equally before the law.

Reports (and related material) on Roma in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and Macedonia are available at:  
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### 3. Eviction order in the Municipality of Midea (Argolida, Agia Triada settlement)

#### PRESS RELEASE

2/9/00

#### **SUBJECT: NEW RACIST UNANIMOUS MUNICIPAL ORDER FOR THE FORCED EVICTION OF ALL ROMA RESIDENTS OF MIDEA (ARGOLIDA)**

The cooperating organizations **Greek Helsinki Monitor** (GHM) and **Minority Rights Group-Greece** (MRG-G) make public today another racist unanimous municipal order for the forced eviction of all Roma residents of Midea (Argolida), adjacent the -notorious for similar orders- municipalities of Nea Kios and Nea Tirynta. No additional comments are necessary.

#### **Report of the Chairman of the Municipal Council of Midea [Argolida, Peloponese], unanimously adopted by the Council**

The Municipal Council of Midea, with its resolution n.165/2000 -unanimously adopted by its members- submitted before the competent Committee to solve the Problem of the Athiganoi of the Prefecture of Argolida its final proposal for the local Athiganoi [widely used, pejorative word for Roma]. Here is the relevant excerpt of the Council's decision to inform our fellow citizens.

- A. The area where Athiganoi live is an important crossroad used by the residents of all districts of the Municipality of Midea along with many other transit visitors. This puts at stake the sense of security of all passers-by, including of the Athiganoi.
- B. This crossroad includes the road leading to the archaeological sites of the Municipality (Dendra, Midea). As a result, many of the Greek and foreign visitors of those sites have been repeatedly assaulted and robbed by the Athiganoi.
- C. The Municipality of Midea has no possession of free land.
- D. To the increasing number of registered municipal residents of Midea, a large number of non-registered residents is being added, resulting to the highest criminality rates within the Prefecture.
- E. For lack of personnel, the Police Station of Agia Triada is in no position to adequately cover the entire region.

As a result, I am proposing to the Council the following resolution:

1. Local Athiganoi with real estate property should remain in our region, though not at the existing site. Their property should be replaced with other land elsewhere.
2. Regarding those Athiganoi without real estate, the Municipal Council should insist on its initial position namely:

The allocation of a suitable place for the accommodation of all Athiganoi in the Prefecture with the best possible infrastructure (water and electricity supply, sewage system, telephone, etc).

3. I submit this proposal after having taken into consideration the feelings of anger of the municipal residents, resulting from all sorts of Athiganoi's illegal activity. As well as from the large number of immigrants living in our region, which, for lack of personnel, the Police is in no position to control.
4. Finally, keeping in mind the intention of the government to abolish all existing Police Stations –a plan which we strongly oppose-- we believe that the situation in the region will deteriorate. As a result, we ask from the competent Prefecture Committee to solve the Problem of the Athiganoi to accept our proposal. Otherwise, it is certain that we will face the strong reaction of our fellow citizens.

After discussing the issue and taking into consideration the President's report, the Municipal Council unanimously approved the latter as it stands.

(The document is signed by the President and the members of the Municipal Council, as well as the Mayor, Ms. G. Nassou)

Source: daily «Ta Nea tis Argolidas» [Argolida News], 7/8/00

#### 4. Eviction order in the Municipality of Nea Tiryntha (Argolida)

### PRESS RELEASE

15/9/00

### **SUBJECT: ANOTHER RACIST UNANIMOUS MUNICIPAL ORDER FOR THE FORCED EVICTION OF ALL ROMA RESIDENTS OF NEA TIRYNTHA (ARGOLIDA)**

The cooperating organizations **Greek Helsinki Monitor** (GHM) and **Minority Rights Group-Greece** (MRG-G) make public today another racist unanimous municipal order for the forced eviction of all Roma residents of Nea Tiryntha (Argolida), adjacent to the -notorious for similar orders- municipalities of Nea Kios and Midea. This racist order was preceded by a similar racist decision of the Ministry of Justice. The latter was warned about in June 2000, and its lack of reaction can be considered as tacit confirmation of the order. An appeal has been filed to the Ombudsman's Office. No additional comments are necessary.

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#### **Decision of 31 May 2000 of the Municipal Council of Nea Tiryntha (unanimous)**

#### **Decision No. 71/2000**

Topic No 3: Eviction of Athiganoi from the district of the Municipality of Nea Tiryntha.

