

**REPORT ON THE COVERAGE OF THE ROMA IN THE GREEK PRESS**

**JUNE 2000**

*(Comments in italics are made by the GHM)*

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**1. On Nea Kios**

**3/6/00: *Avgi*, p: 80**

"Isolate racism in Nea Kios"

Progressive Left Coalition's position on the events in Nea Kios.

*Positive report.*

**4/6/00: *Epochi*, p: 1, 16, 17**

"Visit of solidarity to the Roma of Nea Kios"

Announcing the visit of human rights activists and party members to the city of Nea Kios on June 8<sup>th</sup>.

"Holding Roma collectively culpable"

With reference to the visit of the popular Rom singer Vasilis Paiteris, and the teacher Thanasis Nikolaides to the city of Nea Kios. The latter, together with four local family leaders went to the town hall asking for a meeting with the Mayor. The delegation was abused by «indignant» citizens, and the Mayor was only willing to talk with Mr. Paiteris and Mr. Nikolaides, provocatively ignoring the Roma residents of his municipality.

Public statements by leftist party-movements and associations.

*Very positive reports.*

**10/6/00: *Eleftherotypia*** [M. Nodaros], p: 50

"Racist horror in Nea Kios"

Terror and racism against the Roma and their supporters prevailed in Nea Kios. Following the municipal council's decision to prohibit the entrance of Roma into the city of Nea Kios and the local market, a group of "indignant" [non-Roma] citizens of Nea Kios impeded the entrance of 30 people (members of the Progressive Left Coalition Party, ecological and humanitarian organizations) in the city. Reportedly, the atmosphere was electrified and the attitude of the citizens of Nea Kios towards the visitors was very hostile. The incident was instigated by the local municipal authorities. The "indignant" citizens blocked the street towards Nea Kios, impeding the movement of the visitors' bus with threats, bad language and abuses. Following this, almost 300 people approached the Roma settlements with bad intentions, claiming that they had heard shootings which the police had never heard. The latter's intervention was very crucial for avoiding further tensions.

*Very positive report, highlighting the racist attitude of the residents of Nea Kios towards the Roma and most importantly the responsibility of the municipal authority.*

**Also on the same subject:**

**9/6/00: *Avgi***, p. 9

*Statements by some of the human rights activists and party representatives, denouncing the racist practices of the local authorities and residents of Nea Kios. Stella Alfieri, former Progressive Left Coalition MP, stated that the municipal decision of May 20<sup>th</sup> that prohibited the movement of Roma in the city was unconstitutional. Moreover, Alfieri criticized the central government for not taking a clear stance to endorse the Progressive Left Coalition Party's proposals for improving the Romanies' quality of life. Nikos Papas, from the Progressive Left Coalition-Youth Section, claimed that in the year 2000 it is socially and politically unacceptable to distinguish Roma from non-Roma citizens. Moreover, he stressed the urgent need for Roma children to return to school and the authorities to alter their position. Roma criminality is only natural when taking into consideration their social exclusion. Roma are not natural born law-breakers and criminals. Panos Lambrou, journalist working with weekly "Epochi", stated that "fighting against racism is an obligation of all free citizens". In a common press release, issued by all representatives who visited Nea Kios, the local authorities, most of the political parties, the government and some of the media were highlighted in particular as the parties responsible for the situation in Nea Kios. However, the whole country was generally responsible. Positive report.*

**10/6/00: *Avgi***, p: 48

"Does Nea Kios belong to Greece? Or is it a state of its own?"

*The report highlights the racist practices of the municipal authorities and their responsibility for instigating the crisis.*

**10/6/00: Avgi** [D. Gousetis]

*The author comments negatively on the attitude of the Nea Kios municipal council president, Mr. Maninis, who happens to be a member of the Progressive Left Coalition Party [the only party in Greece that is actively involved in the promotion of Romani rights]. The report is also sarcastic of the attitude of the local priest, who serves in the committee of citizens of Nea Kios in favor of the expulsion of Roma from the region. Very positive report, indirectly highlighting the need for Progressive Left Coalition Party to distance itself from the actions of Mr. Maninis.*

**11/6/00: Epochi**, p: 1, 6,11, 12, 13

"Roma die young", by **Vasilis Paiteris**, Rom and popular singer, involved in the Panhellenic Federation of Greek Roma Associations, pages 1, 6.

"Huts on fire", by **Mimi Fyrogenis**, local correspondent working with "Ta Nea tis Argolidas" [The News of Argolida], p: 6, (*regarding the arson of a Romani hut. Roma accused the local residents of burning down the hut of a Rom, Panayote Demetropoulos. His family was threatened and his property was destroyed*).

"The visit of the Athenians", by **Panos Lambrou, Liana Malandreniotis, Nikos Servetas**, p: 11, (*regarding the visit of human rights activists and party members to Nea Kios, with references to the role of the municipal authorities who instigated the crisis and the abuse of the visitors by "indignant" citizens*).

