

## Greece

### Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2001](#)

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor  
March 4, 2002

Greece is a constitutional republic and multiparty parliamentary democracy in which citizens choose their representatives in free and fair elections. The Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) won the majority of parliamentary seats for a second consecutive term in parliamentary elections held in April 2000. Its leader, Constantine Simitis, has been Prime Minister since 1996. The New Democracy Party is the main opposition party. The Government generally respects the constitutional provisions for an independent judiciary.

The national police and security services are responsible for internal security. Civilian authorities generally maintain effective control of all security forces. The police and security services are subject to a broad variety of restraints; however, some members of the police and security forces committed human rights abuses.

Greece, with a population of 10.9 million, has a market economy with a large public sector that accounted for some 40 percent of the estimated gross domestic product (GDP) of \$120 billion for the year. Residents enjoy a high standard of living. Net flows from the European Union (EU), mainly from structural adjustment funds and subsidies, account for 3.3 percent of the country's GDP.

The Government generally respected the human rights of its citizens; however, there were serious problems in some areas. There was a report of an isolated police killing of a Rom. Security force personnel sometimes abused persons, particularly illegal immigrants and Roma. Overcrowding and harsh conditions continued in some prisons. Police sweeps resulted in the detention under often squalid conditions of undocumented immigrants. There are legal limits on the freedom of association of ethnic minorities. Leaders of minority religions noted a general improvement in government tolerance. Laws restrictive of freedom of speech remained in force, and some legal restrictions and administrative obstacles on freedom of religion persisted. Violence and discrimination against women were problems. Discrimination against ethnic minorities remained a problem. Roma continued to suffer widespread discrimination. There were reports that minority children were forced into begging, and the trafficking in women and girls into the country for the purpose of prostitution was a problem.

#### RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

##### Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

###### a. Arbitrary and Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports of political killings by the Government or its agents. In October a police officer shot and killed Rom Marinos Christopoulos, after Christopoulos drove a truck through a police checkpoint. The officer was arrested and jailed on October 24. When the officer was released on bail 5 days later, Roma rioted in the Zefyra area of Athens. The case was pending trial at year's end. Isolated incidents of terrorism continued during the year. The terrorist group November 17 has claimed responsibility for 22 killings during the past 25 years, but no one has ever been arrested and charged in these cases.

###### b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

###### c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Constitution specifically forbids torture, and the law, which has never been invoked, makes the use of torture punishable by a sentence of 3 years' to life imprisonment; however, security force personnel occasionally abused persons, particularly illegal immigrants and Roma (see Section 5). A Report on Greece issued in May by the U.N. Committee Against Torture expressed concern about the excessive or unjustifiable use of force by police against ethnic and national minorities and foreigners.

There were reports that in June Port Authority personnel abused 164 migrants who came ashore in Hania, Crete. There were allegations of brutal beatings and the attempted rape of a youth with a truncheon. The Port Authority Chief claimed that injuries occurred during fights and attempted escapes. The Ministry of Merchant Marine initiated disciplinary proceedings against one officer and two harbor guards. No one had been charged in the case by year's end.

In July Human Rights Watch (HRW) criticized the beating by police of a man in Rhodes earlier that month when he protested a traffic check and a traffic ticket. Police claimed that the man resisted and insulted them. The man did not press charges and admitted that he insulted the policemen, who later were transferred to other locations. An internal inquiry was ordered. No one had been charged in the case by year's end.

Roma experienced police abuse more frequently than some other groups. Amnesty International called on the authorities to conduct an impartial investigation into allegations made by Andreas Kalamiotis, a 21-year-old Rom, who claimed that he was beaten and mistreated by police in July while in custody for disturbing neighbors in Aghia Paraskevi with loud music. No one had been charged in the case by year's end. In September 2000, police were accused of beating Roma during a routine traffic stop in Nafplio. No one had been charged in the case by year's end.

Immigrants--mostly Albanian citizens--accused police of physical, verbal, and other mistreatment (including the confiscation and destruction of their documents), particularly during police sweeps to apprehend illegal immigrants (see Section 2.d.). The severity of this problem diminished during the year due to legislation that allowed immigrants to regularize their status.

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture carried out one of its periodic visits during September. The committee particularly reviewed developments concerning the treatment and detention conditions of persons held under laws concerning aliens. Its report was not released by year's end.