*Introducing this topic, the Mayor stated that: For the past twenty years, Gypsies have been living on the boundary of the Municipality, in the area known as "Valtos". They, combined with the laxity and negligence of the authorities, have gradually created a shameful and embarrassing settlement at the entrance to Greece's first capital and opposite the Cyclopean Walls of historical Ancient Tiryntha.*

Everyone is aware that their residence in this location has caused nothing but problems both in the present and in the past. Needless to say, the thievery and destruction they cause to the vehicles of our citizens has turned the road connecting the Nafplio-Argos National Road with the Provincial Road of Nafplio-Nea Kios into a forbidden zone after dark. The Municipality has been notifying all the authorities of the magnitude of the problem, both today and in the past, when it had commune status. Unfortunately, the problem has remained as it was. As you can see, the above reasons make it impossible for these people's presence to continue in this particular area.

*Because their settlement has been illegal from the first moment of its existence, our Municipality has not taken any measure whatsoever to improve their living conditions as far as security or health. These particular Athiganoi had originally settled in the "Glykia" area of the Municipality of Nafplio, and have moved here from there. According to the census of 1991 in what was then the community and is now the Municipality of Nea Tiryntha, no Athiganos was registered here. Therefore, we received none of the regular state subsidies that are given to other Municipalities for the improvement of their living conditions. For the development of our Municipality, we have initiated contacts with many agencies, in particular, the Ministry of Justice and the Public Real Estate Company.*

In accordance with:

1. The document of the Ministry of Justice with protocol no. 100324/24-9-99. This document concerns the decision for the allotment of a plot of land for the widening of the present road connecting the

National Road with the Provincial Road that is adjacent to the Gypsy settlement. We are required to proceed regarding the following:

- a. Fencing the remaining property of the Country Prison
- b. Eviction of the settlement of the Athiganoi.

The above-mentioned allotment of land will be cancelled in case the previous two requirements are not provided for.

2. The document of the Public Real Estate Company, protocol no. 11058/9122/Ö 313540/14-10-1999. This document allots us the plot of land 10.00 meters wide and 11,600 square meters in area, on the south side of the road connecting the Nafplio-Argos National Road to the Provincial Road of Nafplio-Nea Kios. This will create a second traffic lane on the existing road and a corresponding paved sidewalk, as stated in the technical study No. 19/99 “Widening-Asphalting and sidewalk construction” with which the road-widening, etc., works will commence.

Unfortunately, the state has not yet managed to implement the Laws that apply to us all. It has not used the capabilities it surely possesses to find and create any sort of tolerable living conditions for these people that would give them the possibility of living in conditions equal to our own. We therefore find ourselves in the difficult position of having to demand the eviction of the illegal and dangerous settlement of Athiganoi from this particular area and the property that we possess by rights of the above decisions. These works must be executed to improve the development and prospects of our area to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are aware of the problem of finding space in which to relocate the settlement. We hereby state that we will participate in any meeting with Municipalities and the Prefecture so requested, in order explore collective possibilities that exist.

Next, the President of the Municipal Council took the floor and called upon the council to decide on this topic. After an open discussion and upon consideration of the Mayor’s introduction, the Municipal Council declares that:

IT IS UNANIMOUSLY DECIDED THAT:

- A. The illegal settlement of Athiganoi will be evicted immediately from the area on the Provincial Road of Nafplio-Nea Kios, which belongs to the Municipality of Nea Kios and the State. This must be completed so that road-widening works can freely begin on the Country Road connecting the Nafplio-Argos National Road with the Provincial Road of Nafplio-Nea Kios.
- B. We request the assistance of the Public Prosecutor, the Police, the Prefectural Authority, and all other agencies for the eviction of the Athiganoi by the deadline date of 31 August 2000.
- C. The following will be notified of this decision:
  1. Ministry of Planning, Environment and Public Works
  2. Ministry of Public Order
  3. Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization
  4. General Secretary of the Peloponnisos Region
  5. Prefect of Argolida

This decision has been assigned the serial number 71/2000.

Written by the undersigned:

The President of the Municipal Council

The Mayor

The Secretary

The Members

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**PUBLIC REAL ESTATE COMPANY**  
**PREFECTURE: ARGOLIDA**  
**MUNICIPALITY: Nea Tiryntha**  
**K.Y. Argolida**  
**A.K. 450 sections**

**USAGE ALLOTMENT OF PUBLIC REAL ESTATE**

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE  
TOPIC:

IN ACCORDANCE WITH: a) The document of the Mayor of Nea Tiryntha, protocol no. 1629/19-7-99  
b) The documents of the Ministry of Justice, registration No. 1 66117/17-6-99, 2) 30480/18-6-1999, 3) 94072/19-7-99  
c) The document of the Warden of Tiryntha Country Prison registered No. 4480/20-7-1999