"Racist pogrom", by **Panos Lambrou, Liana Malandreniotis, Nikos Servetas**, p: 12-13, (*regarding the aforementioned visit; statements by local municipal counselors, counter-statements by party members and associations, commentaries*).

*Very positive contributions.*

**13/6/00: Avgi**, p: 1,3

"In the Greek south, huts are set on fire"

While some "whites" in Nea Kios burn down Romani huts, the government obviously downplays the incident of the arson, referring it to «personal rivalries». The hut of a Rom, Panayote Demetropoulos, was set on fire yesterday around 9.30 in the evening. The scene was very much reminiscent of the "American south". A group of men, after chasing the women and children who were inside the hut, burned everything down. Following relevant question in the press room Mr. Reppas --the government's spokesperson-- simply referred to a meeting which took place on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, between governmental officials, the Prefect of Argolida, the local mayors and Roma representatives. During that meeting, it was decided that no eviction ultimatums would be accepted and that the municipalities should immediately proceed to short-term and

long-term housing schemes for the local Roma, with the help from the government. Following this meeting, as Mr. Reppas stated, the atmosphere was not as electrified as in the first days right after the municipal decision, although there still existed phenomena of «personal rivalries» falling into the jurisdiction of the penal law. Contrary to the government, Greek Helsinki Monitor came out with a very strong press release denouncing the municipal authorities of Nea Kios as instigators of the incident.

*Very positive report, criticizing the government for downplaying the incident and not denouncing the arson.*

**Also on the same subject:**

**12/6/00: *Eleftherotypia***, [M. Nodaros], p: 51

"Nea Kios on fire"

*With reference to the arson of the Romani hut as well as the reactions of the local municipal council. G. Maninis, president of the municipal council, put the blame on the human rights activists and party members who visited Nea Kios and reinforced the Romanies' position. According to Maninis, there was no real arson. Roma who wanted to present themselves as victims of racism burned down the hut. Positive report denouncing the fact and endorsing the Romanies' story.*

**13/6/00: *Rizospastis***

<http://www.rizospastis.gr/wwwengine?action=showpage&page=page&publdate=13/6/2000&pageno=23&direction=1>

"They insist on ultimatums"

Panayote Kosionis, the Communist Party MP, visited the prefecture of Argolida and realized that what is happening in Nea Kios is just the tip of the iceberg... Besides Nea Kios, serious problems between Roma and non-Roma citizens exist also in the neighboring municipalities of Nea Tiryntha and Midea. A governmental counselor from the Ministry of Interior met with the Prefect of Argolida and entrusted him with the duty to communicate with all the concerned municipalities in the Prefecture. The counselor had announced a 60-day deadline for the municipalities to come up with specific proposals, disallowing eviction ultimatums as the solution. The Prefect informed Mr. Kosionis of these latest developments, promising that the Prefecture of Argolida will create model settlements for all local Roma. Yet, the situation is not at all as bright as the government would like it to be. Although the mayor of the municipality of Midea distanced herself from the municipal decision of Nea Kios, she stated that local citizens in Midea have been extremely patient with the Roma and their unlawful behavior. According to her, the only solution to the problem would be increased security measures by the police as Romanies' integration into mainstream society is difficult if not impossible...

*Very positive report, highlighting the massive racism in Argolida towards the Roma.*

**Also on the same subject:**

**11/6/00: Rizospastis**, p: 1, 26

"Anti-racist front"

*Report referring to the initiatives taken by Communist party members in Argolida and the deputy Mr. Kosionis. It also refers to the arson of the Romani hut.*

**14/6/00: Eleftherotypia**, [G. Votsis]

"The big shiver"

I was listening to the radio the other day and more specifically to the lawyer and president of the Municipal Council in Nea Kios, Mr. Maninis --candidate of the parliamentary elections with the Progressive Left Coalition for three times-- and I was shivering...

Roma burned down the hut in their settlement, on purpose, he said... It is a lie that Roma children and women were in danger. The "Athenians" (members of the Progressive Left Coalition Party and other humanitarian and ecological associations), who came to stand by the Roma were provocative, and they were rightly abused by the people of Nea Kios. The latter are not racist in any way, they are just fighting for the quality of their life...

Mr. Maninis was contradicted by his colleague, Mr. Voutsis, from the Progressive Left Coalition Party. Mr. Voutsis mentioned that a leftist should not talk and behave in a racist way. That was right. The President of the Coalition, Mr. Konstandopoulos, had similar critique towards Mr. Maninis. However, this was not enough... What happens in Nea Kios is not just a «local» incident. The government, the parties, and the civil society should have reacted strongly and not let everything happen... You need more worrying signals? Our children know nothing about physics, chemistry and mathematics, but they are the most xenophobic youth in Europe according to the official records... What else do we need to stop pampering our egos and realize that the virus of racism and xenophobia has infected us?

