

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

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1. Raid in the Roma camp by the Gallikos River (Thessaloniki)
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On July 6, 2000, at approximately 6:00 a.m., police raided a Roma settlement by the Gallikos River in search of drugs, weapons, and suspects. About one hundred people were brought to the police station. Police located outstanding warrants against some of those arrested for unpaid fines for trading without permits or driving without a 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-run Macedonian Press Agency (MPA) covered the incident (6 July) in a way that stigmatised the Roma: it falsely reported that some of those people taken into custody 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 news 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 the racist and improper treatment.

**DROM NETWORK FOR THE SOCIAL RIGHTS OF GYPSIES
GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR
MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP-GREECE**

Mr. Dimitris Reppas, Minister of the Press and Media
Mr. Michalis Stathopoulos, Minister of Justice
Mr. Michalis Chrysohoidis, Minister of Public Order

**SUBJECT: APPEAL FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION AND CRIMINAL
PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THE ILLEGAL AND RACIST POLICE ACTION AND
ITS WANTON, DEFAMATORY AND RACIST COVERAGE BY THE
MACEDONIAN PRESS AGENCY**

10 July 2000

Dear Ministers,

At 6:00 on the morning of 6 July 2000, "with their usual tactics, the special forces of the Thessaloniki General Security disturbed the sleep of innocent children and adults with a raid on the Gallikos River Gypsy settlement. The raid took place without the presence of a Public Prosecutor, and was an unmitigated violation of the sanctuary of the family." These charges were made by the Prefectorial Authority of Thessaloniki on 7 July, in an untypical action for which it should be lauded. The Press Release concerning this charge is co-signed by the Urban Cooperative AGISO of the Roma themselves, the DROM Network, and the Doctors of the World. It points out that the 100 citizens who were violently apprehended into police custody were suspected of narcotics involvement ("gypsies are always suspected"). It was later ascertained that only a few of the detainees had prior offenses of the price and the traffic control codes. The signatories of that press release characterized the entire police action as racist.

That same day, the state-run Macedonian Press Agency published a wanton, defamatory and racist "news" report of the event, which totally inaccurately stated that "illegal aliens" were also arrested during the "clean-up raid," and that "a number of the detainees are fugitives from justice, wanted for robbery, burglary, fraud, and other offenses, and that they are expected to be arraigned tomorrow." We have intervened to the director of the MPA, asking for a full rebuttal to the publication and either the imposition of sanctions on its author or information on the person (most probably a police officer) who induced him to write such inaccuracies. Unfortunately, the only thing the MPA did was to repeat the news item the next day, maintaining that some of the detainees had prior "arrest warrants for burglary." Even this was erroneous since all had already been released. This time, however, the MPA named "the director of the Thessaloniki security, Fil. Karaghiozides," as the source of the erroneous and defamatory information. At the same time, the MPA also chose not to mention the aforementioned charges made by the Prefectorial Authority of Thessaloniki. This confirmed the impression that its publications were aimed at tarnishing the largest Roma community, which, according to the - dubiously reliable as far as deadlines are concerned - declarations of the State, is awaiting imminent resettlement in the model settlement at Gonos.

In light of all this, we are calling upon you to initiate the necessary governmental and criminal proceedings provided by Greek law and international conventions for the severe punishment of those responsible for both this illegal and racist police action as well as the wanton, defamatory and racist coverage by the MPA in obvious collaboration with higher police officials.

Sincerely yours,

Thanassis Triaridis
DROM Network for the Social Rights of Gypsies

Panayote Dimitras
Greek Helsinki Monitor

Nafsika Papanikolatos
Minority Rights Group - Greece

MPA (Macedonian Press Agency)

GYPSY TENT-DWELLERS AND THE M.P.A.
(Thessaloniki, 10 July 2000 (21:01 UTC+2))

Concerning the release issued by the *Greek-Helsinki Monitor*, the *DROM Network for the Social Rights of Gypsies*, and the *Minority Rights Group-Greece*, which accuses the Macedonian Press Agency of “wanton defamatory and racist coverage” of the July 6th police raid on the French River Gypsy camp, Spyros Kouzinopoulos, M.P.A. Managing Director, has issued the following statement:

“Late that same night, the M.P.A. correspondent published a news item based on information received from police sources - just as other newspaper crime reporters published similar articles based on the same information. These police reports, however, turned out to be exaggerations.