In August 2000, two foreigners accused police in Crete of mistreatment while under detention. There was no investigation into or action taken in this case by year's end.

In the 1998 case of three policemen who allegedly beat two Romani teenagers, the police officers were held responsible for not preventing the mistreatment of the two individuals, and fines were imposed against the officers. The officers were acquitted on appeal, and no fines were paid.

The Ministry of Public Order opened a Bureau of Internal Affairs in 1999 to investigate alleged criminal offenses by police officers and to submit an annual report to the Parliament regarding its findings. During the year, the Bureau took several disciplinary measures, including dismissal and suspension, against officers involved in corruption, mainly for the forging of documents and bribes for illegal construction, but also for cases of procuring and drugs. During the period October 1999 to December 2000, 933 complaints were filed, of which 388 were referred to local police stations and 470 were left pending for lack of evidence. Charges were filed in the remaining 75 cases.

Local police corruption facilitated trafficking in persons (see Section 6.f.).

Numerous anarchist and terrorist groups attacked a wide spectrum of targets, mostly

commercial property, during the year. The firebombing of vehicles, drive-by shootings of buildings, and bombings at commercial establishments, mostly late at night, were widespread.

Conditions in some prisons remained harsh due to substantial overcrowding and outdated facilities. As of September, the Ministry of Justice reported that the total prison population was 8,389 inmates, while the total capacity of the prison system was 5,284. In general juveniles are held separately from adults, and women are held separately from men, except at Korydallos Prison.

In two cases involving the imprisonment of foreign drug traffickers, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) concluded in August that prison conditions sometimes amounted to inhuman or degrading treatment. The court cited overcrowding and inadequate facilities in the cases and ordered the Government to pay \$13,000 (5 million drachmae) to each plaintiff.

Poor conditions continued at the Amygdaleza and Drapetsona detention centers for illegal alien women. The Ministry of Justice continued its program to improve prison conditions and expand capacity. Construction continued on four new prisons.

The Government permitted prison visits by independent human rights monitors, and several took place during the year.

#### d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, throughout the year, the police conducted large-scale sweeps and temporarily detained, often under squalid conditions, large numbers of foreigners while determining their residence status (see Section 2.d.). Some of the foreigners were detained indefinitely with no judicial review.

The Constitution requires judicial warrants for all arrests, except during the commission of a crime, and the law prohibits arbitrary arrest orders; the authorities generally respected these provisions in practice. By law the police must bring persons who are detained or arrested before an examining magistrate within 24 hours. The magistrate must issue a detention warrant or order the release of the detainee within 3 days, unless special circumstances warrant a 2-day extension of this time limit.

Defendants brought to court before the end of the day following the commission of a charged misdemeanor offense may be tried immediately, under an "expedited procedure." Although legal safeguards, including representation by counsel, apply in expedited procedure cases, the short period of time may inhibit defendants' ability to present an adequate defense. Defendants may ask for a delay to provide time to prepare their defense, but the court is not obliged to grant it. The expedited procedure was used in less than 10 percent of applicable cases.

The effective legal maximum duration of pretrial detention is 18 months for felonies and 9 months for misdemeanors in practice. Defense lawyers assert that pretrial detention is exceedingly long and overused by judges. A panel of judges may grant release pending trial, with or without bail. Pretrial detainees made up 31 percent of those incarcerated, contributing to overcrowding, according to government sources. A person convicted of a misdemeanor and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment or less may, at the court's discretion, pay a fine instead of being imprisoned.

In February the ECHR found Greece to be in violation of Article 3 and Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights for holding Mohamed Dougoz--who was being expelled from Greece--in the Drapetsona detention center and Police Headquarters at Alexandras Avenue for several years under conditions that were determined to be inhuman. The Government was ordered to pay \$13,000 (5 million drachmae) to Dougoz.

The Constitution prohibits forced exile, and the Government did not employ it.

#### e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the Government generally respects this provision in practice.

The judicial system includes three levels of civil courts, (first instance, appeals, and supreme) and three levels of criminal courts (first instance--divided into misdemeanor and felony divisions, appeals, and supreme), appointed judges, and an examining magistrate system, with trials by judicial panels.

The Constitution provides for public trials, unless the court decides that privacy is required to protect victims and witnesses or the cases involve national security matters. Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence, the standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt, the right to present evidence and call witnesses, and the rights of access to the prosecution's evidence, to cross-examine witnesses, and to counsel. Lawyers are provided to defendants who are not able to afford legal counsel only in felony cases. Both the prosecution and the defense may appeal.