*Very positive report, highlighting the "tolerance of the intolerance" phenomenon, very much present in Greece.*

**16/6/00: Avgi**, p: 9

"The Ombudsman against the municipality of Nea Kios"

*With reference to the Ombudsman's letter to the municipality of Nea Kios, bringing the latter before its legal responsibilities.*

**Also on the same subject:**

**20/6/00: *Eleftherotypia*, p: 53**

"The Ombudsman in favor of the Roma"

*Very positive reports.*

**16/6/00: *Avgi*, p: 1**

"A Rom was shot at in Nea Kios"

A Rom Christos Demetropoulos was shot in the arm by two young passers-by, who tried to take him away with a motor-bike. The victim was transferred to the hospital of Argos while police has started the investigations.

**Also on the same subject:**

**16/6/00: *Eleftherotypia*, [M. Nodaros], p: 149**

"Boiling far-west in Nea Kios"

The former municipal counselor, Mr. Pinatsis, denounced the orders by the municipal authorities that 40 people are sent to block the entrances of the city prohibiting Roma from entering Nea Kios on an everyday basis. According to the victim, Christos Demetropoulos, the perpetrators were not the Roma, but the local residents.

*Both reports were very positive.*

**17/6/00: *Exousia*, p: 2, 14**

"The big shiver number 1 and 2"

The victim became the victimizer. The Roma Christos Demetropoulos and his mother were accused of perjury. It was because the police came to the arbitrary conclusion that he was not shot by the local residents of Nea Kios but by the local Roma. Unbelievable. I wonder who thought of this brilliant idea... I also wonder how come Mr. G. Maninis was a candidate of the Progressive Left Coalition Party and not with the extreme right...

*Two commentaries denouncing the racist practices in Nea Kios.*

"Shame on you, residents of Nea Kios..." [Stella Somarakis]

Police found a gun and 80 grams of hashish outside the hut. The victim denied any involvement in drug trafficking. Christos Demetropoulos was transferred to a hospital in Athens, although he was not gravely injured. The Rom singer, Vasilis Paiteris, visited him and found him guarded by police officers. He was released the next day. His mother spent the night in the police station of Kifisia.

*Positive report, endorsing the victim's story.*

**17/6/00: *Eleftherotypia*** [M. Nodaros], p: 16

"They arrested the victim"

Since they found no blood in the scene of the crime, but a weapon and some hashish outside Christos Demetropoulos' hut, the police believed that the victim was injured by local Roma instead of the residents of Kios. The family denies any involvement in drug trafficking and the victim insists on his initial testimony that he was shot by some young residents of Nea Kios. Relatives of the victim claim that the transfer of the victim to an Athenian hospital was just a way to send the family away and to make the role of the police easier. Due to the lack of eyewitnesses, police used the testimonies of the victim's two underage Roma relatives who were present in the course of the investigation. Journalist and activist Liana Malandreniotis and Rom singer Vasilis Paiteris found Christos Demetropoulos in the hospital at the time when the police officers were asking him to sign a paper, the content of which he ignored.

**17/6/00: *Avgi*** [Notis Ananiades], p: 1, 8

"Nea Kios: The police arrested the victim!"

**17/6/00: *Rizospastis***, p: 27

"They ended racism with one shot"

**18/6/00: *Avgi*** [N. Ananiades], p: 22, 35

"Going from the arson of a hut to the shooting of a 17-year-old boy"

*With references to the key questions of the shooting, the Ombudsman's reaction and the local residents' and municipal counselors' aspirations for high quality tourism in Nea Kios.*

**18/6/00: *Epochi*** [P. Lambrou], p: 23

"Creating suspects?"

"Our Roma" [Liana Malandreniotis], p: 23

**21/6/00: *Avgi***, p: 32

"Instead of chasing after the guilty, police incriminates the victims"

*Letter of demonstration by G. Maninis to the newspaper. The shooting of Demetropoulos was just another Romani trick.*

*The answer of Avgi: there are too many unanswered questions and the way police handled the case, on the contrary, does not make things clearer. Avgi had the*

*obligation to report all aspects of the incident and not confine itself to the bulletin of the police.*

*Positive reports bringing forward some of the key questions to the matter.*

**17/6/00: *To Vima***, p: A25

*Neutral report referring to both stories without any further comment.*

**21/06/2000: *Athens News*** [Kathy Tzilivakis], page: A02 (Article code: C12679A023)  
[http://athensnews.dolnet.gr/athweb/nathens.lst\\_by\\_topic?e=C&t=01](http://athensnews.dolnet.gr/athweb/nathens.lst_by_topic?e=C&t=01)

"Human rights activists condemn 'racist' treatment of the Gypsies"

HUMAN rights groups and several left-wing political parties called for a joint press conference in Athens yesterday to vehemently condemn the "racist" measures taken by the municipal council members in the Peloponnesian town of Nea Kios against some 500 Gypsies who live in the area. They criticized the government for ignoring "human rights violations" and urged the interior and justice ministries to intervene.

