

**MARCH ACTIVITY REPORT
OF THE GHM ROMA OFFICE**

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1. Housing policy

a. Loans for 940 Roma families by ministerial decision

(excerpts from GHM Report to the ERRC no. 81, March 2000 Press Coverage)

28/3/00: *Avgi*, p: 21

‘Government remembers Roma tent-dwellers’

Fourteen days before the elections, while in power for fifteen years, the Greek socialist party remembered the existence of Roma tent-dwellers. Loans with favorable conditions will be given to 940 Roma families (not even one thousand!) for acquiring their own house. Eligible will be Roma families living permanently in municipalities throughout the country. The loans will be for 15 years and the price per square meter will not surpass the amount of 120.000 drachmas.

Also on the same subject:

28/3/00: *Kathimerini*, p: 35

‘Favorable loans for Roma’

Both reports are neutral simply reporting the fact. Avgi though puts emphasis on the pre-election timing of the announcement of such a decision.

Also on the same subject:

28/3/00: *Karfi*

In addition to the aforementioned reports, this one states that most of the loans concern homeless Roma living in Tyrnavos (Continental Greece) and Orestiada (Western Thrace).

Following these reports, GHM staff contacted the Ministry of National Economy and the Prime Minister’s Office for the Quality of Life asking for the relevant ministerial decision as well as supplementary information regarding the beneficiaries, the criteria of selection and the decision-making body. Reportedly such practical details were to be discussed after the parliamentary elections (9/4/00). Regarding the decision itself (n. 12624/195), the latter was issued by the Ministry of National Economy and more precisely the General Directorate of Financial Policy on March 27, 2000. Yet, its inclusion in the Official Gazette is still pending. Among others, the decision was based on previous ones (8613/B.496/13.3.98) regarding the rehabilitation of Roma in the municipality of Sofades (Karditsa, Continental Greece) and the state’s responsibility to map out housing policies for sensitive groups. The decision provides for subsidies to 940 homeless Roma families, enabling them to acquire their own house within 15 years. 80% of the rate of interest of the 940 loans in question will be subsidized by the Greek state -the official guarantor- through the National Bank of Greece. The amount of money per family is not to surpass the amount of 15 million drachmas, nor 120.000 drachmas per square meter. The subsidy will be terminated in case a beneficiary owns more than 5 semesters’ mature bills. The rate of interest is not to surpass the minimum rate for the acquisition of real estate. In case a beneficiary fails to prove ownership-occupancy, the latter will have to give the whole loan back. Beneficiaries are Roma families living permanently in municipalities throughout Greece. Following a selection procedure, the latter will be announced by the municipalities. The plots of land could be municipal or owned by the beneficiaries.

b. Roma in Chalandri/NGO initiatives for a housing scheme

Following GHM initiatives, on March 10, 2000, the Greek Ombudsman met with Roma and NGO representatives. The aim was to discuss the imminent need for a housing plan of action for the Roma tent-dwellers in Chalandri (an Athenian suburb), following reports to the Ombudsman by some of the owners of the camp site. Based on court decisions, also invoking their right to property, the latter asked the

Ombudsman's intervention in precipitating the eviction of Roma from the region. Due to the sensitivity of the issue, the Ombudsman's Office came in touch with GHM staff to receive information about the case. Following this contact, GHM threw at the table the idea of a meeting with Roma representatives. Besides, G. Kaminis and A. Takis from the Ombudsman's Office, present at the meeting were also Stelios Kalamiotes, president of the "Elpida" Association of Roma tent-dwellers in Chalandri, Elpida Efthymiatis from Doctors of the World-Greece and Christina Rougheri from GHM. The latter took over the writing of a report to be submitted to the Ombudsman as a response to the owners' statements. The report made reference to the attempted eviction of 1999, the relevant court decisions, the living conditions in the camp and the NGO initiatives -in cooperation with the Prime Minister's Office for the Quality of Life- for alternative housing solutions. The report made also reference to the precedent of Nea Alikarnasos and the canceling of an eviction protocol issued by the mayor in 1997; the Heraklion county court ruled that the eviction was abusive (see also November 1999 GHM Activity Report).