In March the ECHR found Greece to be in violation of Article 6 (the right to a hearing within a reasonable time by a tribunal) of the European Convention on Human Rights in the case of George Arvelakis, who was convicted of murder in 1988. In November 1997, the Greek Supreme Court had rejected his final appeal.

Defendants who do not speak Greek have the right to a court-appointed interpreter. According to several immigrant associations in Athens, the low fees paid for such work often resulted in poor interpretation. Foreign defendants who depend on these interpreters frequently complained that they do not understand the proceedings of their trials. Also defendants often are not advised of their rights during arrest in a language that they can understand. Several complained that they were not shown the Hellenic Police Informational Bulletin, which contains prisoners' rights in a variety of languages, and that they were forced to sign blank documents later used for their deportation.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

#### f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution prohibits the invasion of privacy and searches without warrants, and the law permits the monitoring of personal communications only under strict judicial controls; however, these provisions were not respected in practice. Some human rights monitors reported suspicious openings and diversions of mail. The Government reportedly took no steps to stop such practices or to prosecute those involved. Unlike in the past, The Greek Helsinki Monitor reported that it was not monitored by security services during the year.

In April the ECHR found Greece in violation of Article 8 (on privacy) of the European Convention on Human Rights, in the case of Donald Peers, who was arrested at the Athens airport in 1994 for drug offenses; while he was in jail at the Korydallos prison, officials opened his mail. The ECHR determined this to be a violation of his right to privacy and family life, his home, and correspondence. The Government was ordered to pay \$13,000 (5 million drachmae) to Peers.

The ERRC reported that police conducted regular raids and searches of Romani neighborhoods for alleged criminal suspects, drugs, and weapons (see Section 5).

Local authorities evicted or threatened to evict Roma from camps and tent dwellings during the year (see Section 5).

In the past, nonethnic Greek citizens were prohibited legally from settling in a large "supervised zone" near the frontier; however, this prohibition was not enforced in practice, and the

restrictions were lifted formally in March.

## Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

### a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, legal restrictions on free speech remained in force. Articles of the Penal Code that can be used to restrict free speech and the press include Article 141, which forbids exposing to danger of disturbance the friendly relations of the Greek state with foreign states; Article 191, which prohibits spreading false information and rumors liable to create concern and fear among citizens and cause disturbances in the country's international relations; and inciting citizens to rivalry and division leading to disturbance of the peace; and Article 192, which prohibits inciting citizens to acts of violence or to disturbing the peace through disharmony among them. Those convicted in the past of violations of these articles were allowed to convert their prison sentences, up to 3 years, into a fine of approximately \$13.50 (5,000 drachma) per day.

In most criminal defamation cases, the defendant typically was released on bail pending appeal, and no jail time was ever served. In February Sotiris Bletsas, a Vlach activist, was convicted of disseminating false information under Article 191 of the Penal Code and sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment and a \$1,351 (500,000 drachma) fine. In 1995 at a Vlach festival Bletsas distributed a publication of the Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages in Europe that mentioned the minority languages in Greece. Her conviction was reversed on appeal in December. In November 1999, according to HRW, two journalists for Eleftherotypia were indicted for defamation for alleging that the Lesvos police were associated with smugglers; in December 2000, the journalists were acquitted by judicial decree. The Constitution allows for seizure (although not prior restraint), by order of the public prosecutor, of publications that insult the President, offend religious beliefs, contain obscene articles, advocate violent overthrow of the political system, or disclose military and defense information. However, seizures are very rare, and there were none during the year.

There were 17 independent newspapers and magazines. Satirical and opposition newspapers routinely criticized the highest state authorities. Members of ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities freely published periodicals and other publications, often in their native language.

The Constitution provides that the state exercise "immediate control" over radio and television, and the law establishes ownership and technical frequency limits on electronic media; the Government and media outlets have disputed application procedures and frequency allocations. The law also legalizes stations operating with pending applications. The National Radio and Television Council has an advisory role in radio and television licensing, whereas the Ministry of Press and Mass Media has final authority.

