

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

**Contents**

- 1. Roma in Nea Kios (Argolida, Peloponese)**
- 2. Roma in Nea Tiryntha (Argolida, Peloponese)**
- 3. Roma in Patras and Rio (Argolida, Peloponese)**

**1. Roma in Nea Kios**

*The following is a translation of a report published in «Rightly!», GHM's Internet magazine on human rights. GHM visited Nea Kios and the neighboring municipalities of Nea Tiryntha and Midea where a substantial Romani population inhabits. GHM met with local Roma and residents of Nea Kios, municipal cadres, the Prefect of Argolida and the deputy police commissioner in the region. Following GHM's initiatives, a complaint -co-signed by 15 personalities such as the Progressive Left Coalition MP, M. Damanaki, former Coalition deputies, Manolis Glezos and Stella Alfieri, as well as members of party organizations, human rights and ecological associations- was filed on June 30<sup>th</sup>. The complaint was mainly based on the extensive work of GHM. In addition, following a GHM/IFEX press release (12/6/00) that denounced the abuse of journalist Panos Lambrou and the arson of a Romani hut by the «indignant» residents in Nea Kios, the Greek Minister of Justice, Mihalīs Stathopoulos, asked for a court investigation of the anti-Roma actions in Nea Kios.*

**Nea Kios opposed to the presence of the Roma and their supporters**

Nea Kios (Argolida) is one of the few communities that were upgraded to municipalities under the "Kapodistrias" scheme. Three thousand people live in the municipality, 600 of which are Roma. The majority of the Roma are plot owners who have lived in the city of Nea Kios and in Argolida in general for over thirty years. They are mainly gathered in two areas (Karakaxa and Panitsa), not far from the town center, in houses and shanties.

The whole population of Nea Kios used to earn their living by selling oranges. For five years now, financial activity has moved from the primary sector of production to the tertiary one, mainly in tourism. The seaside area is a suitable place for tourist enterprises, and its development is the new catchwords in dealing with the stalemate agronomics policy of the past years in the area. It is not coincidental that the same 5-

year period has been a «milestone» in the history of the recent, turbulent coexistence with the Roma...

The municipal authority in particular claimed that the Romanies' prolonged, ever-increasing, offensive, and anti-social behavior has gone too far and cannot be tolerated any longer. In the context of the "political and social dialogue" that was established with the **resolution of the Town Council of 20th May**, the whole Roma population is labeled as law-breakers and undesirable. The offensiveness they are blamed for ranges from illegal driving, building and trading to drug dealing and gun selling. That resolution was followed by protest marches with black flags; the Roma were not allowed to enter the town, they were abused by "indignant" citizens and patrol groups and there was even a police raid in their houses and shanties. In a press conference held by the Town Council on 31/5/00, concerning the resumption of the rallies, Mr. Katriliotes, Mayor of Nea Kios, made the following statement that was typical of the time: *"We are not dealing with some helpless gypsies, but with organized crime. We are the helpless ones, not they; we are helpless as the society believes that something could be done about them."* As a matter of fact, other forms of "organized crime" in the territory, such as procuring and provision of women for nightclubs have not triggered so much reaction from the municipal authority and its "indignant" voters...

After listening to Mr. Katriliotes haranguing against the Roma Mafia, one would expect that the police operation of 25<sup>th</sup> May might have come up with something better than 28 people being accused of stealing power... Besides, a few days before the operation, Mr. **Kapelos**, the deputy **Police Commissioner of Argolida**, had stated that the crime rate in the district is not higher in comparison with the rest of the county (daily "Eleftherotypia", 24/6/00). The abuse instigated by the Town Council did not only continue after the police operation, but it was extended to other groups of citizens, the so-called "Athenians" or "self-appointed supporters" of the Roma and the "agents provocateurs". However, even the local people who did not join the patrol groups, who did not raise a hand against a Gypsy or his property, those who did not swear at or (in an unambiguous way) warn his children not to go to school, those who rephrased the old motto "Nea Kios a place of culture" as "Nea Kios a place of racism" had to face the wrath of the indignant locals and the members of the Town Council.

The Town Council and the local residents were mad at everybody... A group of 30 people from Athens: reporters, representatives of organizations and political parties visited the area on 8/6/00. They were unable to enter the town. They were obstructed by the "indignant" crowd – **with police sufferance**. A committee demanded to talk to the mayor was abused by the resentful Kios citizens who had gathered, **at the municipal authority's instigation**, outside the Town Hall. All these happened regardless of the fact that the members of the Town Council had received a **letter** from the **Ombudsman** pinpointing the criminal liability of their action since 1<sup>st</sup> June.

On 9/6/00, the shanty of **Panayote Demetropoulos** was burnt down. The Roma believed that the arson was committed by the angry Nea Kios people. On the other hand, the Town Council claimed that such statement was a provocation. Although the Roma shantytown was guarded by the police, the shanty in question had no protection because of its distance from the settlement. (The fact that the settlement was under surveillance insinuated who was considered as the potential persecutor by the police.) Demetropoulos reported that his family was threatened by a group of citizens, and one

of his children was injured while trying to run out of the shanty. The child was taken to hospital in Tripolis. Along with the shanty, all the household items of the large family were burnt.

A few days later, on 15/6/00, Panayote Demetropoulos' nephew Christos, aged 17, reported that he had been shot on the arm by two young Kios citizens without any reason. He stated that he did not know the names of the offenders but he could recognize them. The police did not really take the victim's allegations seriously. **The victim himself and his mother were charged with perjury.** According to the authorities, they falsely reported that some Nea Kios residents had done the shooting, instead the offenders should be Roma. Then, the police hurried to the victim's shanty for a search, rather than going after the actual offenders. All these were happening while the victim was being taken to the "KAT" hospital in Athens, four hours after he had been transferred to the Argos hospital. The distance of the hospital is not justified from a medical point of view. Although there were no eyewitnesses to disprove Christos Demetropoulos' testimony, the police found the testimonies of two underage relatives of Demetropoulos sufficient – these testimonies had not been read to them before they signed. The police also found no traces of blood at the scene of the shooting. In addition, the gun and the 80 grams of marijuana found in a bag **outside** the shanty seemed to have "proved" that the scuffle involved people belonging to the same race as the victim. This "proof" was not equally valued by the District Attorney's Office since the case was eventually referred to a regular hearing. This shows that the original evidence was not enough for an indictment of perjury against the accused and a trial flagrante delicto.