As a follow-up to that meeting, on March 17, 2000, A. Takis from the Ombudsman's Office, Stelios Kalamiotes, Elpida Efthymiatis and Christina Rougheri had a discussion with Mr. Kotsopoulos, advisor to the Athens prefect. The aim was to inform the competent prefect authorities about the complexity of the situation (the right to property vis a vis the protection of a sensitive group) and the imminent need for a housing scheme in Chalandri. Mr. Kotsopoulos explained that the prefect authorities have no budget for initiating such large-scale schemes. He committed himself to look into the possibility the prefect -together with the municipality- to raise funds for that purpose from specific EU programs as well as the national lottery. Mr. Kotsopoulos took over the responsibility to establish a close contact with the municipality of Chalandri and the Prime Minister's Office for the Quality of Life. He seemed to be rather positive and much eager to contribute in any possible way.

c. Roma in Spata/ Municipal initiative for a housing scheme

Following contacts with F. Stamos from the Prime Minister's Office for the Quality of Life and Elpida Efthymiatis from the Doctors of the World-Greece, GHM was informed about a latest housing scheme for Roma tent-dwellers in Spata (an Athenian suburb, where the new city airport is being built). The mayor committed himself to transfer 17 Roma families at a municipal site with full infrastructure. Reportedly, the necessary works will start soon, within the forthcoming days. The Prime Minister's Office for the Quality of Life will also provide the families with pre-fabricated houses initially used for the Athens earthquake victims. Local Roma have accepted the idea of relocation.

d. Low, steady progress in the works for the self-managed camp in the former military barrack of Gonou

Following contacts with DROM Network for the Roma Social Rights spokesperson, Thanasis Triarides, GHM was informed about the latest developments in the former military barrack of Gonou and the progress in the works for the first self-managed settlement in Greece. There had been a considerable progress in the works, reaching their final stage. Yet, in all probability, some slight repairs will be needed even after the

transferring of Roma in the new settlement (the polycenter will not be ready by that time). According to Thanasis Triarides, the waysides in the former military barrack were about to be completed. In the infrastructure works were also employed some of the future residents of the settlement. The Minister of Interior, Mrs. Vaso Papandreou, made known that 246 pre-fabricated houses (initially used for the Athens earthquake victims in September 1999) would be given for equal number of Roma families.

2. Follow-up activities regarding cases of police brutality against Roma in Greece

a. Contacts with the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities

In view of the impending circulation of a report on Roma issued by the Office of the (OSCE) High Commissioner for National Minorities, GHM -aiming at exercising extra pressure on the Greek government- lobbied for the inclusion in the report of several cases of police brutality against Roma in Greece. For two of them, despite the forensic doctors' reports as well as the Prosecutors' indictment for "torture" in the case of E. Kotropoulos and L. Bekos and "manslaughter" in the case of A. Celal, sworn administrative investigations reached conclusion only after two years' time and -in essence- in favor of the victimizers. The third case was that of N. Katsaris who was ill-treated by police officers in Nafplio in autumn 1999. The issue reached the Ombudsman and the Greek Justice as N. Katsaris filed a complaint against the officers in question.

b. References on Greek Roma to a report distributed by GHM and MRG-G to the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Human Rights and Inhuman Treatment or Punishment, Vienna 27 March 2000



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Greek Human Rights List: <http://www.egroups.com/group/greekhr/fullinfo.html>

GREECE: TORTURE, INHUMAN TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

(Report¹ Distributed to the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Human Rights and Inhuman Treatment or Punishment, Vienna 27 March 2000)

¹ This report is largely based on Greek Helsinki Monitor and Minority Rights Group-Greece, **Human Rights in Greece: Joint Concise Report for 1999**, 7 January 2000; Greek Helsinki Monitor **Reports to the European Roma Rights Center** Nos.69, 11 October and 70, 15 November 1999; and

23 March 2000

Introduction

Greece is not immune from the worldwide tendency of law enforcement officials frequently abusing the rights of citizens during arrests, interrogations, detention or imprisonment. Such attitude is facilitated by the practice of court authorities to rarely prosecute such criminal behavior. When they do so, cases reach the court many years after the facts. This happens even in cases backed with forensic evidence. Occasionally, compellingly incriminating evidence in addition to forensic certificates is ignored by the courts, which end up acquitting police officers. The latter may stay in the force during all these years of investigation and court procedures, thus still able to exert undue influence on those who dare prosecuting them. Such practices discourage many victims of police violence to file charges against policemen. Finally, many police stations have either inadequate or overcrowded facilities: as a result, detainees are treated in a degrading way. Some recent examples are provided below. Competent state authorities do not appear very sensitive to such allegations; hence little progress has been made recently.