The following day, when it became evident that the Gypsies arrested had been unjustly harassed, the M.P.A. returned with an updated report stressing, even by its title, that “the information concerning weapons in the Gypsy camp proved to be a hoax.” The article, moreover, emphasized the very difficult conditions under which the tent-dwelling Gypsies of Thessaloniki live.

In all its years of operation, the Macedonian Press Agency has always maintained fundamental ethical principles and has avidly defended democratic and humanitarian values. To those accusing it of “racism” it offers complete access to the hundreds of dispatches and articles it has published on the problems of the Gypsies in Thessaloniki and the rest of the country.”

2. Ill-treatment of L. Bekos and E. Kotropoulos; letter to the Ombudsman

On July 18, with the help of GHM L. Bekos and E. Kotropoulos, two Roma youngsters who had been ill-treated by police officers in Mesologhi in May 1998, filed a report to the Ombudsman asking for a proper investigation of their matter. Despite the fact that --following much of GHM and MRG-G pressure to the authorities-- the Ministry of Public Order ordered a Sworn Administrative Examination in June 1998, L. Bekos and E. Kotropoulos are still ignorant of the outcome of this investigation. Moreover, even though the officers in question were indicted by the Public Prosecutor for torture, the latter were not suspended nor removed from their job. On the contrary, they were freely exercising pressure upon the victims to drop the case.

3. Racist follow-up in Nea Kios

On June 28 and 29, the local daily "Argolida News" [Ta Nea tis Argolidas] reported the following incident:

On June 26, a resident of Argos (a neighboring city to Nea Kios), Demetrios Fotiades -who is not a Rom himself but looks like a Rom- stopped at the central square of Nea Kios to buy pork. A municipal citizen of Nea Kios, Demetrios Arapakis, who was sitting at a nearby café, angrily remarked to the butcher: "Why do you sell pork to a Gypsy?" Then Fotiades, who became very upset by this remark, responded: "If you do not want him to sell [to Gypsies], then you must pay him." Arapakis stood and physically assaulted Fotiades, who did not respond. The incident ended following intervention from other people who were present at the time at the Town Hall. Both parties were asked to come to an agreement and peacefully resolve the misunderstanding.

Reportedly, some days later, three Roma young women went to buy *souvlaki* (Greek kebab) from a central restaurant in Nea Kios, near a local parish where a Roma wedding was taking place. The owner of the restaurant refused to serve the women, and threatened them at knife-point to leave his restaurant.

4. Lawsuit filed against racist persecution of Nea Kios Roma

PRESS RELEASE

Subject: Lawsuit filed against racist persecution of Nea Kios Roma

On 30 June 2000, fifteen representatives of various organizations and political parties and movements brought a lawsuit before the Prosecutor of the Misdemeanor Court of Nafplion concerning the racist persecution of the Romani citizens of Nea Kios, Argolida. Among the signatories of the lawsuit are: Manolis Glezos; Maria Damanaki, MP/Coalition Party; Stella Alifieri, former MP; representatives of the non-governmental organizations, *DROM Network*,

*Greek Helsinki Monitor, Minority Rights Group-Greece, and the political movements, A.K.O.A., A.E.K.A. and S.E.K.E.; V. Paiteris, advisor to the Panhellenic Federation of Greek Roma Associations (P.O.S.E.R.); and journalists. They have filed specific charges both for the violation of law 927/1979 (**On the punishment of practices and acts intended to provoke racial discrimination**), and for classic offenses of the penal code (Articles 183, 184, 186, 187, 192).*

*As the lawsuit notes: “the undersigned, acting as individuals as well as on behalf of the Organizations, Movements, and Political Parties they represent, have decided to address themselves to Justice, being of the opinion that Judicial Authority is the last means of defense of the fundamental human and social rights of the Roma of Nea Kios, Argolida, **who face imminent danger for their lives.** After the illegal, immoral, inhuman, totalitarian and fascist conduct of the Municipal Council of Nea Kios, occurring on 20/05/00 and subsequently (see I-Account), and which not only have no grounds in any canon of ethics but **clearly violate the Constitution of Greece and the existing laws** (see below, under 3), the 600 Roma (80 families) of Nea Kios have been **unconditionally characterized as an “endangered population” that must be protected by every means from the racist fervor of the Municipal Council and of the local community, incited to its hatred by the Council.***