The municipal authority mentioned **provocation**. Three days earlier (12/6/00), government spokesman D. Reppas commented on the events in Nea Kios as "instances of personal disputes that have to be considered separately in the context of the criminal law." One may justifiably wonder how Mr. Reppas defined "personal dispute" that the government spoke of ... The liability of the members of the Town Council – which the **Ombudsman** also pointed out – have not been considered from a legal point of view up to now. The government spokesman insisted on his initial views that the incident was a "personal dispute". He avoided denouncing directly the racist practice of the socialist mayor of Nea Kios despite the three letters from the **Greek Helsinki Monitor** and **Minority Rights Group-Greece** to the **Prime Minister** and the **Ministers of Justice and Public Order**. Mr. Reppas' statement coincided with the publication of a particularly **revealing report on Greece by the Committee of the European Council against Racism and Xenophobia**. Meanwhile, the government spokesman discredited the conclusions of the report (in which there is specific reference to the Roma), commenting on the situation in Nea Kios as "vendetta" and "personal disputes". In addition, for a second time, the spokesman claimed that it is the responsibility of the Prefecture to handle incidents like this.

It is the negligence of the government not to condemn racist practices. The competent District Attorney's Office in ex officio is investigating the liability of the members of the Town Council in Nea Kios, who have sworn on the Constitution. Fifteen citizens belonging to various political domains and organizations filed a complaint on 30/6/00, asking for Justice to be administered; the justice that has been overdue for long days and rough nights ...

## APPENDIX

IFEX- News from the international freedom of expression community

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### ACTION ALERT - GREECE

12 June 2000

Journalist harassed

SOURCE: Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), Athens

(GHM/IFEX) - On 8 June 2000, journalist Panos Lambrou of the weekly "Epochi" was verbally and physically harassed by a mob led by municipal council members in Nea Kios (Argolida, Peloponese) at the presence of the police.

Lambrou was participating in a visit with forty members of an antiracist group, members of parties and other organizations who came from Athens to Nea Kios to support the local Roma community that has been facing racist attacks by local citizens and authorities. The visitors were declared undesirable by the local municipal authority "for lack of good intentions". Without any police interference, local citizens impeded the group's movement and harassed the journalist in front of the city hall.

#### BACKGROUND:

On 20 May 2000, the municipality of Nea Kios, led by the mayor (of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement party, PASOK) and the president of the municipal council (of the Progressive Left Coalition party, Syn), declared that all Roma in the region were undesirable. They claimed that the Roma were the cause of the high crime rate, a charge denied by the police authority. The police acknowledged that the decision created an explosive atmosphere and policemen were stationed in the Roma settlement as a security measure. Moreover, on 9 June, in the course of the evening, the hut of a Rom, Panayote Demetropoulos, was set on fire by "a group of men with wild intentions" who were also "running after women and children who were trying to escape" (as reported by Mimi Fyrogenis in "Epochi"'s 11 June edition).

On 11 June, GHM and Minority Rights Group-Greece denounced the arson of the Roma hut in Nea Kios. The two organizations held the town's municipal authority responsible for instigating this crime. The organizations denounced "the town's extremely racist decisions", and they were accusing the municipal leaders of having created an explosive atmosphere which led to such circumstance.

Taking into account the unanimous character of the decisions by the municipal council and the absence of any outspoken denunciation of the racist behavior of the municipal counselors by their parties, PASOK, New Democracy, Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and Syn, are sharing the responsibility of the incident. The event exposes

Greece internationally, and it is often referred to as the "reminiscent of 'the American south' of another era", according to the organizations. In addition, GHM and Minority Rights Group-Greece denounced the verbal and physical harassment of the journalist. Finally, the organizations called upon the minister of justice to immediately introduce proceedings against all those responsible for these racist and criminal acts, as prescribed by Greek law and by the international covenants. "Otherwise, the Greek state will be considered as an accomplice because of inaction", declared the two groups.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Send appeals to authorities:

- Denouncing the harassment of the journalist and the police inactivity
- Denouncing the racist attacks against the Roma population of Nea Kios by local authorities
- Calling for a swift and full investigation of the incidents and the bringing of charges against instigators and perpetrators of racist attacks against the Roma and the harassment of journalist Lambrou
- Recalling that as a party to the United Nations' International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (UN ICERD), Greece has an obligation to prosecute all forms of racist violence

#### APPEALS TO:

George Papandreou  
Foreign Minister  
Athens, Greece  
Fax: +30 1 36 81 433

Dimitris Reppas  
Minister of Press and Information  
Athens, Greece  
Fax: +30 1 36 06 969

Professor Mihalis Stathopoulos  
Minister of Justice  
Athens, Greece  
Fax: +30 1 77 55 835

Please copy appeals to the source if possible.

For further information, contact GHM at P.O. Box 60820, GR-15304 Glyka Nera, Greece, tel: +30 1 347 22 59, fax: +30 1 601 87 60, e-mail: [office@greekhelsinki.gr](mailto:office@greekhelsinki.gr), Internet: <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr>

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## PRESS RELEASE

11/6/2000

**TOPIC: RACIST ARSON OF A ROMA HUT IN NEA KIOS.  
MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY AN ACCOMPLICE. GUILTY SILENCE  
OF POLITICAL PARTIES. MINISTER OF JUSTICE  
SHOULD INITIATE THE PROSECUTION OF PERPETRATORS.**

**Greek Helsinki Monitor** and **Minority Rights Group-Greece** denounce the arson of a Roma hut in Nea Kios (Argolida, Peloponese) which happened two days ago, during the night. The two organizations hold the town municipal authority responsible for instigating this crime with its extremely racist decisions. The municipal authority created an explosive atmosphere bound to lead to actions like this. Taking into account the unanimous character of the municipal council's decision and the absence of any outspoken denunciation of the racist behavior of the municipal counselors by their parties, Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), New Democracy, Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and Progressive Left Coalition (Syn) are sharing the responsibility of the incident. The event exposes Greece internationally, as it was the reminiscent of "the American south" of another era. In addition, the organizations denounce the verbal and physical harassment of Panos Lambrou, journalist in the weekly "Epochi". The action is also instigated by the municipal authority. Finally, **Greek Helsinki Monitor** and **Minority Rights Group-Greece** call upon the Minister of Justice to introduce immediate proceedings against all those responsible for these racist and criminal acts, as prescribed by Greek law and the international covenants. Otherwise, the Greek state will be considered an accomplice because of its inaction.