The decision taken by the municipal council of Nea Kios is aimed at literally getting rid of all Gypsies from the town, according to Liana Malandrenioti who is one of the press conference organizers. Based on the municipal council's decision, which was taken on May 20, Gypsies are prohibited from entering the town. This prohibition is enforced by regular roadblocks policed by townspeople. They permit only two Gypsies at a time to enter the commercial district for shopping. There are also around 142 Gypsy children who are no longer welcomed at school. The electricity and water has been cut off in the Gypsy settlements.

Members of the municipal council defend their actions by claiming that the Gypsies are responsible for the reported rise in local crime, including drug trafficking. "We are not racists, but we just want to put an end to all these problems," the president of the Nea Kios' municipal council George Maninis told the Athens News last week.

These measures, however, have made the situation worse. A shack belonging to a Gypsy family was burned down two weeks ago and an 18-year-old Gypsy was wounded in the arm in a drive-by shooting. The victim and his mother, who claimed that the assailants were residents of Nea Kios, were arrested for reportedly lying to the police.

"The municipal council's decision is illegal, unconstitutional and is terrorization," former MP and member of the Coalition of the Left Stella Alifieri told reporters. "It cultivates racist attitudes. This decision angered us because what right does this municipal council have to cast out the Gypsies on the basis of the criminal behavior of some Gypsies. Not only are the Gypsies not allowed to enter the town, but they are also prohibited from buying and selling."

Alifieri added that the president of the Left Coalition Nikos Constantopoulos has also condemned the measures taken by Nea Kios' municipal council. She said that her party

would pressure the government and the interior ministry in particular to protect the rights of the Gypsies "who are Greek citizens".

Nikiforos Diamantouros from the office of Greece's Ombudsman issued a report last week concerning the events in Nea Kios. The report deems the municipal council's tactics "illegal". Lawyer and human rights activist Yianna Kurtovic told reporters yesterday that the measures taken by the municipal council are a clear violation of the existing legislation concerning racial discrimination (Law 494/1970). She said that based on Article Two of this law, the government is obligated to condemn every form of racial discrimination and to ensure that public policies, at both the national and local level, do not discriminate against racial minorities. "A Gypsy asked me the other day what would happen if police discovered two drug dealers and a robber in a neighborhood in Argos," said Panos Lambros, a member of the Renewed Communist and Ecological Left (AKOA). "Would they tear down the area? Would they prohibit the residents of this neighborhood from entering Argos for shopping? Would they forbid their children to attend school?"

The well-known Gypsy musician Vasilis Paiteris announced plans to hold a concert at a settlement in Glykia in Perama this Saturday, where members of the municipal council has recently expressed similar intention as its counterparts in Nea Kios. "We have to show our support for the Gypsies," he said.

**Also on the same subject:**

**21/6/00: *Avgi*, p: 33**

"Nea Kios: Solidarity with the Roma"

**21/6/00: *Eleftherotypia* [I. Sotirhu], p: 24, 41**

"The government tolerates the racist practices in Nea Kios"

**21/6/00: *Rizospastis*, p: 1, 21**

"The government tolerates the racist practices in Nea Kios"

**21/6/00: *Exousia* [Dimitris Chrisicopoulos], p: 16**

*Positive reports.*

**23/6/00: *Avgi*, p: 11**

"A sworn administrative examination should be ordered"

Greek Helsinki Monitor and Minority Rights Group-Greece sent an open letter to the Minister of Public Order, Mr. Chrisohoides, demanding a Sworn Administrative Examination for the case of the Rom Christos Demetropoulos, resident of Nea Kios. According to the two organizations, the police's awkward handling of the case raises questions as to its objectivity and impartiality. Police seems to have tried to cover-up

the case. Despite the lack of substantial evidence, police accused Christos Demetropoulos and his mother of perjury. The lack of evidence explains why the Public Prosecutor did not immediately sent the mother and the son to the court, instead it had ordered further investigation.

*Neutral to positive report.*

**24/06/2000: Athens News**, [K. Tzilivakis], page: A02  
Article code: C12682A021

[http://athensnews.dolnet.gr/athweb/nathens.print\\_unique?e=C&f=12682&m=A02&aa=1&eidoss=S](http://athensnews.dolnet.gr/athweb/nathens.print_unique?e=C&f=12682&m=A02&aa=1&eidoss=S)

"Activists want inquiry into the 'mysterious' attack on Gypsy.  
Authorities' handling of drive-by shooting in Nea Kios raises questions"

BY KATHY TZILIVAKIS

HUMAN rights groups are questioning whether police officers in the Peloponnesian town of Nea Kios, where townspeople are determined to keep some 500 Gypsies out of their town, are non-discriminatory in carrying out their duties. In a letter to the Public Order Minister Michalis Chrysohoidis, the Greek Helsinki Monitor is demanding a judicial inquiry into the way which local police officers carried out an investigation concerning last week's drive-by-shooting of an 18-year-old Gypsy at a nearby settlement.