*Worst of all is the fact that the inhuman racist persecution of the Roma is (also) supported by **the Municipal Council of Nea Kios by its unanimous (!!!) decision on 20/05/2000** – that is, by the highest elected officials in local government, who are sworn to uphold the **Constitution and the Laws of the State.** If the results of these actions vindicate their instigators, then let no one doubt that similar incidents of racist persecution are bound to occur in this country against Roma, Kurds, immigrants, or other social groups.*

In Germany on the night of 9-11-1938, after planned provocation Nazi Storm Troopers (SA) assisted by groups of “indignant” citizens burned and looted the shops and homes of Jewish citizens as well as of those who maintained business and social associations with Jews. That night is recorded in the annals of racist and totalitarian violence as “Kristallnacht.” We do not believe that Greece in the year 2000 is Germany of 1938. However, we the undersigned have repeatedly charged that both Greece and the rest of Europe is experiencing a subtle yet real and protracted “Kristallnacht” against Roma, minorities, as well as economic immigrants. If the State and Judicial Authority tolerate and allow acts of racist violence to go unpunished today, if they do not defend the fundamental rights of human beings to life and the free development of their personality, then another link in the chain of racism and fear of the Other will be forged. Where will this chain lead?

*We the undersigned profoundly believe that society itself is responsible for racism. We are well aware that today’s tent-dwelling Roma are a marginal social group, and that marginal groups provoke a fear in the rest of society that breeds racism. **When the State does not take institutional measures to protect these populations, when it does not support their essential educational and professional integration, when it does not ensure the rudiments of a humane life, then it is by its omission an actual accessory to racist violence against these populations.** For this reason, we have previously put forth specific proposals for the protection of the social rights of tent-dwelling Roma, and for their educational and professional integration into society. **If these proposals had been adopted in the case of the Nea Kios Roma, we would not have arrived at the current racist aberration. But regardless of the State’s responsibilities, it is unacceptable to use “indignant” citizens as a pretext for***

criminal offenses and illegal acts against defenseless people. Nor can the irrational, fascist desires of certain sick minds to “cleanse their region of Roma” stand up as an alibi.

We wish to note that, to protect their lives as well as their personal and family security, this lawsuit contains the signatures of neither the Nea Kios Roma nor the citizens of the Argolida Prefecture opposing the above racist acts. In mind of the account of this lawsuit, the Public Prosecutor may seek out these individuals and privately examine them as witnesses, thus protecting them from possible attacks and the threats that have already been voiced.

*With these conditions we submit this lawsuit, reiterating that “the Judicial Authority has the duty to **IMMEDIATELY AND IMPERATIVELY** defend the life and social rights of the Nea Kios Roma, who are vulnerable and defenseless at all times.”*

The frontispiece of the lawsuit contains the words of Primo Levi: **“When a society, whether on a local or national level, indiscriminately prohibits the integration and hinders the residence of any cultural, national, social or other group using the rationale of the collective guilt of this group, then we have the first link in the chain. The last link in the chain is found at Auschwitz.”**

The lawsuit is signed in alphabetical order by:

Alfieri, S. (former MP/Coalition)

Damanaki, M. (MP/Coalition)

Dimitras, P. (Greek Helsinki Monitor)

Glezos, M. (former MP/first in the state electoral list of the Coalition)

Gousetis, D. (journalist/ “Avghi” newspaper)

Hadjinikolaou, N. (attorney, Ph.D. candidate in Criminal Law, Aristotle University of Salonica)

Kardasiadis, A. (attorney)

Lambrou, P. (journalist/ “Epochi” newspaper)

Malandrenioti, L. (journalist/“Epochi” newspaper)

Paiteris, V. (Federal Advisor/ P.O.S.E.R.)