It is recalled that on May 20, 2000, the municipality of Nea Kios declared that all Roma in the region were undesirable, they were the cause of the high crime rates, a charge though denied by the police authority. This declaration was instigated by the Mayor (PASOK) and the President of the Municipal Council (Syn). The decision created an explosive atmosphere, in fact acknowledged by the police. There were policemen stationed in the Roma settlement at all time. On June 8, an anti-racist group of 40 people, consisted of members of parties and other organizations that came from Athens to the region, was declared undesirable by the local municipal authority for their "lack of good intentions". Local citizens impeded the movement of the organizations without any police interference. Meanwhile, the aforementioned journalist was being harassed. On June 9, during the evening, the hut of Panayote Demetropoulos was set on fire by "a group of men with wild intentions" who were also "running after women and children who were trying to escape" (Mimi Fyrogenis, "Epochi" 11/6/00).

1. MINISTER OF JUSTICE INFORMS GHM & MRG-G OF COURT INVESTIGATION OF ANTI-ROMA ACTIONS
2. IT'S A SHAME! GOVERNMENT CONFIRMS COVER-UP AND, THEREFORE, ENCOURAGEMENT OF RACIST ACTIONS IN NEA KIOS. POLITICIANS AND ORGANIZATIONS HAVE FILED A COMPLAINT.
3. GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN REJECTS ECRI AND DOMESTIC ACCUSATIONS ON RACISM
4. LETTER TO MINISTER OF PUBLIC ORDER REQUESTING INVESTIGATION OF POLICE ANTI-ROMA ACTIONS
5. LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER WARNING OF GOVERNMENT COVER UP IF NOT ENCOURAGEMENT OF RACIST ACTIONS IN NEA KIOS

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**MINISTRY OF JUSTICE**  
**OFFICE OF THE MINISTER**

Athens, 3-07-2000

Protocol no.: 2607

TO:

List of Recipients

Concerning the Press Release of 30 June 2000 from Greek Helsinki Monitor and Minority Rights Group-Greece, we inform you that the Ministry has sent the enclosed document to the Public Prosecutor of the Misdemeanors' Court of Nafplion.

We are also enclosing the reply of the Public Prosecutor of the Misdemeanors' Court of Nafplion.

From the Office of the Minister

(signed)

Maria Pachi

List of Recipients:

1. Greek Helsinki Monitor (P. Dimitras)
2. Minority Rights Group-Greece (N. Papanikolatou)
3. Office of the Synaspismos party: a. S. Alfieri  
b. M. Glezos  
c. M. Damanaki
4. "Avghi" Newspaper (D. Gousetis)

**HELLENIC REPUBLIC**

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

16 JUNE 2000

MINISTER  
ATHENS

Protocol no.: 2370

To: The Public Prosecutor of the Misdemeanors' Court, Nafplion

Greek Helsinki Monitor and Minority Rights Group-Greece (Glyka Nera, Attica, tel. 347.22.59 - fax 601.87.60) denounced the display of racism by the Ministry of Justice, an attitude that also prevails in our country. Specifically, the explosive atmosphere in Nea Kios led to the arson of the shanty inhabited by the Rom Panayote Dimopoulos on 9.6.2000. The hut of the victim was set on fire by a group of men intent on brutality. The group also pursued the women and children attempting to flee, and abused Mr. Panos Lambrou, a journalist from the newspaper "Epochi" who had reported on the issue. The abuse was provoked, according to the charges, by the incitement of the town authority which declared the Roma as undesirable in the area. In view of all this, we kindly request that you carry out a preliminary investigation of the charges. If the probable cause is found, we hope that criminal prosecution would be proceeded.

We kindly request that you inform us of your actions.

The Minister

(signed)

MICHALIS P. STATHOPOULOS

**HELLENIC REPUBLIC**  
**PUBLIC PROSECUTOR, MISDEMEANORS' COURT**  
**NAFPLION**

Nafplion, 27-6-00  
Protocol no. 2042

Address: Nikitara Sq.  
Postal Code: 221 00  
Information: M. Koina  
Tel: 0752-27772  
Fax: 0752-24426

TO THE:  
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE  
(OFFICE OF THE MINISTER)

(incoming document stamp)  
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE  
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER  
Protocol no. 2586  
Received 3-7-2000

In pursuance to the order with protocol number 2370/2000, we are honored to notify you that that we have ordered the Commanding Officer of the Argos Police Precinct to

carry out the preliminary investigation of the charges, with our order number A00/3701.

The Public Prosecutor

Vasilios Pappadas (initialed)

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

30/6/2000

**TOPIC: IT'S A SHAME! GOVERNMENT CONFIRMS COVER-UP AND, THEREFORE, ENCOURAGEMENT OF RACIST ACTIONS IN NEA KIOS. POLITICIANS AND ORGANIZATIONS HAVE FILED A COMPLAINT.**

The co-operating organizations **Greek Helsinki Monitor** and **Minority Rights Group-Greece** consider the confirmation released two days ago by government spokesman D. Reppas on the cover-up, and therefore, the encouragement of racist actions by the municipal authority in Nea Kios, a shame for Greece. The government claims that the incident is a "vendetta" that is typical of certain areas, instead of taking legal and administrative action against the municipality -- the proper action prescribed by every international treaty for the attempted pogrom against the Roma. The illegal character of the latter had been confirmed by the Ombudsman.

Greece is now definitely answerable internationally for its toleration of racism. It is expected to account for its attitude in the relevant debates before the UN Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in August as well as at the annual OSCE Implementation Review Meeting in October.

At the same time, 15 citizens and representatives of several organizations (including ours) filed a complaint at the Nafplio District Attorney's Office. They believe that the instigators of the despicable racist actions in Nea Kios should be prosecuted. (The related press release is attached).

D. Reppas' statement: (<http://www.hri.org/news/greek/kyber/2000/00-06-28.kyber.html>)

" I have to tell you that this [the issue of Nea Kios] is being handled by the Prefecture. Numerous meetings have been held with the participation of all competent local authorities involved. I believe that some issues arise out of personal disputes. There are instances of 'vendetta' that often break out in certain areas. However, a problem of this sort is insufficient to suggest that Greece has a policy of discrimination against a group of our fellow citizens. This isn't so."