Christos Dimitropoulos was wounded in the arm in a shooting at the night of June 16. He told the police that he was shot by two Nea Kios residents. Police, however, accused him of perjury and arrested both Christos and his mother, who had corroborated her son's story. Officers were also searching for his father after they discovered a pistol, empty gun shells and a small quantity of marijuana in his shack.

A spokesperson of the Greek Helsinki Monitor, Panagiotis Dimitras, sent a letter to Chrysohoidis yesterday, in which he questioned how the local police were able to conclude that Christos had been lying and that he had actually been shot by an "unidentified Gypsy" after only a few hours of investigation. Panagiotis postulated that the local public prosecutor was not convinced by the evidence compiled by the police against the youth, as he released both the son and the mother from custody and ordered a preliminary investigation into the matter.

The Greek Helsinki Monitor is urging Chrysohoidis to intervene on the matter. In addition, an inquiry should be launched to determine whether the police officers had sufficient evidence to prove the drive-by shooting was committed by some Gypsies or if they were only swayed by the anti-Gypsy sentiment in the town. A number of human rights activists who recently visited the town said that many police officers ignored "racist" actions taken by townspeople against the Gypsies. Human rights groups have condemned a decision taken by the town's municipal council in May to prohibit Gypsies from entering Nea Kios. Locals conduct round-the-clock roadblocks in order to guard their town from the Gypsies, who are blamed for a reported rise in local

crime.

The secretary-general of the Public Order Ministry Dimitris Efstathiadis visited Nea Kios at the beginning of the month and called on local officials to find a solution by the end of July. A committee has been set up by the locals to try to come up with a solution, but so far nothing fruitful has resulted from this initiative. The Greek section of the Helsinki committee has also sent a letter to Justice Minister Michalis Stathopoulos earlier this month calling upon him to intervene the matter before it spirals to a level that is "out of control". Stathopoulos has yet to respond.

**24/6/00: *Eleftherotypia*** [A. Galanopoulos], p: 16-17

"Nea Kios: How everything happened"

*How everything started in Nea Kios; the municipal decision of May 20<sup>th</sup>, the counter-reactions, statements by the police. Mayor Katriliotes and the President of the Municipal Council, G. Maninis, stated that this has been the only way to attract the interest of the central government and the media. The problem to coexist with the Roma could not be confronted in a different way. It was only after the decision of May 20<sup>th</sup> that an advisor to the Prime Minister showed interest and visited Nea Kios. Police claimed that the criminality rate in the region was relatively low. A Rom, Vasilis Zafeiropoulos, put the blame on Roma who do not live permanently in the region. They are the troublemakers but there are peaceful Roma too in Nea Kios.*

"The plans of the Greek government"

Mr. Angelides, advisor to the Prime Minister, following the events in Nea Kios, stated that **"by the first autumn raindrops, all Roma tent-dwellers would have been transferred to prefabricated houses. We have already allocated more than 500."** Mr. Angelides also made reference to the government's favorable loan policy towards the Roma and the construction of houses by the Organization of Workers' Housing. By July 15<sup>th</sup>, a working team --with the participation of the Prefect of Argolida, three MPs, four mayors and three advisors to the Prefect-- is expected to have completed a research on all the problems in the region.

*Positive report, without further comments.*

**25/6/00: *Epochi***, p: 3, 15

"Mr. Pahis"

*Commentary signed under the initials, Th. P., regarding the role of the local Archbishop and his lack of interest in the Roma. Positive report.*

"Racists without regrets"

*Critical comments on the reaction of the municipal counselors of Nea Kios following the visit of human rights activists and party members in the region. The human rights activists and party members were called by the municipality supporters of*

*lawbreakers and provocateurs. The President of the municipal council, G. Maninis, stated that the Roma were encouraged to continue their unlawful behavior by illustrating the abuse of a local resident by the Roma after the visit as an example. The report calls the municipal counselors and Mr. Maninis, in particular, racist. It emphasizes the critical reactions by the President of the Progressive Left, Mr. Konstandopoulos and local cadres of the Communist party and the Coalition concerning the municipality's anti-Roma practices. Very positive report.*

**25/6/00: Prin** [Petros Karapetis], p: 2, 16

"The new Peloponesian War...Municipalities in Peloponese, envious of the glory of Nea Kios"

*Positive reports, referring to the racist practices against Roma all over the Peloponesian peninsula. The Municipality of Nea Kios decided to evict all Roma tent-dwellers from the region after August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2000. Roma are undesirable also in Tripolis and Kalamata. Local residents in Kalamata and the municipal authorities in Tripolis argue in favor of the expulsion of the local Roma, portraying them as troublemakers. **"In every respect, we ask and demand the immediate expulsion of the Roma. We demand the transfer of them to such a site where their particular way of living will not be a nuisance to everybody. Do not let us down as you know well that we can judge and remember"** (letter of residents of Agia Triada in Kalamata to the Prefect and the mayor of the city). They also claim that the presence of the Roma leads to an overall downgrading of the quality of life in the region. Local press seems to support these views, seeing Roma culture as incompatible with the Greek one.*