Torture, Ill-Treatment and Misconduct by Law Enforcement Officials, Followed by Impunity

Police Violence Against Minors

- Perhaps one of the most characteristic cases of police violence, including torture, that can remain without any consequences for the perpetrators of such acts is the case of two minors, aged 14 (initials: P.T.) and 16 (D.A.). In 19 August 1994, they were arrested and brought to the police station of Kassandreia, Halkidiki (Northern Greece), as suspects for the theft of 460,000 drs. (around \$2,000 at the time) from their employers. During their interrogation, three police officers, separately or jointly and for more than an hour, were beating the two minors with their hands, feet, truncheons, and shafts. They even took off the pants of one minor and obliged him to bend and shout "I am a fag," while threatening him that they will force one shaft into his behind and submit him to electroshock. All this, so as to extort confessions from them. In the end, it turned out they were wrongly suspected in first place and were set free. A forensic report verified the injuries and the probable causes. The previous acts were thus described in the 1263/1998 judgment of the Three-Member Misdemeanor Court of Halikidki, which convicted the three policemen for torture (article 137A of the Penal Code) and sentenced them to 4 years in prison each and 5 years deprivation of their civil rights. Despite the gravity of the action, though, the three policemen were set free on appeal. Worse, they were not even suspended from the police force. On 3 March 2000, the Three-Member Appeals Court of Salonica ... acquitted the three policemen from these charges, arguing that the incidents of torture were "exaggerated by the minors" and the injuries were caused by their employers, before the minors were brought to the police station. The prosecutor, who had asked for the policemen's conviction, subsequently filed to the Supreme Court for the cassation of the court's decision.

Police Violence Against Roma

Amidst repeated allegations of excessive police violence against Roma in recent years, the murder of one Rom and torture of two others in 1998, backed by forensic evidence, led to no disciplinary measures against the police officers involved: officers indicted in 1998 for homicide or torture have remained in office and the proceedings continued as of this writing. This happened despite court indictments. The ministry simply launched an inconclusive "sworn administrative investigation."

- In April 1998, Angelos Celal, a 28-year-old Rom, was killed by police officers in Partheni (near Salonica), while trying to escape police control. The forensic report certified that Celal died of a head wound caused by a bullet shot in the back of his head. In addition, he had another wound in

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights **Torture and Inhuman Treatment or Punishment in the OSCE Region** (Report to the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Human Rights and Inhuman Treatment or Punishment Vienna, 27 March 2000).

the back. In June, the prosecutor informed the police that he had indicted three police officers for murder, conspiracy to commit murder and other charges. The police officers were not suspended. The case has yet to reach the courts.

- In May 1998, Lazaros Bekos and Eleftherios Kotropoulos (17 and 18 years old respectively) were ill-treated by police officers during their detention at the police station in the town of Mesolongi. According to a forensic certificate, they had “medium bodily injuries, inflicted with a broken instrument.” In July 1998, the two Roma pressed charges against the police and, in December, three officers were indicted for violation of article 137A of the criminal code on “torture and other offenses against human dignity.” Specifically, they were accused of having violated paragraph 3, section 1, for “concurrent bodily harm caused by a person, whose duties are the investigation of possible criminal acts, with the intent to extort from another person under his authority a confession, a deposition or an information.” Throughout 1998 and again in 1999, the Roma youth were harassed by these police officers to retract their statements. Even after their indictment, the three police officers were neither transferred nor suspended from duty. The case has yet to reach the courts.
- On 12 September 1999, Nikos Katsaris, a 23-year-old Rom living in the Chalandri camp, was in a car heading towards Nafplio with his father, his underage brother and a cousin. On this Sunday, they wanted have a look at three open-air markets, without having to deal with the sellers immediately. All three open-air markets were surrounded by barbed wire. When leaving the third market, three police officers stopped the Roma and, at gunpoint, told them to get out of the car, and put their hand ups. The officer did a body search - swearing, kicking and beating them. The Roma claimed that they had only come to look at cars to buy, and not to steal, as the police suspected. To prove this, they even showed the officers the notes with names and mobile phones of the owners of the cars to prove their intention to buy a car. Nevertheless, they were taken to the police station and kept in two separate cells with ten other people, mostly immigrants awaiting deportation. They were detained because the police found court decisions against Nikos Katsaris and his father involving as yet unpaid fines. The two underage youths were released the same day while Nikos Katsaris and his father were only released after their relatives paid the bail the next day. On 27 October, Nikos Katsaris, with the help of the Greek Helsinki Monitor, pressed charges against the policemen involved and subsequently filed a complaint to the Ombudsman’s office. The police did not even deem the case worth of a “sworn administrative investigation,” stating that an internal review in that police station showed that none of the allegations were well founded.