Web pages pertinent to the issue (in Greek):

Press release on the complaint: <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/greek/pressrelease/29-6-00.html>

Text of the complaint: <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/pdf/roma-nea-kios-eglisi.PDF>

Review of the Nea Kios case: <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/pdf/nea-kios-istoriko.PDF>

Full record of articles and press releases on the "Pogrom against the Roma in Nea Kios, Argolida": <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/greek/articles/roma-nea-kios.html>

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## **MINISTRY FOR THE PRESS AND THE MASS MEDIA**

Athens, 28th June 2000

### **BRIEFING TO COLUMNISTS AND FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS BY THE GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN, MINISTER FOR THE PRESS AND MASS MEDIA, D. REPPAS. (Excerpts selected and translated by Greek Helsinki Monitor)**

FILIS: Greece is mentioned, among other countries, in the report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe that came out yesterday. I would like you to comment on the report since this document at the European level recommends that our country should take new measures against racism, which has been found in many aspects of social and state activity.

REPPAS: Every one of us has experienced the Greek reality. You know that the Greek society tolerates differences. It is a society that accepts differences in every area, whether it has to do with moral, cultural, religious or other beliefs. It is a well-known fact that in the Greek society, there is equality before the law. Discrimination is not allowed. I believe that there is no room for such discriminations in the Greek state. The institutional framework in our society is sufficient. However, allow me to say that what primarily matters is the mentality, the views of the Greek citizens themselves. Therefore, I would like to say that in this aspect the Greeks are the pioneers. I think that the Greeks, as citizens, accept citizens from other countries. The Greeks accept the fact that they may live with people who have an entirely different view from their own. I regard these accusations as overstated. I do not agree that Greece may have to face charges, at least not the charge of discrimination on this issue.

FILIS: In that report certain data are stated. For example, the fact that of the 220,000 foreigners who applied for a green card in our country, only 23,000 received one. Could you comment on that?

REPPAS: You are well aware that in order to come to useful conclusions, we must consider every aspect of the matter. If your approach is fragmented, then your conclusions will not be correct. You may also notice that a legalization procedure is on the way. It states that all the necessary requirements must be fulfilled in order for foreign citizens to make their homes in Greece. It is also known that thousands or even hundreds of thousands of foreign citizens have entered and settled in our country, without following this procedure. That is to say, they avoid complying with the requirement for legalization. All these are issues that the instrument in question does not deal with. Many people did not participate or choose not to participate in the procedures that the Greek state has set up. Therefore, we should have full knowledge of the issue, so as to be objective and come to the right conclusions. Moreover, we must not ignore an important factor by highlighting a specific aspect of the whole

issue. In fact, only in the recent period, Greece has received a great influx of foreign citizens. It has taken the initiative, from a legislative point of view, in order to deal with this issue. The shortcomings or deficiencies that are observed in the effort to implement this policy cannot constitute the basis and motive for the above accusations.

BOITARD: There is another case that concerns Greek citizens of Nea Kios. Since you have told us that the situation is very good and wonderful, that the state does not permit discriminations and so on, what will the government and the state do eventually about the resolution of the Municipal Council of Nea Kios? The Ombudsman has labeled this resolution as illegal. It also violates several international documents that Greece has signed to prohibit this kind of discrimination.

REPPAS: I have to tell you that this is being handled by the Prefecture. Numerous meetings have been held with the participation of all the competent local authorities involved. I believe that some issues arise out of personal disputes. There are instances of "vendetta" that often break out in certain areas. However, a problem of this sort is insufficient to suggest that Greece has a policy of discrimination against a group of our fellow citizens. This isn't so."

BUATAR: The Ombudsman found these decisions illegal.

REPPAS: The Ombudsman was correct in pointing out many issues. I think that the administration carefully considers every suggestion or recommendation by the Ombudsman in the framework of the existing laws. However, I believe that using this fragmented approach exaggerates certain issues. There are problems in any society.

BUATAR: But every society recognizes the existence of these problems. It does not shut them up.

REPPAS: You are referring to an issue, one aspect of a number of issues that is put forward to form an all-embracing accusation. I think this is not rational and not acceptable.

BUATAR: We are not accusing. We are describing.

REPPAS: As you have seen, (I am mentioning this because of the questions and the discussion we had afterwards) the sad result of the efforts made by the border sentry to prevent some foreign citizens from entering Greece illegally. Greece has, of course, remonstrated with the Albanian government about this issue. The Albanian government must reinforce the garrisons that guard the border in order to prevent citizens -- who often engage in illegal activities -- from entering Greece, and from crossing the border. We should honor the border sentries for their sense of duty and self-denial to guarantee conditions for a normal social life in an extremely sensitive region. You realize that Greece is situated in an area that faces many problems recently. The map of the area has changed, and things become different. Therefore, I repeat, we must consider this in order to draw a comprehensive and correct conclusion.

FILIS: To sum up, do you accept the recommendation and the exhortation from the Council of Europe that our country needs to take additional measures against racism?

REPPAS: Greece always takes the initiative and the necessary measures to deal with existing problems. Surely there are problems. There is always room for improvement in every field. Nevertheless, of course, we have also made considerable progress. Besides, the introduction of the "Ombudsman's Office" was our own decision, it did not exist a few years ago. All these indicate the direction that we are moving towards: the direction of modernization, and better conditions in the Greek society. And, of course, in the context of a discussion such as this, I cannot accept, and I downright reject any kind of accusation, claiming that there is racism in Greece or that the Greek society is discriminatory. You know very well that, in the past, while talking about similar issues, we strongly criticized incidents that involved people who took the law into their own hands. We denounced manifestations of racism or xenophobia coming from members of municipal authorities or other public officials. We are firmly upholding our position on this. Thus, we should not be blamed for the lack of political will; this is not acceptable.

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To: Mr. Mich. Chrysohoidis, Minister of Public Order

**TOPIC: SWORN ADMINISTRATIVE INVESTIGATION MUST BE  
ORDERED FOR APPARENT POLICE ATTEMPT TO SLANDER INJURED  
ROM OF NEA KIOS**

22 June 2000

Mr. Minister

On 15 June 2000, the Rom resident of Nea Kios Christos Demetropoulos reported to the police that two Greek residents of Nea Kios shot at him and had injured him in the arm. A few hours after the event, the victim and his mother were arrested by an order of the Police Directorate of Argolida, with the charge of perjury. The police was also seeking his father, as there was a charge of illegal possession of firearm, cartridges and cannabis, according to the press release issued the following day. The police accused another Rom of "unknown personal data" for the shooting. The District Attorney did not seem at all convinced by the police evidence. On 16 June the two Roma were released and a preliminary investigation was ordered instead.