## **2. Fighting Romanies` social exclusion**

### **a) Programs in Elia, Peloponese**

**26/6/00: Eleftherotypia** [M. Nodaros], p: 53.

"Registering the Roma for a life without exclusions"

In the framework of a program to fight the Romanies' social exclusion, working groups from the municipality of Pyrgos (Prefect of Elia, Peloponese) started to register the local Roma population, writing down their living conditions, literacy rates and everyday problems. The initial findings show that most of them live in destitute conditions, with low literacy rates and high unemployment. The situation of the tent-dwellers is even worse. What seems to be encouraging though, is the fact that most of them wish to settle down permanently and acquire their own house. These findings will be presented in a meeting organized by the municipality of Pyrgos in mid August. Romani products of popular art will also be exhibited to the public. The neighboring municipality of Amaliada has been involved in the Panhellenic program "Multi Roma Action Hellas", to fight against the Romanies' discrimination and social exclusion.

### **b) Research conducted by the University of Ioanina: Why Roma children fail to attend school.**

**21/6/00: *Exousia*** [Dimitris Chrisicopoulos], p: 16

"They need school for them"

Based on the findings of a research conducted by the University of Ioanina -- the institution in charge of the Educational Program for Roma -- the Roma think of school as a mean to acquire basic knowledge allowing them to deal with the state and the society. In particular, school enables them to be able to read signs, sign documents and count. Roma parents are not ready to see education as a priority for their children. One of the main obstacles is the lack of housing. The children of Roma tent-dwellers cannot think of school while living without any infrastructure. Most of them are poorly dressed and feel embarrassed of their appearance. Another serious obstacle is social prejudice. Moreover, Roma parents do not wish to forgo the money that their children can earn from begging and street trade. Nevertheless, Roma do not want separate classes, they see it as a sign of discrimination.

*Neutral report, referring to the findings of the research without further comments.*

### **Special appendix (local press)**

#### **1. On Nea Kios (May 2000)**

**22/5/00: *Ta Nea tis Argolidas*** [The News of Argolida], p: 1, 6, 7

Overall it was a positive meeting p: 1, 6, 7

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, a meeting on Roma took place in the Cultural Center of Nea Kios with the participation of many local political cadres. Statements were made by the mayor of Nea Kios, G. Katriliotes, the Mayor of the neighboring municipality of Nea Tirynta, K. Nikolaou, the vice-Prefect of Argolida, Mrs. S. Giola and Mr. Tsournos, who is an MP.

*Rather positive report stressing on the need for integrationist policies towards the Roma in the Prefect of Argolida.*

**23/5/00: *Ta Nea tis Argolidas*** [The News of Argolida], p: 1, 6, 8

Municipality of Nea Kios: Fighting Zone p: 1, 8

*(Regarding the municipal decision of May 20<sup>th</sup>. Critical comments).*

A strange fire in the Romani settlement of Agia Triada p: 1

On May 19, a fire broke out in the area around the Romani settlement of Agia Triada. Thanks to the Fire Brigade's immediate intervention, the settlement was saved. Roma residents said that prior to the fire, they had seen a white car with three people inside moving suspiciously in the region. *The reporter comments on the timing of the fire which coincides with the crisis in Nea Kios, and referring it as a "strange" fire.*

The meeting of May 19<sup>th</sup> in Nea Kios: Roma exclusively on the agenda p: 6

Statements by the local political cadres, such as the Mayor of the neighboring municipality of Argos, an advisor to the Prefect of Argolida, the director of the Public Electricity Company in Argolida and an MP.

*Positive report.*

**24/5/00: *Ta Nea tis Argolidas*** [The News of Argolida], p: 1, 6, 7

The voice was lowered but the positions remain the same

Regarding the general meeting of the residents in Nea Kios with the municipal counselors. Statements made by the mayor, some of the citizens and the local priest.

*Positive report, critical of the attitude of the municipality towards the Roma. The Municipal Council is portrayed as the instigator of the crisis.*

**25/5/00: *Ta Nea tis Argolidas*** [The News of Argolida], p: 1, 2, 9

Three human rights organizations denounce racism p: 1

In reference to the relevant press release issued by the DROM Network for the Roma Social Rights, Greek Helsinki Monitor and the Minority Rights Group-Greece.

*Positive report.*

The Prefecture is ready to demolish all illegal constructions 7, 9.

In a meeting between the Prefect of Argolida and the Mayors of Nea Kios, Nea Tirynta, Midea and Asklipio, as well as with 6 police cadres, the secretary-general of the Ministry of Public Order and the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life, it was decided that all problems should be dealt with legally. All illegal buildings would be registered and demolished. Illegal provision of electricity would not be tolerated. Denunciations of robberies, blackmails and other unlawful acts would be thoroughly examined by the police. Since the Roma are Greek citizens, they should not enjoy either a privileged status nor should they be discriminated against. Mr. Salesiotes, the Prefect of Argolida, put the blame of the alleged criminality of the Roma on the ones who do not live permanently in the region. Romanies' housing rehabilitation should become a priority for all municipalities in the region. There exist numerous housing schemes. Argolida, even belatedly, should take action to facilitate the Romanies' social integration and become a model for the rest of the country.