Police Violence Against Asylum Seekers and Immigrants

In recent years, some 500-700,000 immigrants have settled in Greece, mostly illegally; two-thirds of them are Albanians, and most belong to minority religions, but no official figures are available. In 1998, a legalization procedure for those immigrants was launched, eventually involving some 230,000 people applying for residence permits. Only some 35,000 had been granted permits by the end of 1999. Migrants are subjected to frequent “sweeping operations” aiming at the summary expulsion of all those without any legal documents. Frequent allegations that migrants are subjected to degrading and humiliating, sometimes violent, treatment by policemen during these operations are routinely rejected without any investigation by state authorities.

- The best-known recent example happened on 3 July 1999. All foreigners found in the streets were rounded up by the police and, even if holders of legal residence documents, taken to police stations or open-air stadiums and had their fingerprints taken for possible match against pending criminal cases. Illegal immigrants were expelled from the country, with TV crews filming the operation. Over 300 intellectuals signed a protest petition, but only the outcry of the Greek farmers, worried about their crops in the absence of cheap foreign labor force, persuaded the government to return to stop mass expulsions. Similar, less publicized “sweeping operations” recurrently took place throughout 1999.

Conditions in Prisons and Detention Facilities and Prisoners’ Rights

On 20 August 1999, the Ombudsman carried out an “autopsy” in the detention facilities of the [Athens Center] Omonoia Square Police Station, following citizens’ complaints. In a letter to the Minister of Public Order (7905/99/2.3-27-8-1999), the Ombudsman stated that the facility was overcrowded: between 55-115 detainees in premises with an –otherwise inadequate- infrastructure for just 30 detainees. One consequence was that minors and adults were kept together, against the law. Another, in conjunction with the lack of light and air, that they were all forced to wear only their underwear, given the heat, “in violation of the respect to their dignity.” The only two toilets’ cleanliness was “unacceptable to say the least.” Most detainees had skin and infectious diseases that were not at all or inadequately treated by doctors. The most serious problem, noted the Ombudsman, was the lengthy (sometimes up to six months) detention of foreigners awaiting expulsion, which “informally transforms their places of detention into prisons, without any prior indictment of these inmates.” “In combination with the prevailing appalling material conditions, that detention could be considered de facto ‘inhuman and degrading treatment.’” Noting that the use of the term “sweeping operations” [see above] is “very offending for human dignity,” the Ombudsman recommended that, when there are no adequate facilities, no such operations leading to mass detention of foreigners be carried out. He added that foreigners who cannot be expelled immediately [for lack of country ready to accept them] be granted temporary permission to stay in the country and be set free. Following this report, short-lived improvements were noticed in that police station. Nevertheless, these conditions prevail throughout the country wherever detention centers are inadequately equipped and/or overcrowded.

Greek Helsinki Monitor and Minority Rights Group - Greece, in anticipation of the presentation and distribution of this report to the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Human Rights and Inhuman Treatment or Punishment, have submitted a complimentary copy to the Greek Foreign Ministry on 23 March 2000.

**STATEMENT BY THE GREEK DELEGATION
TO THE
OSCE SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING
ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND INHUMAN TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT
Vienna, 27 March 2000**

This is in response to a statement made by the representative of the Greek Helsinki Monitor, and also it is meant to be a brief comment on documents distributed outside this hall concerning cases of alleged ill-treatment of individuals by police in Greece.

First of all, I would like to say that the Government of Greece attaches great importance to the respect for human rights of all persons in Greece, particularly of those who happen to be more vulnerable, such as Roma and immigrants, including –and especially- illegal ones. In this context, we welcome the scrutiny to which the behavior of responsible authorities is subjected by the civil society, such as NGOs. We consider the work of NGOs in this respect as an indispensable element of democracy. And we value their intervention in the cases where abuses are alleged or proven, in the various stages of treatment of such cases, including, when necessary, in international fora such as this meeting.