The racist municipal authority, trying to evade responsibility, took advantage of this police attitude. Besides, the police had neglected to stop the activities of "patrol groups" that had been going on for weeks. The illegal character of the "patrol groups" has been pointed out by the Ombudsman. Thus, the impression that the police authorities had tolerated unlawful racist actions by the residents of Nea Kios is formed. On 15th June, they tried to cover up those who were really guilty for the shooting of the Roma, and the victim was slandered.

For this reason, our organizations are asking for an urgent Sworn Administrative Investigation. More specifically, investigation should be conducted to determine whether there was any evidence found within such short period of time that suggest perjury was committed by the Rom and that the shooting was committed by Roma instead of local residents. We demand the forensic examination of the blood found outside the hut and the fingerprints on the gun found at the same place. In case none of

these can prove that the shooting was committed by Roma, the police ought to impose strict penalties on those who attempted to incriminate the Rom. By doing this, when the competent UN Committee takes into consideration the implementation of the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (L.D. 494/1970, Official Gazette A 77) in Greece (in August 2000), and the events in Nea Kios, the committee will not regard the Greek state has violated the Convention, either by ignoring or by being accomplice to acts of racial discrimination.

Yours truly,

Panayote Dimitras  
Spokesperson  
Greek Helsinki Monitor

Nafsika Papanikolatos  
Spokesperson  
Minority Rights Group - Greece

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To Prime Minister Kostas Simitis

**TOPIC: IS THE GOVERNMENT INTENTIONALLY COVERING UP  
AND THUS ENCOURAGING RACIST ACTIONS IN NEA KIOS?**

14 June 2000

Mr. Prime Minister

We believe you would be surprised and upset if a White House spokesperson is: commenting on the restrictions imposed by the Municipal Councils in the Southern States concerning the presence of African-Americans, making public statements that black people spoil the cultural character of the area, referring to arsons of African-Americans' huts simply as "instances of personal disputes that have to be considered individually, within the framework of the criminal law", and using the derogatory word "Negroes".

That is how we felt after a similar response by government spokesman Dimitris Reppas to a relevant question from the "Avghi" daily about what recently happened at the expense of the Roma in the "Greek South" of Nea Kios. The full text of that exchange as well as characteristic resolutions and statements of the municipal authority of Nea Kios are as follow. Instead of a denouncement and prosecution of such actions that the government is obliged to proceed with (specifically according to Articles 2 and 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination - L.D. 494/1970, Official Gazette A 77), the latter is apparently indifferent, thus covering up extreme racist actions (and calling the Roma by the derogatory name of "athiganoi"). Such treatment is equivalent to encouragement for the recurrence of similar acts in Nea Kios or anywhere else, since the perpetrators are aware of the fact that impunity is certain.

We hope that this is not really the government's stand, which would make the country internationally accountable for the tolerance of racism. We hope that the statements of

the government spokesman are the result of misleading information that the government received and that they will be revoked publicly at once. On the other hand, the state should consider the imposition of administrative and criminal penalties on the perpetrators.

Yours truly,

Panayote Dimitras  
Spokesperson  
Greek Helsinki Monitor

Nafsika Papanikolatos  
Spokesperson  
Minority Rights Group - Greece

GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN D. REPPAS' RESPONSE  
TO A QUESTION BY "AVGI" (12-6-2000)

QUESTION: The Municipal Council in Nea Kios, Argolida has come to a decision, according to which Gypsies are prohibited from entering the town. They are only allowed to enter individually. The implementation of this resolution is being denounced since the residents of the area have substituted the official police authority, forming armed patrols. In view of these, our question is: does Nea Kios come under the jurisdiction of the Constitution and the laws of the Hellenic Republic or is it outside Greek territory? What does the government intend to do about the situation at hand?

ANSWER: This issue comes under the jurisdiction of the Prefecture of Argolida. At a meeting that took place on 2nd June and was chaired by the Prefect, with the participation of local government authorities and representatives of the athiganoi, it was decided that the athiganoi would be settled in prefabricated houses and effort would be made to find a permanent solution for their settlement, by means of loans and construction on suitable sites. On the same day, visit to the settlement to ascertain the situation was followed. It seems that the situation has been mollified although there are still instances of personal disputes, which will have to be considered individually, within the framework of the criminal law. All Greek citizens are treated by the government as equals. We would resolve the problems that was caused by the competent regional departments that were trying to solve the problems themselves and caused the incidents.

RESOLUTIONS AND STATEMENTS BY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES  
CONSTITUTING INCITEMENT TO OR ACTS OF  
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE ROMA.

Excerpts from a (unanimous) resolution of the Town Council of Nea Kios (20/5/2000)

8. We declare that we do not want the gypsies to be present, move or stay in our Municipality until the issue is settled in principle.

9. We denounce all those who have sold land to gypsies up to now and we consider them as the instigators of the present situation. Those who do likewise will have to

face the entire Municipality of Nea Kios and the community itself. There is no room for more gypsies in our town.

10. Since the gypsies cannot abide by the law and order, we invite those who have bought land in the area to return their property and we declare that we are willing to play a decisive part in this procedure.

"The Gypsy population that has gathered here will modify the cultural character of the area. This increase in the population must be stopped. Each one of us here must take up responsibility towards his fellow citizens."

(G. Maninis, Chairman of the Town Council of Nea Kios, during the People's Assembly of Nea Kios 22/5/2000, reprinted in Argolida News, page 7).