Further to the above documents of the Municipality of Nea Tiryntha and the Warden of Tiryntha Country Prison and following verbal consultation with the Prison Warden, we inform you of the agreement for the allotment of a plot of land, 8 meters wide, from the property of the Tiryntha Country Prison. This land is to be used for the construction of a roadway-sidewalk, which will connect the National Road with the Provincial Road of Nafplio-Nea Kios. The requisite conditions for the allotment of this Plot of land are as follows:

- a. The fencing of the Prison property as described in the attached report no. 2479/10 5-99 from the Warden of Tiryntha Country Prison.
- b. The demolition of a corner of the Tiryntha Country Prison in order to straighten the road leading to Nea Tiryntha.
- c. The eviction of the settlement of Athiganoi.
- d. The relocation of the warehouses under demolition on the portion of the property slated for allotment to existing unused buildings near the prison. A study of the repairs necessary for the conversion of these buildings will be submitted by the Themis Construction Company, Inc. after consideration of the proposals from the Prison and
- e. The expenses of fencing and repairs to the buildings that will burden the Municipality of Nea Tiryntha.

General Director  
K. BARDANI

**5. Eviction order in Nea Alikarnasos; Roma were served with protocols of eviction twice in two years**

**Background information (excerpt from GHM's November 1999 Report to the ERRC)**

The Heraklion (Crete) County Court, with the 975/1999 decision of 12/11/1999, cancelled the 17/12/1999-eviction protocol issued by the Mayor of Nea Alikarnassos against Roma.

The Court acknowledged that in principle the municipality had the right to issue a protocol of eviction as the proprietor of the land in question. Roma settled in this land, following the decision of the prefecture authorities and with the consent of the municipality. Previously, the Roma tent-dwellers had been scattered around in the wider district. This fact provoked intense reactions on behalf of the local residents and a solution was imminent at the time. The Roma built shacks and lived without any infrastructure hoping, as promised by the authorities, that their living conditions would improve soon. The increase in the population of the camp made things worse and provoked a new series of reactions but no serious effort was ever made towards the improvement of the situation. The lack of any effort of this kind can in no way be blamed on the evicted. Under the aforementioned circumstances and, following the failure of the committee set up by the Heraklion Prefect to find a suitable place for the transfer of the Roma, a protocol of eviction was issued by the municipal authorities. The evicted, in their majority people with large families and low income, claimed that they would not be able to face the consequences of this decision. Taking into account all this, one can conclude that even though the eviction decision was within the rights of the municipality, it was evidently abusive. Therefore, the grounds for the Roma's appeal should be accepted and the protocol of eviction, which was initially issued, be canceled.

.....

Even though the Roma of Nea Alikarnassos won the case in court in 1999, following the municipality's first attempt to expel them, the latter has not given up the idea of their eviction. Claiming that it owns the whole site (according to the first protocol, there were some private owners as well), the mayor of Nea Alikarnassos is asking for the second time in two years the eviction of the local Romani population. During this time, the latter has done everything possible to block their transferring first at a nearby former military barrack and then, to the Industrial Zone where the Periphery of Crete had allocated land for them. In cooperation with the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life, the Periphery is in charge of a housing scheme. Reportedly, the transferring is to be completed in two years' time.

With the help of GHM, local Roma filed a report to the Ombudsman.

## **PRESS RELEASE**

15/9/00

### **SUBJECT: NEW MUNICIPAL ORDER FOR THE EVICTION OF ALL ROMA RESIDENTS OF NEA ALIKARNASOS (CRETE)**

The cooperating organizations **Greek Helsinki Monitor** (GHM) and **Minority Rights Group-Greece** (MRG-G) make public today another municipal order for the eviction of all Roma residents of Nea Alikarnasos (Crete). A year ago, setting important case law, the courts annulled a similar order as abusive. The municipal authorities did not appeal that verdict but chose abusively to issue another order a year later, and to service it in mid-summer, forcing the Roma to go again to the courts. This time they also appealed to the Ombudsman's Office. No additional comments are necessary.

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**HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
HERAKLION PREFECTURE  
MUNICIPALITY OF NEA ALIKARNASOS**

**Nea Alikarnasos 20/6/00**  
Protocol number: 3754

### **PROTOCOL OF ADMINISTRATIVE EVICTION**

On this day, 20/6/2000, in the Town Hall of Nea Alikarnasos, I the Mayor of Nea Alikarnasos, in the presence of the Secretary of the Municipality, Irimi Karandai, submit the following report:

The persons named below, residing in of Nea Alikarnasos as tent dwellers, with the intent to acquire rights of occupancy and ownership to a plot of land of 42415 m<sup>2</sup>, belonging to the Municipal share of land 307, the sole proprietor of which is the Municipality according to the final land distribution and the contract 9223/22.1.99, have been continuously arbitrarily and illegally occupying this site since the year 1992.