Papanikolatos, N. (Minority Rights Group-Greece)

Sifakakis, I. (Socialist Workers Party of Greece)

Triandafyllou, A. (Renewal Modernist Movement of the Left)

Triaridis, T. (member/DROM Network)

Tzikas, T. (member/A.K.O.A. Central Committee)

5. The police authorities of Argolida on the racist events in Nea Kios

On the day after the shooting of a Rom youth in Nea Kios, the police issued a press release. Following NGO charges that police was framing Roma the police sent GHM a reply. The English translation of these documents follows:

Press Release of 16/6/2000

It was reported to our agency by the Athiganos Christos Dimitropoulos, son of Gerasimos, age 18, resident of Nea Kios, that about 18.30 on 15/6/2000 in the rural site of "Karakaxa", Nea Kios, two residents of the Nea Kios Municipality, whom he did not know, approached him on motorcycle and shot him with a pistol and without any reason, wounding him in the left arm. The investigation by our agency did not confirm this act.

-Specifically, upon investigation by our agency (Argos Security Department), our preliminary inquiry concluded that an incident occurred about 18.30 on 15/6/2000 in the Karakaxa area, Nea Kios, at the Settlement of Athiganoi and at the tent of the Athiganos Gerasimos Dimitropoulos, son of Athanasios, age 47, resident of Nea Kios. And that the said incident during which the Athiganos Christos Dimitropoulos, son of Gerasimos, was wounded in the left arm by a gun, occurred among the Athiganoi, rather than with the involvement of unknown residents of the region, as was originally claimed. During the legal search that took place at the tent of Gerasimos Dimitropoulos and the surrounding area, a spent cartridge from a 9mm pistol was found and seized near the tent. Found a short distance away was a sack containing a 9mm Star pistol of Spanish manufacture, 132 cartridges of the same diameter, approximately 80 grams of pure Indian cannabis, as well as blood stains that came from the wound of the said victim.

-The victim Christos Dimitropoulos was taken originally to the Argos General Hospital and then to Center for Rehabilitation of Injured Persons (K.A.T.) in Athens, where he is hospitalized in custody, under arrest for falsely testifying that perpetrators of his injury were residents of Nea Kios.

-Also arrested was the Athiganida Vasiliki Dimitropoulos (mother of the victim), who falsely testified that her son had been wounded by residents of Nea Kios, and that incident took place far from the settlement. Gerasimos Dimitropoulos (father and husband, respectively, of the aforementioned) is being sought for illegal possession of the said weapon and cartridges, and for possession of Indian cannabis (hashish).

-In addition, a second Athiganos of unknown identity is being sought as the perpetrator of the incident.-

CONFIDENTIAL

Athens, 1 August 2000

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ORDER
GENERAL STAFF OF TO
THE HELLENIC POLICE GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR
ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION
DIRECTION OF PERSONNEL P.O. Box 608 20
DEPARTMENT I OF OFFICERS 153 04 GLYKA NERA
4 P. Kanellopoulou St., 101 77 Athens ATTICA

Person in charge: Andreas ANDRIKOS
Telephone: 69 81 001
Protocol Number: 4803/22/69-d

SUBJECT: "Allegations against Officers of the Department of Security of Argos, Argolida"

RE: a) *Your report-denunciation of 22-6-2000 and*
 b) *Our document 4803/22/69-b of 6-7-2000.*

1. Subsequent to our above document (b), we inform you of the following regarding the subject in question, resulting from the legal investigation of the Argolida Police Directorate:

a) On 15-6-2000, about 18:30, Christos DIMITROPOULOS, son of Gerasimos, age 18, resident of Nea Kios, was brought to Argos Hospital with a gunshot wound in the left forearm.

b) For this incident Officers of the Security Department of Argos, in collaboration with other members of the Argolida Police Force, undertook all the necessary investigations and preliminary inquiries into this case, and so as to locate the perpetrators. The relevant file was sent to the Public Prosecutor of the Misdemeanors Court, who is responsible for evaluating the thoroughness and legality of such inquests.

c) In his statement, the victim claimed that, at 18:30 on the aforementioned date, at the location "Karakaxa", while standing near the orchard, he was approached by a motorcycle ridden by two unknown to him inhabitants of the village in question. One of the riders then shot him with a short-barrel gun (pistol).

d) The victim's mother, Vasiliki DIMITROPOULOU, resident of Nea Kios, testified under oath during her examination that at approximately 18.45 of the same day, her son returned from a visit their tent with a wound to his left arm.

e) The on-site search and investigation of the tent in which the victim and his parental family reside, which took place from 20:20 to 20:45 of the same day, in the presence of an official from the Public Prosecutor's office ascertained the following:

(1) A 9mm spent cartridge was found a short distance from the tent.