## **2. Roma in Nea Tiryntha**

*The following is a translation of a report published in "Rightly!", GHM's Internet magazine on human rights. GHM visited Nea Tiryntha on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000.*

### **NEA TIRYNTHA: THE CYCLOPEAN WALLS OF RACISM**

#### **Citrus trees have no future in this Municipality, and so do the Roma...**

On 31/5/2000, the Town Council of Nea Tiryntha decided to disallow the staying of the Roma, with a unanimous vote, who have been settlers of the Perama area for twenty years now, on a plot of land belonging to the former county prison and the Ministry of Justice. The twenty-year stay was not only confirmed by the Roma, but also by the **Mayor of Nea Tiryntha Mr. Nikolaou himself**, in his recommendation to the Town Council. Moreover, in his recommendation, Mr. Nikolaou admitted that the Municipality – and previously the community of Nea Tiryntha – had never taken the initiative to improve the (destitute) living conditions of the approximately 30 Roma families of the area, with the explanation that "*the settlement was illegal.*"

The Roma settled in Perama when they were unwelcome in the "Glikia" area near the city of Tiryntha and Nea Kios. They have claimed that they settled on the site of the prison with the consent of **Mr. Melides**, Mayor of Nafplio at that time. Concerning the eviction, the Municipality of Nea Tiryntha makes references to a document from the **Ministry of Justice** which allocates an 8-meter-wide strip of land to the Municipality for the construction of a motorway with pedestrian walkway which will connect the National Road of Nafplio with Nea Kios. One of the requirements is the "*removal of the gypsy settlement*". This renders the Ministry of Justice directly involved in the situation and becomes responsible for what happens to the Roma in Nea Tiryntha. This responsibility becomes even greater if we take a relevant statement by **Mr. Salesiotes, Prefect of Argolida** into consideration, about the acute housing problem of the Roma in the Prefecture and the lack of substantial support from the Ministry: "*You are well aware that I took measures regarding the settlements but the Ministry of Justice does not allocate land so that the problem can be solved.*" (Argolida News, 25/5/00, page 9). One can reasonably wonder: What is the priority for the Ministry and the State: the widening of a road or the housing problem of these people? Which right should be urgently protected?

For the **Municipality of Nea Tiryntha** there is no room for sensitivity in answering the question... "*The citrus trees have no future; the Municipality has to turn to other activities, such as tourism and the sea. How is development towards the sea and tourism possible with the state the gypsies are in? (...) Their stay at that spot today, as much as in the past, has only created problems. (...) The place is a 'forbidden area'. Try passing through there at night. The incidents in Nea Kios are nothing compared to those in Nea Tiryntha. It is primarily a matter of law and order. We sympathize with the Municipality of Nea Kios and if the competent authorities do not act upon what they have promised about keeping order, I am sorry to say that we are going to regain control of the situation like the citizens of Nea Kios*" (excerpts of Mayor Mr. Nikolaou's recommendation to the Town Council which met on 31<sup>st</sup> May, as recorded by the **Greek Helsinki Monitor**). Mr. Nikolaou had taken a similar stand concerning the Roma issue in Nea Kios at a meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May.

As the Municipality was being influenced by the negative publicity of the same issue in Nea Kios, it attempted to give a humane dimension to the whole affair: "*these people should live better somehow and surely they should not be living there*" [i.e. at the entrance of the first capital of Greece opposite the Cyclopean walls], "*the removal must be carried out peacefully*". He also gave a "generous" time limit for the transfer of the Roma into another area: till the end of August 2000. Nevertheless, since the 1991 census did not record any Rom as registered citizen in Nea Tiryntha, the place of relocation will have to be sought outside the Municipality. Indeed, the "humane" approach of the Municipality includes the claim from the Mayor that "these people [i.e. the Roma] do not want to abide by the law."

### **What is the plight of the Roma?**

There are about 30 families of tent-dwellers living without any infrastructure in self-made shacks of cardboard, wood and nylon in Nea Kios. These shacks are visible from the seaside and the road that connects Nea Kios with Argos. Sanitary arrangements are non-existent and the settlement is among the 5 worst ones visited by members of the **Greek Helsinki Monitor**. The only support they had from the state during the twenty years of their stay in the area were 150.000 drachmas and a tent they received when their shacks were flooded. Several Roma being questioned stated that they were registered citizens of Nafplio with the intention of transferring their legal residence to Nea Tiryntha. Their twenty-year long stay in the Municipality more than guarantees this right: municipal citizenship requires a minimum permanent stay of two years. Their income is not stable. They are occasionally employed on the fields, but due to the presence of the immigrants that gives rise to competition, jobs become increasingly unavailable. For three years, the children of the settlement have been attending (preparatory) classes **separately** from the children of the district at a place near the shacks. There were about 30 student at the beginning, very few of them continue. The Roma said that last year the children made no progress whatsoever. They believed that this was due to the lack of interest on the part of the teacher: "*The school frequently closes earlier; the kids keep learning the alphabet and songs. Now, is that what school is all about?*" The police authorities frequently visit the settlement in order to deliver warrants. The last raid reportedly took place 6 years ago, at 6 o'clock in the morning, when police officers broke into the settlement with their guns in hand.

## What the State ought to do (even belatedly)?

Given that:

- a. the state is obliged to see that all its citizens are adequately housed under the constitution (Article 21, paragraph 4),
- b. it has an international obligation to upgrade the citizens' living standards constantly (Article 11, paragraph 1 of the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**),
- c. there is the precedent of the case from the **County Court of Heraklion** (No. 975/1999 12<sup>th</sup> November 1999) which ruled the eviction of the Roma in Nea Alikarnassos by the Town Council illegal,
- d. the relevant response by the **UN Committee** on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stated that evictions without the provision of an alternative choice are illegal and incompatible with the spirit of Article 11, paragraph 1 of the relevant Covenant,

the State ought to:

- 1) Look into the housing problem of the Roma in Nea Tirynta, attain the co-operation of all the competent authorities in order to solve the problem, including the Ministry of Justice.
- 2) Prevent the eviction of the Roma, unless a serious housing solution (short-term as well as long-term) is found, and that the Roma would be relocated in sites that have the basic requirements for a decent living.
- 3) Find out to what extent the accusation by the Mayor of Nea Tirynta is valid: the Roma increases the crime rate in the area. In case it is proved groundless, the party who made the accusation should be penalized appropriately as it is prescribed by the Greek and international law.

## APPENDIX

**GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR (GHM)  
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To Professor Mihalis Stathopoulos,  
Minister of Justice

12 June 2000

**TOPIC: NECESSITY OF TAKING ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL  
MEASURES AGAINST ANTI-ROMA MUNICIPALITIES**

Mr. Minister,

You are familiar with the fact that Greece, in the framework of its status as State Party of the ICERD (i.e. the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination), has undertaken to:

- condemn racial discrimination (Article 2),
- ensure that public, national and local authorities refrain from acting discriminately (2a),
- take drastic steps towards the re-examination of local policies that aim at giving rise to racial discrimination (2c),
- prosecute incitement to racial discrimination or acts of violence against any race (4a),
- forbid incitement to or encouragement of racial discrimination by public, national or local authorities (4c).