What is important though in the case of intervention in international fora is the need to see things in their proper perspective. Indeed, some people might have been puzzled, or even shocked, to see that in a meeting like this one, designed to deal with torture, inhuman treatment and punishment, literature is distributed and statements are made concerning Greece. And the puzzlement is increased –and rightly so- when one sees the nature of the allegations and the fact that three or four cases are brought up to support the claim that such ill-treatment in Greece is met with impunity. Now, these cases are still pending before the courts, so the claim about impunity is at least premature.

But the very fact that these cases are not yet concluded is particularly significant and revealing from an important point of view. Indeed, it is testimony to the importance the Greek Government attaches to those cases and to the meticulous way with which it treats them. Take for example the case of alleged police violence against two minors, which dates from 1994. The case has gone through the judicial system, and, as recently as on the 3rd of March of this year, the three policemen were acquitted by an Appeals Court. Still, the case is not over. The prosecutor has since then filed to the Supreme Court for the cassation of the Appeals Court decision. The case is still going on.

Now, if the policemen had been conclusively acquitted a few years ago, would that have meant that the case would by now be considered closed, and Greece would not be faced today with such accusations?

After all, the Rodney King case in the USA, a case to which the whole world has literally been eyewitness (whereas the case mentioned in Greece rests on the allegations of two persons), is not much older than 1994. The policemen involved were acquitted, and nobody is talking about it in this forum. Nobody has mentioned the recent Diallo case either. Talking about impunity? In Greece?

If the three Greek policemen accused of ill-treatment of minors in 1994 had acted –and acted indisputably- in the way in which they are accused of having acted, in any of most of the countries represented in this room, including countries that pride themselves of their human-rights record, they would most probably have been let off the hook long ago. Not in Greece.

Turning, again briefly, to the alleged police violence against asylum seekers and immigrants, first I would want to correct an inaccuracy that has crept into the GHM report. It is not true that, of the 230.000 applications for residence permits, only 35.000 such permits had been granted by the end of 1999. The exact figure is 87.311. This figure is by now about 100.000.

Concerning the treatment of immigrants by police, every effort is being made by the Government in order for the rights and dignity of the immigrants to be scrupulously respected. A concrete piece of evidence of such concern is the fact that all arresting officers are obliged by law to hand to every individual at the moment of his/her arrest an “information bulletin”, in which the detainee’s rights are spelled out in detail. Those bulletins are available in 14 languages, and there different bulletins for detainees and for persons being detained for deportation. Copies of the bulletins I have available here.

As for the so-called “sweeping operations”, I want to point out, first of all, that this is not an official term; it is an unfortunate concoction of the media. That some checks of the documents of immigrants in Greece have to be done is inevitable, especially given the unprecedented influx of, mostly illegal, immigrants into the country in recent years. That such checks should be conducted with meticulous respect for the rights and dignity of the persons involved is of paramount importance to the Greek Government.

How do you go about carrying out such checks? While it might seem as lacking discretion, not to say elegance, that checks are carried out in the open, mainly on means of public transportation, one might wonder what the alternatives can indeed be: conducting raids at workplaces? Knocking at doors at five o’clock in the morning?

Needless to say, the legalization of the status of immigrants –and therefore some sorting out between legal and illegal immigrants- is beneficial first and foremost to the immigrants themselves.

c. GHM and MRG-G press release and short-term plan of action regarding the case of Rom Angelos Celal

Following a relevant report in “Eleftherotypia” (30/3/00), GHM and MRG-G denounced with a press release the decision of the Council of First Instance Judges of

Thessaloniki to issue an order of dismissal of all charges against the police officer who, on 1 April 1998, killed Rom Angelos Celal.

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PRESS RELEASE

30/3/2000

**TOPIC: SHAME TO THE GREEK JUSTICE! DISMISSAL OF CHARGES AGAINST
POLICE OFFICER WHO KILLED A ROM IN THE BACK
THAT IRREPARABLY EXPOSES GREECE INTERNATIONALLY.**

Greek Helsinki Monitor and **Minority Rights Group- Greece** irately condemn the decision of the Council of First Instance Judges of Salonica to issue an order of dismissal of all charges against the police officer who, on 1 April 1998, killed Rom Angelos Celal, under the pretense he was acting "in legitimate self-defense." An argument that cannot stand in view of the autopsy report. This decision confirms the general impression that, in Greece, impunity prevails for police officers who torture or kill civilians. Moreover, it irreparably exposes Greece internationally, as only last Monday 27/3/2000, in Vienna and during the "OSCE Supplementary Meeting on Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment," the Greek delegation invoked the pending before justice status of the Celal case to highlight how the state cares for the proper investigation of alleged police abuses. This case was mentioned in contradistinction to the internationally known King and Diallo cases, in which American courts acquitted the policemen. What will be Greece's arguments in future international meetings?