(2) Traces of blood that had been rinsed off with water were found at the edge of the tent.

(3) There was an uninterrupted trail of drops of blood from the place where the blood traces were found to the adjacent dirt road (a distance of 20 meters).

(4) No blood traces were found leading to the tent from the place where, according to the victim's statement, the incident occurred.

(5) A 9mm pistol and a large number of cartridges (132 pieces) of the same diameter were found carefully concealed at a distance of forty (40) meters from the tent.

2. The discovered exhibits were sent to the Criminology Laboratory for examination. The victim's father, Gerasimos DIMITROPOULOS, owner of the weapon and ammunition, was charged with possession.

3. An eyewitness, who was working during the critical time in a field adjacent to the settlement, testified that he heard the sound of a gunshot coming from the victim's tent. He then saw the victim brought by other person of his race to the adjacent road. He testified in addition that he saw two women go towards the place where the pistol and ammunition were found.

4. From the above discoveries we conclude that both the victim and his mother testified falsely that the victim was shot by residents of Nea Kios, for which they taken into custody for perjury (article 224 par. 2 of the Penal Code).

- However, only Vasiliki DIMITROPOULOU was brought before the Public Prosecutor, and was allowed to go free after her indictment. Her wounded son was being hospitalized at the Center for Rehabilitation of Injured Persons (K.A.T.) and was not brought in.

5. The Argolida Police Directorate has ordered the police patrol and monitoring of the greater Nea Kios area, intended to prevent and suppress all forms of criminal activity and to implement the law against any wrongdoing, without discrimination.

*Supervisor of the Administrative Division
ILIAS PAPAETHYMIU
Major-General*

*Verified Copy
Athens, the same day
For the 1st Officers Department*

*(Signed and stamped)
ANDREAS ANDRIKOS
Police Commissioner A*

6. On the occasion of the 26th anniversary of the restoration of the Greek Democracy

PRESS RELEASE

23/7/00

**SUBJECT: THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY TURNS 26! MORE THAN
100,000 ROMA "ENJOY" IT IN DESTITUTE SETTLEMENTS, PERMANENT
VICTIMS OF INSTITUTIONALIZED RACISM
THAT THRIVES WITH IMPUNITY**

On occasion of the 26th anniversary of Greece's return to democratic rule, our collaborating organizations, **Greek Helsinki Monitor and Minority Rights Group-Greece**, wish to recall

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.

International reaction has already begun in the form of letters to Ministers and Embassies, as well as sternly censoring reports by intergovernmental organs such as the High Commissioner for National Minorities of the OSCE and the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). The subject will be discussed on 15-16 August 2000, during a special session of the UN Commission for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on the Roma worldwide. In Greece, with the exception of the Ombudsman, the DROM Network for the Social Rights of Gypsies, the Doctors of the World, a few local agencies and, occasionally, the Synaspismos Party and the KKE (Communist Party of Greece), no other governmental or non-governmental agencies responsible for upholding the law or professing interest in defending human rights appear to be disturbed by this problem. This deafening silence gives the impression of complicity.

We cite an indicative (but not exhaustive) list of violations of Roma rights, noting that, for those cases referred to him, the Ombudsman has confirmed the charges made by the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). These events, covering the period of the past four years, take the form of a "tally" of the supposed implementation of the governmental "Policy Framework on Greek Gypsies," which was announced in July 1996.

A. Racist Decisions by Municipal Councils Explicitly Referring to Roma Evictions (3)
Rio (1999), Ano Kios, Argolida (2000) and Ano Tirynta, Argolida (2000)

B. Illegal Evictions With No Resettlement Provisions (7)
Evosmos, Thessaloniki (1998), Ano Liosia, Attica (1997, 1999), Anatoli, Ioannina (1999), Makryianni, Patras (1997), Phoinikas, Thessaloniki (1997) and Trikala, Pyrgos (1997).

C. Attempted Evictions Averted By Protest (10)
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, Thessaloniki (2000).

