

RAXEN BULLETIN

1. THE “POLITICAL HEADLINES”

Three of the Pakistani immigrants kidnapped most probably by secret agents last summer (according to the Athens prosecutors' findings) have filed a criminal lawsuit against the public order minister at the time the alleged incident took place. Giorgos Voulgarakis, who is now culture minister, is denounced for instigating the abductions, shielding guilty parties and lying in Parliament about the incident. (Kathimerini, 19.05.2006, Ethnos, Imerissia, Eleftherotipia, 18.06.2006) In the relevant parliamentary discussion where all 4 parliamentary parties leaders participated, the current Public Order Minister (V.Polidoras) claimed that the Pakistani immigrants use to kidnap one each other in a sort of a 'sport' and that this eventually also happened last year. The opposition parties accused the minister of racism (news.in.gr, 19.05.2006) while proposed to the Parliament to examine the issue by a Parliamentary Examination Committee given its importance. The proposal was rejected thanks to the votes of the right majority MPs (votes 153vs 122).

A major issue of islamophobia and nationalism has arisen in the public discourse around Ms Karahassan, who is the Muslim candidate of the major opposition socialist party (PASOK) at the forthcoming local administration elections in Western Thrace. This is the region where the Muslim minority Greek citizens mainly reside and claim self-determination of their Turk ethnic-origin. A public discussion, which soon became a crisis, included long debates and intolerant comments about Ms Karahassan and the Thrace Muslim minority Greekness and presumed incompatibility with the national identity.

Petty traders who saw their permits taken away after a new provision limiting the access to such profession, which is from now on linked to Greek or EU citizenship or Greek ethnic origin protested in demonstration in Athens on May, 10, 2006. However, such limitation does not fall within the grounds of the recent anti-discrimination law, due to the 'citizenship exemption' provided by the directive (art.3.2 , DIR 43/200/EC) and the national law (art.4.2, law n.3386/20050. With the decision of the minister of development (K1-186/18-1-06) the right to get the professional permit for the open market trade from municipalities or communities is limited to those having citizenship of European Union Member States, or immigrants of Greek ethnic origin. (Eleftherotipia, 06.06.2006)

2. UPDATE ON LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

There are no major developments concerning anti-discrimination or anti-racist legislation.

However, there has been some legislation activity concerning religious freedom and legalization, as well as about immigrants' integration policies at a local level:

A new law was passed by the parliament, abolishing a much criticized provision of an almost a century old law n.1363 of 1938 (article 1), according to which in order to found or build a worship place for any other religion, the Greek Orthodox Church administration should provide its opinion and permission. From now on such application is submitted directly to the Ministry of Education and Religions and not anymore to the Greek Orthodox Church authorities.

<http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/showfile.asp?file=syne060530.txt>

According to the newly approved by the Parliament Greek Code for Local Administration, the Municipalities are also responsible for designing and implementing integration policies for immigrants, under the provisions set by the immigration law n.3386/2005 (especially for long term residents)

(law n.3463/2006 – FEK 114/A/08.06.2006 Greek Parliament)

The third major immigrants' legalization program launched in autumn 2005 (the previous ones were implemented in 1997 and 2001) ended by legalizing less than 100.000 immigrants through payment of increased fees and social security contributions for undeclared labor by immigrants and through a tacit amnesty of employers. Due to low numbers of regularized immigrants and the gaps that lead to keep in irregular status a large part of the 2nd generation of immigrants and minors new provisions have been adopted through a ministerial decision for regularizing minors and students frequenting Greek primary, secondary schools and Universities through payment of the relevant residence permit fees (150€ per year).

3. RESEARCH

The Amnesty International in its Report for the year 2006 regarding Greece commented in summary the following: *Migrants, refugees and members of minority groups suffered human rights violations, including denial of access to asylum procedures, ill-treatment in detention and discrimination. Romani homes were targeted for demolition in ways that breached international standards, and Roma faced discrimination and racist attacks. A new law improved the situation for conscientious objectors to military service, but still provided for punitive alternative civilian service.*

4. ANNEX

1. Unofficial list of racist violence incidents and cases

- Group Z police officers allegedly beaten a national from Bangladesh on 12 May. Two MPs of the Greek Communist Party have asked from the Minister of Public Order to punish the officers. Men of the group Z in Nikea (a suburb of Piraeus) mistreated Dorei Shohid when the latter tried to arrest him because he was reportedly acting suspiciously. Shohid was first transferred to the hospital and then to the police station, from where he was released since there were no charges against him. The MPs have also asked from the Minister to adopt measures in order to prevent similar acts of police violence. (Rizospastis, 01.06.2006, UNCHR Greece: Press review on migrant and refugee issues -Athens, 02.06.06)

- On May 15 and 16 unidentified neofascist groups attacked immigrants with knives, stones and improvised weapons in N.Kosmos and Daphne Athens suburbs while there an arson attack against an immigrant store in N.Kosmos took place too. (Indymedia 18.05.2006)

Court cases

- The murderer of a 20 years old Albanian immigrant in Zakynthos after the 2004 football match between Albania and Greece has been condemned to life imprisonment (Athens Indymedia, 07.05.2006)

- The Prosecutor of Kefallinia (an Ionian Sea island) initiated penal action on the basis of the penal provision for racist crimes (law n.927/1979) for 'actions aiming to racial discrimination', that is racist writings on the walls of Argostoli on 06.09.2005. This is the first time that the relevant provisions have been activated, however the case has been archived since the perpetrators remained unidentified. (V.Arghiri, Prosecutor of Kefallinia, Argostoli, 896/31.05.06)

3. Major upcoming events

The KEMO (Research Center for Minority Groups) is organizing its 10 year anniversary conference about immigrants and minorities issues next December.