It is pointed out that the Celal case is mentioned in all international human rights reports of NGOs (Amnesty International, International Helsinki Federation, European Roma Rights Center, etc.) and (inter)governmental agencies (U.S. Department of State, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, etc.). Related material is available in our web pages:

- in Greek: <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/greek/articles/roma-celal.html> and
- in English: <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/english/pressrelease/celal.html>

It is reminded that the autopsy report records that Celal was killed by "a bullet of a service gun ... that penetrated the skull in the occipital area" while he had a prior "superficial injury in the lumbar area." How then two wounds in the back of the body can be compatible with police claims that Celal was shooting at them rather than with his father's claims that he was killed while attempting to flee? What was the ground of the Prosecutor's Office 1998 indictment of three policemen for manslaughter?

It is needed to stress the dimension of racial discrimination. Probably because the victim was a Rom, police had concluded the Sworn Administrative Inquiry (EDE) without waiting for the result of the indictment while the judges did not consider it necessary to bring the matter before a court. There are many similar examples. When the victims are not Roma, on the other hand, cases usually reach the courts and EDE's are at least pending until courts have deliberated conclusively.

The Celal case confirms the comments of University of Salonica Law School Professor Nikos Paraskevopoulos ("Eleftherotypia" 29/3/2000) on the "responsibility of criminal justice" for the "mild treatment of police abuses including manslaughter" that makes "police officers (...) dangerous for human beings, society, democracy."

We call upon the competent Ministers of Justice and of Foreign Affairs to make sure that all necessary steps provided by the law be taken to avoid a new and greater international vilification of Greece as a country that tolerates impunity of police abuses.

Looking for additional information, the very same day, GHM contacted the widow of A. Celal and her family. The latter confirmed the initial information that the decision was related to the Prosecutor's Office 1998 indictment for manslaughter and not the complaint filed by the father of the victim, Panayote Celal. GHM asked and took the consent of the widow to proceed legally with the case in any possible way, so as the court to reverse this decision. For that purpose, GHM took action for the public prosecutor to appeal the council decision of acquittal. In addition, GHM member, D. Gousetis, made reference to the case in his weekly column in "Avgi" on April 1st, 2000 (http://www.avgi.org/cgi-bin/hweb.exe?-A=135284&-w=20000401_&-V=AVGI) as one of the examples which -in the eyes of human rights activists- reinforce the impression that impunity prevails for police officers who torture or kill civilians in Greece.

3. Follow-up in the case of stateless Durgut Sezgin/ Letter to the Ombudsman

(The following is a letter prepared by GHM staff aiming at sensitizing the Greek authorities and precipitating the frustratingly slow procedures for granting Rom, D. Sezgin, with a stateless identity card).

To the Ombudsman's Office

Athens, April 4, 2000

As you already know, two and a half months ago I sent you a report listing my problems as stateless. In the meantime there has been no development, nor response on your behalf. I am coming back today with similar requests as the prolongation of this suspense has had a real effect on my personality and family. I am asking your help to get at least a stateless identity card and an answer to my application for citizenship. I hope to hear from you soon.

Regarding the latter, that is my application for citizenship, I would like to provide you with additional data which Greek Helsinki Monitor brought to my knowledge. Based on Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Reduction of Stateless People, ratified by Law 535/26-1-1977 and, giving the fact that my mother is Greek and my father stateless, the Greek state should have given me citizenship immediately. On these grounds, in 1993, it gave citizenship to my sister, following her application after she became adult. On the contrary, my application has been without an answer since 1990, when I became adult.

Finally, I am asking you whether and whenever you think it is appropriate to let people in the administration, having shown a real interest in my case, know of this letter. I am referring to Theodore Theodorou and Dimitris Moshopoulos, diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as to Ioanis Kokinis, in charge of the Rodopi Police Directorate. This letter was written by Greek Helsinki Monitor, in particular the organization's Stateless Section to which I belong (hoping not for long time) which is fully informed and competent to handle my case.

With respect

D. Sezgin

**4. On the occasion of the International Day Against Racism (March 21)/
GHM preparations for the International Roma Day (April 8)**

On the occasion of the International Day Against Racism GHM issued a press release with references also to the situation of Roma in Greece.