D. Destitute Settlements (15)
Riganokampos/Kato Souli Patras, Damaria Lamia, Tenekedoupoli Komotini, Halastra Thessaloniki, Nea Zoi and Homateri Aspropyrgos, Nea Tirynta Argolida, Gallikos River Thessaloniki, District Hospital and Kato Kastritsi Rio Achaia, Sageika Achaia, Aetoliko Aetoloakarnania. "Model organized settlements" [according to the state - "appalling models" according to MKO] with substandard infrastructure: Menemeni Thessaloniki, Makryianni Patras.

E. Police Raids With No Public Prosecutor Present
Gallikos River Thessaloniki (2000), Aspropyrgos (2000).

F. Police Violence (Verbal to Fatal) Against the Roma
Death: A. Mouratis (Livadia 1996) and A. Celal (Partheni Thessaloniki, 1998).

Degrading Treatment To Torture: 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 Dourgout (Komotini). His application for a stateless identity document has been repeatedly refused since 1998. The Komotini Hospital refuses since 1999 to provide his wife Songioul Dourgout with an official answer as to why her uterus was removed during a miscarriage procedure.

Information on our webpage: <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/roma-in-greece.html>

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).

7. Cleansing operation against Roma in Aspropyrgos and Ano Liosia (homateri- garbage dump settlement)

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 existing there. The huts, containing family possessions, belonged to Greek and Albanian Roma tent-dwellers. Approximately 7-8 Greek Roma families, some with sick members and without possibility to move, were given an ultimatum to vacate the site by a July 17 deadline. The operation took place without the necessary prior municipal decisions, nor were eviction notices served to the Roma families and no Public Prosecutor was present.

According to the police, this action was a “cleaning operation” of the municipality emptying the site from vacant shucks belonging to “Albanian Gypsies.” Greek Helsinki Monitor countered by describing the action as a de facto “cleansing operation,” one that violated 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

razing 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 continued living among the garbage and the rats in a remote area with no infrastructure.

In an unofficial meeting with (26/7/00) with the presence of Elpida Efthymiatis from *Doctors of the World-Greece* and two journalists from *ANTENNA* television station, the deputy mayor of Aspropyrgos presented the municipality’s cleansing operations as the only realistic way to deal with the issue. Attributing high criminality rates and anti-social behavior to local Roma, the deputy mayor portrayed the eviction as a mere procedural cleaning operation of the municipality, an action rightly performed within its own boundaries. When asked by *Greek Helsinki Monitor* why the municipality of Aspropyrgos did not support the idea of a local Roma self-managed settlement on land granted by the Ministry of Agriculture, the deputy mayor stated:

“Please first find land to build sports club for our children and then we might look upon the Gypsies.”

Last but not least, according to the deputy mayor, the right to asylum ceases before some *“vacant tents made of wood and plastic.”*

9. Anti-Roma, racist reactions by the University of Patras; boycotting of the water supply in the Riganocambos settlement (Patra, Peloponese)

In July 2000, the municipality of Patras made a first step to improve the destitute living conditions in the camp of Riganocambos by providing Roma with external water taps. The initiative was strongly opposed by the University of Patras -the owner of the site- and its Rector, Professor Alahiotes, who argued that the construction might lead to semi-legalizing the Roma presence in the region. As a result, the municipality reportedly installed the water taps on the public road outside the settlement rather than near their huts. (It is reminded that in its June 2000 proposal to the Prefecture, following much of GHM and MRG-G pressure, the municipality had, at least, vaguely proposed the allocation of prefabricated houses to all families in the camp, although without offering possible sites for relocation.) The site location was determined by the University of Patras, which, on various occasions, has made clear that it will not allocate land to the Roma. The University, through its Rector, Professor Alahiotes, has not contributed in resolving the housing problem of Roma in Rio and, like the local municipality, wished for the Roma eviction. (It is reminded that Roma live within the area owned by the University Hospital of Rio.) After much of GHM and MRG-G pressure, the municipality agreed to accommodate in prefabricated houses only three Roma families, who are municipal residents, while aiming to evict the remaining local tent-dwelling population. Last but not east, in a December 1, 1999, meeting with GHM, MRG-G, and the Prime Minister’s Office for Quality of Life, the Rector of the University, Professor S. Alahiotes, made the following racist, anti-Roma comments and did not offer 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..."*