Moreover, we believe you will agree that resolutions or statements asking for the evacuation of an entire Rom settlement or /and considering all the Roma as criminals fall into the category of actions that result in racial discrimination. The municipal authorities of Nea Kios and Tirynta in Argolida have recently committed such actions. In fact, one of these actions was encouraged by an agency of the Ministry of Justice. It is evident in the attached excerpts of the record of proceedings of the Town Council Meeting.

We hope that you will penalize the people who do not adhere to the International Convention, the Greek administrative and criminal law as soon as possible. Thus, when the competent UN Committee reviews the implementation of the Convention in Greece (in August 2000, when these incidents will naturally be known to the Committee), the Greek state would not be classified as one of those violating the Convention either by tolerating or being involved in acts of racial discrimination.

Yours truly,

Panayote Dimitras  
Spokesperson of Greek Helsinki Monitor

Nafsika Papanikolatos  
Spokesperson of Minority Rights Group- Greece

**RESOLUTIONS AND STATEMENTS BY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES  
CONSTITUTING ACTS OR INCITEMENT TO ACTS OF RACIAL  
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE ROMA**

Excerpt from a (unanimous) resolution of the Town Council of Nea Kios (20/5/2000)

8. We declare that we do not want the gypsies to be present, move or stay in our Municipality until the issue is settled in principle.

9. We denounce all those who have sold land to gypsies up to now and we consider them as the instigators of the present situation. Those who do likewise will have to face the entire Municipality of Nea Kios and the community itself. There is no room for more gypsies in our town.

10. Since the gypsies cannot abide by the law and order, we invite those who have bought land in the area to return their property and we declare that we are willing to play a decisive part in this procedure.

"The Gypsy population that has gathered here will modify the cultural character of the area. This increase in the population must be stopped. Each one of us here must take up responsibility towards his fellow citizens."

(G. Maninis, Chairman of the Town Council of Nea Kios, during the People's Assembly of Nea Kios 22/5/2000, reprinted in Argolida News, page 7).

Excerpt from a unanimous resolution of the Town Council of Tiryntha (31/5/2000)  
[WITH THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE!!!]

Topic No 3: Evacuation of Gypsies from the district of the Municipality of Nea Tiryntha

In accordance with:

1. The document of the Ministry of Justice registered 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 Gypsy settlement.

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

(...)

IT IS UNANIMOUSLY DECIDED THAT:

A. The illegal Gypsy settlement 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.

ATTENTION! There are plenty of other similar statements by municipal authorities, as well as the full texts of the resolutions at the disposal of anybody who is interested.

### **3. Roma in Rio and Patras**

*The following is a translation of a report published in "Rightly!", GHM's Internet magazine on human rights. GHM visited Patras and Rio on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2000. The very same day, the deputy Prefect of Achaia, Apostolos Katsifaras, informed GHM of the latest developments in the Prefect and his contacts with the municipalities concerned and the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life.*

**Roma in Achaia (Peloponese): Lessons on integration policy by the Prefecture.**

## Are the municipalities of Patras and Rio indifferent?

Concerning the Roma, the dialogue between the **Municipality of Rio** and the other competent authorities – mainly the **Prefecture of Achaia** and the **Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life** – reminds one of the ... Greek-Turkish talks. The local authority repeatedly claims in public, before the Prime Minister's adviser F. Stamou (1/12/99) and the press that there are no Roma tent-dwellers permanently living in Rio among all the registered citizens, except three families. Thus, the Mayor avoids participating in the discussions altogether, since from his point of view the problem does not exist. Even though the Roma who are in the area of the local Hospital and the old powder warehouse several of whom have been in the territory of today's Municipality for over three years. They may not be visible from the Town Hall, but their presence has been established by the **Office for Quality of Life**, **Amnesty International**, the **Greek Helsinki Monitor** and **Minority Rights Group-Greece**.

On 27<sup>th</sup> May, a meeting was held involving the **Prefecture of Achaia**, the **Municipalities** concerned, the **Office for Quality of Life** and Mr. Bristoyannis, Chairman of the **Public Estate Society**. The meeting focused on the provision of housing and social reinstatement of the Roma in the Prefecture as well as the formulation of a uniform policy. The Mayor of Rio was **deliberately** absent. His symbolic absence was to demonstrate the actual indifference of the Municipality to solve the problems of the tent-dwelling Roma within its jurisdiction. As mentioned, from the perspective of the Municipality, the problem is limited to three families. There is no question about the rest of the Roma: the Town Council has already decided to evict them. Besides, the Municipality claims that the majority of the Roma are common law-breakers, and are "leading figures of various unlawful activities" with a record of "three break-ins a day" in the district of Agios Vassilios during the summertime (daily "Peloponnisos", 31/5/00). The **Greek Helsinki Monitor** and **Minority Rights Group-Greece** issued a press release on 9/6/00, asking the Municipality to present evidence on the alleged law-breaking activities of the Roma in the area, so the Municipality would not be held accountable for racism and intolerance against a sensitive population group.

Evictions without an alternative housing choice are not consistent with the spirit of International Law [Article 12(1) of the **International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights** and a report by the competent UN Committee]. One might wonder how the Municipality of Achaia – a place where people travel through on their way to or from the Peloponnisos – intends to solve the problem of the Romanies' stay within its limits. Will there be evictions on a 24-hour basis or will the entrance and stay of the Roma be prohibited according to the model of Nea Kios, Argolida?

Nevertheless, even for the three families with municipal citizenship, the future is not clear either. They have been living in shacks for years, on land belonging to the Municipality and the Church. They are going to be transferred to an unknown area, to prefabricated houses which the Municipality has publicly undertaken to provide them with. Only on 6/6/00 the Roma were informed by members of the **Greek Helsinki Monitor** about the plans concerning their transfer to another area. They were informed about the prefabricated houses from the Mayor himself, who reportedly visited them

before the elections, giving out, along with promises, ballots of candidates belonging to a specific party...