This plot of land covers an area of 42415 m<sup>2</sup>. It is bordered by the public road on the north, and the remainder of the Municipal plot on the south, east and west. It appears and is outlined as  $\hat{A}-\hat{A}-\hat{A}-\hat{A}-\hat{A}-\hat{E}-\hat{C}-\hat{A}$  on the attached plan made by the Agricultural Topographical Engineer, Mrs. Irimi Seliniotaki. It is located at the position of Rouses or Dio Aorakia in Nea Alikarnasos and it is bordered by the relief road of the National Highway Heraklion – Aghios Nikolaos, south, east and west, along with the balance of the Municipal plot of land 307.

On the basis of this, the decision number 133/2000 of the Municipal Council, the provisions of Compulsory Law 263/68 as they are in force, article 3, paragraph 12 of law 2307/95 and article 240 paragraph 1 and 4 of presidential decree 410/95.

**WE EVICT:**

[Follow 102 names of Roma]

from the said plot of land of 42415 m<sup>2</sup>, and PROHIBIT these individuals any act of occupancy and use thereof. The above-mentioned evictees have the right to appeal this protocol within thirty days of its issuance before the County Court of Heraklion. A copy of this appeal with a summons must be served on the Municipality of Nea Alikarnasos during this time period.

For verification and proof, this document was prepared and signed in three hundred and six (306) exact copies.

A competent court marshal has been ordered to service a copy to each of the above defendants so that each is informed of all legal consequences.

The Mayor of Nea Alikarnasos

The Secretary of the Municipality

## 6. Commemoration of the Roma Holocaust

### PRESS RELEASE

2/8/00

#### **SUBJECT: COMMEMORATION OF ROMA HOLOCAUST. GOVERNMENT INDIFFERENCE IN GREECE AND IN THE REST OF EUROPE TOWARDS CONTEMPORARY ANTI-ROMA A CTS OF VIOLENCE AND STATEMENTS OF INTOLERANCE.**

The cooperating organizations **Greek Helsinki Monitor** (GHM) and **Minority Rights Group-Greece** (MRG-G) respectfully honor today the memory of the Roma (Gypsy) Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis. They point out that, despite the significant improvement since of the respect for Roma rights, the latter continue to be the object of discrimination and widespread, social but also institutionalized, racism in many countries of Europe, including Greece. GHM and MRG-G endorse fully the following excerpts from today's release of the "Helsinki Commission" of the U.S. Congress that implicitly or explicitly mention Greece among the countries that do not respect Roma rights.

*Holocaust:* The nights of 2 and 3 August 1944, the order was given and carried out to liquidate all Roma prisoners in the concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. 2,897 Romani men, women and children were executed in gas chambers. Today, throughout the world, but also in Auschwitz-Birkenau, commemorations are held by Roma for the approximately 500,000 fellow Roma victims of the, unfortunately forgotten, Holocaust of the Nazi era.

*Excerpts from the Release of Helsinki Commission of the U.S. Congress:*

"Roma still live in a world where walls built under police guard are euphemistically called 'social hygiene measures,' where pogroms are called 'police actions,' where public officials speak openly of a 'Chinese solution' to the birth of Romani children, and where Romani asylum seekers are, as an entire class, dismissed out of hand. (...) Since the fall of communism, the countries where the greatest number of Roma live have allowed this situation to get progressively worse. From Nea Kios in Greece to Csor in Hungary, local authorities have sent the message that their Romani minorities are not welcome -- and national officials have stood by in shameful silence. (...) Governments must do far more to shoulder the responsibilities of leadership and, accordingly, unequivocally and publicly condemn anti-Roma manifestations, from acts of violence to statements of intolerance."

(Full text available at the web page: <http://www.egroups.com/message/balkanhr/767>)

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**GHM Board:** Dimitris Angelidis, Panayote Dimitras, Dionysis Gousetis, Dimitrina Petrova, Christina Rougheri, Gregory Vallianatos.

**MRG-G Executive Committee:** Mehmet Dukkanci, Nafsika Papanikolatos, Christina Rougheri.

**International Advisory Committee:** Savvas Agouridis, Teuta Arifi, Ivo Banac, Vladimir Bilandzic, Marcel Courthiade, Loring Danforth, Fernand de Varennes, Eran Fraenkel, Henri

Giordan, Krassimir Kanev, Will Kymlicka, Remzi Lani, Theodore S. Orlin, Dimitrina Petrova, Alan Phillips, Aaron Rhodes, Patrick Thornberry, Stefan Troebst, Boris Tsilevich, Tibor Varady.

**Affiliation to International Organizations:** Consortium of Minority Resources (COMIR), European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), Minority Rights Group International (MRGI).