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PRESS RELEASE

20/3/2000

**TOPIC: INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST RACISM (MARCH 21).
GREECE: TOLERANCE OF INTOLERANCE,
CONTEMPT OF THE UN, AND SOME GOOD PRACTICES**

Greek Helsinki Monitor and **Minority Rights Group- Greece** on the occasion of tomorrow's International Day against Racism highlight the basic points of the report they submitted (together with the **International Helsinki Federation**) 15 days ago to the relevant UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

1. Greece for the last eight years had disregarded her obligation to submit, every two years, a report to the UN regarding the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination and to provide answers -pending since 1992- to the severe recommendations of the UN Committee. We welcome the fact that Greece submitted at the last moment a report to the UN, thus avoiding being exposed to a review by the Committee without a report, on 15/3/2000. The report was submitted as a result of our appeal to Foreign Minister George Papandreou, as the latter confirmed in a public meeting on 14/3/2000.

2. In the report we submitted to the Committee of the UN, we stressed that Greece's main problem is the widely prevailing «tolerance of intolerance» instead of tolerance of difference and fight against intolerance. We present here two less known cases from everyday life that highlight this problem:

· First, an article entitled "Let's talk about... Gypsies", which refers to Roma and to «their nature for scheming, cheating, stealing and plundering», to the «real deluge of gypsy sub-culture, which our country experiences», to the «the parasitic behavior, which allows us to identify them as active pollutants of our European tradition (...), a privilege they share with the Jews». The article was first published in «Chrysi Avgi» (on 26/11/1999) and then in a column of the local paper «Proini» in Korinthos (Peloponese), on 15 and 16/12/1999. The related denunciation of the Youth Committee of Korinthos was published only in the column «Human Beings and Their Rights» of «Avgi». Apart from that, the local and the wider Greek community preferred to show «tolerance of intolerance».

· Another example of «tolerance of intolerance» concerns the University of Thrace, which does not hesitate to host into its webpages not only vulgar insults and slanders («bastards, stools, etc») for those fighting racism and extreme nationalism (including the Foreign Minister) but also irredentist and racist - particularly anti-Semitic- comments. Like «Turks cannot coexist with other nationalities», «we should liberate the countries of Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds in Asia Minor», «Gypsy means someone mean and disgraced», «Georgie Mineiko-Papandreou-Chad is 75% Jew, true hater of Greece and that is why he serves the USA!...». The University defends such an initiative in the name ... of freedom of expression, while at the same time it assigns list ownership to someone profoundly anti-Semitic. His most recent specimen: «The author of the book, who might not even be Androulakis, should have 'important backing'.... From time to time the 'chosen people' print (...) articles which

slander (...) mainly Christianity. There are also those, who say it openly, making many allegations (if you did not understand, I am referring to the Holocaust)».

3. In this report, as also in the relative report to the European Monitoring Center of Racism and Xenophobia, we mentioned some good practices contributing to the fight against racial discrimination and to the respect of the difference:

- the work of the new Ombudsman Office (which strives with admirable persistence to sensitize the Greek administration to the need to respect different cultures and not discriminate towards minorities)
- introduction of a 0.5% university entrance quota for the members of the "Muslim minority"
- development of educational material elaborate, modern and respectful of their culture for the schools of the "Muslim minority"
- news bulletins in 12 languages by the Greek state radio to cater the needs of immigrant and minority communities
- weekly supplement in Turkish and Russian by the Komotini daily "Paratiritis tis Thrakis" to appeal to the "Muslim minority" and the Russian-speaking "repatriated Greeks" from CIS countries that live in considerable numbers in that area (already there are also daily pages in these languages)
- the "Center for Support to Children and Family" in Votanikos (Athens City), a day care and educational center for the Muslim and/or Roma minority and/or migrant population.

Moreover, in view of the forthcoming International Roma Day (8/4/00), GHM took the following action:

The organization informed accordingly Maria Damanaki, a Progressive Left Coalition MP, sensitive to Roma issues. The latter has been one of the (few) MPs submitting questions on Roma before the Greek parliament. During last year, M. Damanaki posed three such questions to the government. Following contacts with GHM, M. Damanaki took over the writing of an article on Greek Roma to be published on April 7, 2000, the eve of the International Roma Day. In addition, GHM member, D. Gousetis, would work on a special dedication on Roma to be published on April 8, 2000 in his weekly column in the daily "Avgi".