The **Municipality of Patras** has demonstrated a similar self-delusive attitude concerning the tent-dwelling Roma who have lived there for years. They live in sordid conditions in the area of Riganocambos (also known as Kato Souli and Koutsas District), on land belonging to the University of Patras. About thirty families of Greek Roma – among which there are several registered citizens – live together with ten families of Albanian Roma amongst the rubbish. They live in self-made shacks without any infrastructure, not even water. On the contrary, the saplings on a nearby site, which used to be a rubbish dump, are watered regularly by an automatic irrigation system.

The **Municipality of Patras** took part in the meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> May. However, it had only made references to the prospect of action in the built-up area of **Agia Ekaterini**, where there are Roma living in refugees' houses without any problems of integration. There was also the mentioning of the settlement in the **Makriyanni** area where a rent subsidy scheme is already in progress with relative success. The tent-dwellers who are staying at Makriyanni, in prefabricated houses and shacks with basic infrastructure (public pumps and lavatories), are not more than 8 families. Nevertheless, the most important question concerning Riganocambos does not seem to concern the Municipality of Patras. In a petition to the Prime Minister that points out the 19 problems that need immediate attention by the state and the Municipality (12/6/00), **Mr. Floratos**, the Mayor, made no reference to the Roma although he had mentioned the Kurdish refugees.

Specific proposals of the Municipalities of Rio and Patras on housing and social reinstatement of the Roma within their territory are expected to be put forward soon at the Prefecture and the Office for Quality of Life in accordance with the resolution reached at the meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> May. The Municipality of Rio has been called upon to respond to the "inquiry" in spite of its deliberate absence from the meeting at the Prefecture. The Municipality of Patras has also been called upon to respond adequately to all the questions, and it is certainly required to answer the question of Riganocambos. Shall we be waiting for ... Godo?

## **APPENDIX**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

9/6/2000

#### **TOPIC: DISTURBING IF NOT UNACCEPTABLE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE MUNICIPALITY OF RIO ON LOCAL ROMA**

**Greek Helsinki Monitor** (GHM) finds it disturbing if not unacceptable, the statements of the Municipality of Rio on the local Roma, in answering a GHM report referring to the situation in Rio (suburb of Patras). The statements, which our organization was informed of, were reported in the local daily "Peloponnisos" on May 31, 2000. The statements are made under the name of the "cadres of the municipal

authority" who do not seem to have the courage to express their opinion officially or under their own name. Since there is an absent of denial concerning the statement, the opinion of the "cadres" is considered to express the views of the municipality.

The claim that only four Roma families live permanently in Rio, while the rest are merely in transit, is not correct. There exist Roma families and non-municipal citizens living in the region for years and having the same rights with every permanent resident in Rio regardless of their municipal citizenship. This was also ascertained by the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life, in the course of the latter's visit to the region together with GHM. In answer to a parliamentary question by M. Damanaki (Progressive Left Coalition MP), the then Deputy Minister of Interior, G. Florides, also referred to the existence of a Roma settlement in Rio. More importantly, the municipal authority should inform the public and the four Roma families of how "it will take care of their transfer to another site where their healthy living will be secured". On June 6, 2000 when GHM met these families, they had no idea regarding their relocation. On the contrary, they were told in the pre-election period that prefabricated houses were to be allocated to them and would be established at the site where they live today.

If the «personal and constant interest shown by the Mayor, V. Zervas, in finding a permanent solution regarding Roma housing», mentioned by the «cadres» to the newspaper, was true, then the Mayor and the Municipality would have not been the only ones absent from the recent working meeting at the Prefecture of Achaia, with the participation of all other municipalities of the Prefecture and the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life, to overview the right policies for the Roma of Achaia

The professed interest of Mayor V. Zervas was inconsistent with his action. He claimed that he had the "personal and constant interest" in "finding a permanent solution regarding Roma housing." This was mentioned by the "cadres" to the newspaper. However, the Mayor and the Municipality were absent from the meeting at the Prefecture of Achaia, when all other relevant parties – other municipalities of the Prefecture and the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life – were present.

The accusation that " frequently Gypsies ... become the protagonists of various illegal acts" is unjust. Worse still is the claim that according to the Municipality, "in the district of Agios Vasilis, three robberies are registered per day during the summer." The Municipality is called upon to publish IMMEDIATELY the official records for all robberies in Agios Vasilis, the alleged involvement of the Roma in most of them and their participation in all other "illegal acts". Otherwise, the Municipality is manifesting statements of intolerance and racism with grave consequences nationally and internationally.

## **PRESS RELEASE**

(15/6/00)

**TOPIC: 19 BUT NOT ... 20- PRIORITIES OF THE MUNICIPALITY  
OF PATRAS. ROMA'S RESETTLEMENT  
NOT IN THE MUNICIPALITY'S PRIORITIES**

From a related article in the daily "Peloponnisos" (13/6/2000) entitled "19 strong 'slaps in the face!' A memo to the Prime Minister for the 'wounds' of Patras", our cooperating organizations, **Greek Helsinki Monitor** and **Minority Rights Group-Greece**, regretfully realized that the resettlement of the Roma in the Municipality of Patras is not among the 19 priorities set by the Mayor in his memo to the Prime Minister. Even though the problem of the (Kurdish) illegal immigrants is one of the 19 aforementioned points, there is no reference in the relevant memo considering the grave problem of the local Roma.

The camp in Riganocampos-Kato Souli (otherwise called Koutsia), one of the worst five in Greece, falls within the administrative competency of the Municipality which so far has not shown any sincere interest in improving the condition of the camp. In an article of the same daily on May 30, the Municipality (in answer to the criticism of our organizations and referring to the relevant proposals that are to be submitted to the Prefecture by the end of the month) mentioned that the municipality's interest will be limited to the areas of Agia Ekaterini and Makriyani. This means that Riganocampos, with the worse situation, will be left out.

Our organizations are waiting for the Municipality's proposals for all its Roma and, in particular, the tent-dwellers in Riganocampos. Among the tent-dwellers, some of them are municipal citizens. So far, it has become evident that the Municipality has no true interest in the Roma and that all initiatives will be taken only under the pressure of the Prefecture and the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life.

We note, finally, that any development (positive or negative) regarding the Roma tent-dwellers in Riganocampos, as well as those in the rest of the Municipality and the Prefecture, will be included in our next joint report to the United Nations where Roma issues will be discussed, on a global level, in August 2000.