

RAXEN BULLETIN

1. THE “POLITICAL HEADLINES”

Roma housing – forced evictions

Forced evictions of Roma families and demolition of their makeshift shacks is a hot issue either for Patras (Cultural Capital of Europe 2006) or Athens (regarding the area where a new soccer stadium and a mosque will be built, which is presently occupied by Roma population). As the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner, Thomas Hammarberg has noted about the situation in Greece ‘*many Roma families have been evicted without being given adequate notice or a real alternative*’. Media sources refer to the situation in Patras just before the Municipal elections of 2006, as an effort ‘*to win the votes of citizens reluctant to share their city with the Roma and their crude wooden shacks*’ (International Herald Tribune, 23.10.2006).

The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) has sent a relevant letter to the Prime Minister urging Greece to ensure that all affected families may return to the site from which they were evicted or that an adequate, alternative site for resettlement is provided in genuine consultation with the community and within an acceptable distance to their sources of employment and education. COHRE also urged Greece to ensure that restitution is provided for all property that was destroyed during the demolition and to ensure that those responsible for illegal evictions are held accountable for their actions. (Cohre open letter to the Prime Minister, 22.09.2006).

ECHR: Kaja vs. Greece

The European Court of Human Rights published its Chamber judgment in the case Kaja v. Greece concerning inhuman detention conditions. The Court held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) with respect to the conditions of the applicant’s detention in the police detention centre in Larissa. Under Article 41 of the Convention (just satisfaction), the Court awarded the applicant 5,000 euros (EUR) for non-pecuniary damage.

A European Court of Human Rights’ has performed an on site inspection of the immigrants’ detention facilities in the Police Dept. of Larissa on April 2006.

(www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/esc/3_reporting_procedure/2_recent_conclusions/1_by_state/Greece_2006_XVIII_1_A4_EN.pdf, ECSR, pp.19-22 (July 2006).)

2. UPDATE ON LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. A recent circular (76992/2006) of the Ministry of National Education and Religions implementing the recommendations of the Greek Ombudsman has made it clear that the function of confession is performed exclusively and only in the Church and not in school. The head of the Greek Orthodox Church has requested to re-examine such decision, expressing his disagreement to the Ombudsman's recommendations. (Eleftherotipia, 03.10.2006, p.11)

2. After a 2-year-long public debate and reactions a law draft regarding the Athens Mosque to be built in Eleonas (the location proposed by the Greek Orthodox Church) has been tabled in Parliament. Opposition MPs have stressed their concerns about disposing only one Mosque for all Muslim doctrines followers, while the proximity with a new soccer stadium would raise issues of security and fear of hooligan violence against Muslims.

According to the law draft tabled in parliament in mid October, the new mosque will be a private entity supervised by the Ministry of Education and religions and shall be run by a Council of Administration composed by various representatives: of Education and Finance ministries, of the Municipality of Athens, one University competent professor (on Islamic religion and/or culture), and 2 representatives of Muslims residing in Attica (wider Athens area). The representatives of Muslims residing in Attica will be selected by the Minister of Education from a list of 2-8 candidates proposed by two major associations of Muslims in Attica (each association may suggest up to 4 candidates). The Islamic leader (imam) will be proposed by the Mosque Administration Council and assigned by the Education Minister, therefore hired and paid by the state. (www.parliament.gr/ergasies/nomodetails.asp?lawid=476, 09.10.2006)

3. Extension of the 2005 immigrants' regularization program with less strict requirements was announced by the Minister for Interior Affairs (www.ypes.gr/ypes_po/detail.asp?docid=1300 , 10.10.2006) Through an amendment of the migration law in force (law n.3386/2005) an extension of the immigrants who are eligible for regularization is attempted, while a number of the Greek Ombudsman proposals, expressed prior to tabling of the above law in Parliament and in 2006, are implemented.

(www.synigoros.gr/allodapoi/docs/Epik_trop3386.pdf, 23.10.2006)

3. RESEARCH

A survey published in 2006 indicates indifference by the police officers towards extensive racist violence practices and racially motivated crimes against immigrants, especially Albanians. Drawing on interviews with Greek police detectives, the attitudes of Greek police towards migrant communities and racist violence demonstrate that not only are migrant communities, particularly the Albanian, viewed as hotbeds of crime but racist violence against these communities is not perceived as a significant problem by the Greek police. The latter is usually indifferent to racially motivated crimes and often view racist incidents as acts of self-defence by Greeks against the criminal 'other'. According to the author a transformation of such attitudes would require a public recognition of the widespread racism that exists in Greek society.

(Antonopoulos G.A., Greece: policing racist violence in the 'fenceless vineyard', *Race & Class*, Institute of Race Relations Vol. 48(2): 92–100, <http://rac.sagepub.com>, 2006.)

4. ANNEX

1. A police officer member of the special guards' corps was arrested by the Police Internal Affairs Directorate. According to numerous complaints by the Pakistani community the officer was stealing telephone cards (SIM and prepaid calling cards) from immigrants in the Centre of Athens during routine police checks at their gathering areas of Menandrou and Sofokleous Str. (Source: Eleftherotipia, http://www.enet.gr/online/online_text/c=112,id=72998804 19.09.2006)

2. A 22 years old Palestinian and one 50 years old Bangladeshi immigrants have been victims of brutal attack and beatings by unidentified Greeks who, according to media reports, were participating at a rally of the "Galazia Stratia" extreme right-wing and sport oriented association, after the unexpected defeat of the Greek basketball team at the World Championship final on 3.9.2006. The newspapers refer to the incident as one more case of the 'usual hunt of the immigrant' after a Greek national team major sport event. (Source: Eleftherotipia, http://www.enet.gr/online/online_text/c=115,id=91944324, 04.09.2006)

Major upcoming events

1. The Research Center for Minority Groups (KEMO) is organizing its 10 year anniversary conference about immigrants and minorities issues next December. www.kemo.gr The three day conference is entitled: *Interdisciplinary approaches of minority and migration phenomena: the Greek post cold-war conjuncture*. (15-17 December 2006, Athens).

2. The Hellenic League for Human Rights (HLHR) is organizing a conference entitled '*Education and Church: the portrayed Greek middle ages*' on the long debated issue of State – Church separation, for which the HLHR had presented in 2005 an elaborated law draft, later adopted and tabled in parliament – yet not passed - by opposition political parties. (8 November 2006, Athens). www.hlhr.gr