*Neutral report without further comments.*

What the police have to say regarding Roma criminality p: 9

Statements by three police cadres in the region deny allegations of the high criminality in the region, stressing on the need for an overall integrationist policy towards the local Roma. Allegations about criminality are not followed by complaints.

**26&27/5/00: *Ta Nea tis Argolidas*** [The News of Argolida], p: 1, 2, 3, 5, 8

Romanies' wake-up call by the police p: 1, 5

Regarding the police raid, in the early morning of May 25<sup>th</sup>. Roma denounced violence.

*Positive report.*

Today the Prefect's announcements, following his meeting with an advisor to the Prime Minister p: 1

Regarding the meeting of Mr. Fredy Stamos, from the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life with the Prefect of Argolida. Romanies' social integration should be the basis for all measures and initiatives taken in the region.

The position of Progressive Left Coalition p: 3, 8

Acknowledgement of the problems, denunciation of the unconstitutional practices by the municipality of Nea Kios.

*Neutral to positive report, referring to the fact without additional comments.*

Light and darkness p: 2

Regarding an older theatre presentation by Roma children in Agia Triada. It shows the importance of art and education for Romanies' smooth integration and social acceptance.

*Very positive report.*

**29/5/00: *Ta Nea tis Argolidas*** [The News of Argolida], p: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9

Social solution for the Roma p: 1, 7

Press conference of the Prefect of Argolida, Mr. Salesiotes, following his meeting with the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life. The region of Argolida was never seriously involved in programs aiming at precipitating the Romanies' integration into the society. There is need for housing schemes all over the region. Concrete suggestions, proposal and cooperative spirit are expected from all municipalities concerned.

*Neutral to positive report.*

The Communist Party's position p: 3, 9

Public denunciation of the racist practices against the Roma in Nea Kios by the Communist Party.

*Neutral to positive report.*

The voice of Roma in Nea Kios p: 5, 6

The Romanies' reaction over the recent police raid, the municipal decision of May 20<sup>th</sup> and their living conditions.

*Very positive report.*

**30/5/00: Ta Nea tis Argolidas** [The News of Argolida], p: 1, 3, 5, 6, 7

Paiteris and Nikolaides coming to Nea Kios for a peaceful resolution p: 1, 6, 7

The popular Rom singer, Vasilis Paiteris and teacher, Thanasis Nikolaides, came to Nea Kios to assist the peaceful management of the crisis. They registered all problems of the local Roma, convinced them not to resort to violence in response to the municipality's racist practices against them and tried to have a meeting with the Mayor, Mr. Katriliotes. The report gives reference to the abuses of the Romani delegation by «indignant» citizens of Nea Kios while they were trying to enter the town hall.

*Very positive report.*

Parliamentary question on Roma and Nea Kios by New Democracy MP, Elsa Papademetriou p: 3

Parliamentary question on Roma and Nea Kios by Progressive Left Coalition MP, Maria Damanaki p: 5

*Neutral to positive reports bringing forward the issue of the Romanies' need for integration into the Parliament.*

**31/5/00: Ta Nea tis Argolidas** [The News of Argolida], p: 1, 2, 5, 7,

Municipality of Nea Tirynta: ready to expel local Roma p: 1, 5

Regarding the forthcoming municipal council meeting, discussing the expulsion of Roma and the demolition of all illegal buildings in the coastline zone within the municipality's borders.

*Positive report, very critical of the prospect of such a decision.*

Which Albanian immigrants? Now we blame the Jews and as always the Roma p: 2, 7

Reproduction of an article on racism and xenophobia in Greece by columnist G. Votsis, initially published in the Athenian daily "*Eleftherotipia*" on May 29.

*Very positive report.*

We are against the idea of the expulsion of a group of our citizens p: 1, 5

Regarding a declaration of some citizens of Nea Kios, against the Romanies' expulsion from the region and in favor of a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

*Positive report, in support of the initiative.*

**1/6/00: *Ta Nea tis Argolidas*** [The News of Argolida], p: 1, 6, 7

Mayor Katriliotes: we go on for as long as it might take p: 1, 6, 7

In reference to the Municipal Council's press conference regarding the continuation of the mobilization against the Roma. Mayor Katriliotes turning himself against the Roma, their supporters and the media whom he believes are insensitive to the municipality's fight for public order and quality of life.

*Positive report.*

*IMPORTANT NOTE: Ta Nea tis Argolidas has been one of the very few local media that contains balanced reports, presenting the Roma's point of view and arguing in favor of measures aiming at the Romanies' social integration instead of coercion.*

## **2. On Rio and Patras (June 2000)**

**29/7/00: Peloponnisos** p: 1, 3

Internationally exposed

Greek Helsinki Monitor presents the situation of the Roma in Greece and in Achaia in dark colors. Our county is internationally exposed in the GHM's website with 31.750 visitors already.

*Positive report, based on GHM's work on the Roma and its latest report, an update of the September 1999 Report to the OSCE.*

**29/5/00: *Ebdomada tou Rio*** [Week of Rio], p: 4

Meeting in the Prefecture, Romanies' housing problem on the agenda

In reference to the meeting in the Prefecture of Achaia, with the participation of the municipalities concerned, the Prime Minister's Office for Quality of Life and the President of the Public Estate Company. In the short-term, Roma tent-dwellers should be transferred to prefabricated houses and areas with basic infrastructure and in the long-term they should all acquire houses either through the loan scheme or the Organization of Workers' Housing.

*Neutral report, simply referring to the fact.*

**30/5/00: Peloponnisos** [M. Vasilakis], p: 1, 4

They were playing football with dead rats

Roma face numerous problems all over the country and in Achaia in particular. Providing only for the municipal citizens cannot adequately address the problem. Roma tent-dwellers, in most of the cases, are undesirable to the municipal authorities and the local residents. The camp in Makriyani was advertised as a model camp but in reality it was a ghetto with external tabs and some half-completed toilets. There were no free spaces and children were playing among the garbage and the dead rats. The municipality of Patras is expected to come up with concrete suggestions by the end of June, regarding the Romanies' social integration and accommodation. Problems seem to exist also in the municipality of Rio. The solution, according to GHM, would be the construction of fully equipped camps for Roma transit visitors, as Achaia constitutes the passage from Peloponese to Continental Greece. In Sayeika, the mayor admits that municipal citizenship takes time to process in the case of the Roma. However, this is unavoidable since very often they provide the authorities with false data.

*Positive report, based on GHM's work and an interview with GHM Roma Office.*

Roma houses

Regarding the initiatives taken by the Municipality of Dimi to provide housing for local Roma tent-dwellers.

*Positive report.*

**31/5/00: Peloponnisos** [M. Vasilakis], p: 1, 6, 7

Convenient myths and bitter truths

Roma, even if they are forced to travel all over the country and are in search of seasonal occupation, they do have a place where they always return. Stereotypes about the Romanies' nomad lifestyle might be convenient for justifying governmental indifference and social prejudice towards the Roma, but they are not valid anymore... Roma are interested in settling down somewhere and acquire their house and property. Those who used to work in the fields had no real means to face the competition with the illegal immigrants in the labor market. Roma have no tradition of rights vindication in Greece. They acquired their citizenship in the years of the junta government (in the 1970s), most of them are illiterate and cannot afford losing some days' work to protest on the streets! Roma will never think of dynamically vindicating their rights while living below the poverty line and being illiterate. School is not really welcoming Roma children. The latter face social prejudice and learn nothing about their language and culture in the Greek school. Parents know that their children will never be employed in the public or private sector. Therefore, they prefer to send their children to school only for the first 3 to 4 years, then "divert" them to more prosperous professional fields, such as trade.

*Positive report based on an interview with the GHM Roma Office.*

Municipality of Rio: Housing solutions for the Roma

In answer to a recent report on the Roma by the Greek Helsinki Monitor and the Minority Rights Group-Greece, the municipality of Rio denies the existence of any typical Romani camps in the region, stating that in Rio, there are only 4 Roma families. For 4 families that are mentioned, the municipality of Rio and, Mayor Vasilis Zervas, have shown true interest in providing them with adequate housing. The Roma are soon to be transferred to prefabricated houses that are provided by the municipality. The rest of the tent-dwellers are transit visitors who stay in the region for as long as they have members of their family hospitalized in the local hospital. Frequently enough, according to the municipality, Roma behave in an anti-social and unlawful way, creating problems to the rest of the municipal residents. Criminality rate, attributed to the Roma, gets higher during the summer. In the district of Saint Vasilios there are three robberies per day.

*Neutral report covering the municipality's reactions over the GHM's last report on the Roma, an update of the September 1999 Report to the OSCE.*

**1/7/00: Peloponnisos**, p: 6

An answer

The Mayor of Rio was indeed absent from the meeting in the Prefecture of Achaia. The reason was that the municipality has no permanent tent-dwelling population other than the 3 Roma families, who are also municipal citizens.

*Neutral report, simply referring to the fact.*

**4/6/00: Peloponnisos** [Aphrodite Tsikritzis], p: 10

Roma threatened with eviction

Report based on GHM's Internet report on Rio. With reference to the decision of the municipal council to evict the Roma, Romanies' living conditions and the attitude of the municipality and the local university.

*Positive report.*

**6/6/00: Ebdomada tou Rio**, p: 6 [letter to the newspaper by Stathis Pylarinos]

The reader makes reference to the Roma tent-dwelling population of the municipality and the need for housing strategies.

*Positive report.*