In May the first 20 private radio stations in the Athens area were granted operating licenses. The cases of 15 more radio stations had not been heard by year's end. Television stations continued to operate with pending applications; there were more applicants than available frequency. The Government occasionally closes stations for violating intellectual property rights or interfering with civil aviation, military, and law enforcement transmissions, although there were no reports of such closings during the year. State-run stations tended to emphasize the Government's views but also reported objectively on other parties' programs and positions. Private radio and television stations operated independently of any government control over their reporting. Turkish-language television programs are widely available via satellite in Thrace.

The 1998 conviction of Abdulhalim Dede, the Muslim owner of Radio Isik, for illegal construction of a new radio antenna intended to extend the range of the station, was upheld on appeal in June 2000; the court reduced the sentence from 8 to 2 months in jail. Dede paid \$1,373 for his initial conviction (\$559 (207,000 drachma) in fines and \$811 (300,000 drachma)

in lawyer's fees) in lieu of 2 months' jail time and appealed his case to the Supreme Court. In February the Supreme Court decided that Dede did not receive a fair trial and remanded his case to the Xanthi appeals court. The Xanthi Court reexamined his case, and in May acquitted him. The Court refunded the \$559 (207,000 drachma) fine.

In September 2000, a Thessaloniki court ruled in favor of a former Member of Parliament (M.P.), Mimis Androulakis, whose novel "M to the Power of N" was banned from circulation in seven northern prefectures in May 2000 as a "blasphemous" book because of sexual connotations regarding the relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene. The court ruled that the novel was a "work of art" and thus protected by the Constitution.

Internet access is available and generally unrestricted.

Academic freedom was respected.

#### b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for the freedoms of assembly and association, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, the courts continued to place legal restrictions on the names of associations involving ethnic minorities (see Section 5).

Police permits were issued routinely for public demonstrations, and there were no reports that the permit requirement was abused. Peaceful demonstrations against government policies occurred regularly in Athens and other large cities, and the protesters included students, workers, political parties, pensioners, and foreigners.

#### c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution establishes the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ (Greek Orthodoxy) as the "prevailing" religion, but also provides for the right of all citizens to practice the religion of their choice; however, while the Government generally respects this right, at times non-Orthodox groups face administrative obstacles or legal restrictions on religious practice. The Constitution prohibits proselytizing and stipulates that no rite of worship may disturb public order or offend moral principles. The Orthodox Church wields significant political and economic influence. The Government, under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Religion, provides some financial support to the Orthodox Church by, for example, paying for the salaries and religious training of clergy, and financing the construction and maintenance of Orthodox Church buildings.

The Government, by virtue of the Orthodox Church's status as the prevailing religion, recognizes de facto its canon law. In 1999 the Catholic Church unsuccessfully sought government recognition of its canon law (the official "constitution" of the Church).

The Orthodox Church and the Jewish and Muslim religions are considered by law to be "legal persons of public law." Other religions are considered "legal persons of private law." In practice a primary distinction is that establishment of other religions' "houses of prayer" is regulated by the general provisions of the Civil Code regarding corporations. For example other religions cannot, as religious entities, own property; the property must belong to a specifically created legal entity rather than to the church itself. In practice this places an additional legal and administrative burden on non-Orthodox religious community organizations. A 1999 law extended legal recognition to Catholic churches and related entities established prior to 1946.

In February 2000, the Scientologists submitted an application for recognition as a known religion. Although the period mandated by law for processing the application is 3 months, the Ministry waited until October 2000 to decide that it would not recognize the Scientologist community as an "official" religion. In October 2000, the Ministry denied the Scientologists their application for recognition and a house of prayer permit on the grounds that Scientology "is not

a religion." The Church of Scientology appealed the decision to the Council of State in December 2000, and the case was pending at year's end.

Several religious denominations, including foreign Protestants and Mormons, reported difficulty in renewing the visas of their non-European Union citizen ministers because the Government does not have a distinct religious workers' visa category. As part of new obligations under the Schengen Treaty and the Treaty of Amsterdam, all non-European Union citizens face a more restrictive visa and residence regime than they did in the past. During the year no progress was made on issuing visas for foreign clergy to perform their religious work in Greece.

Two laws from the late 1930's require recognized or "known" religious groups to obtain house of prayer permits from the Ministry of Education and Religion in order to open houses of worship. By law the Ministry may base its decision to issue permits on the opinion of the local Orthodox bishop, but ministry officials say that they no longer obtain the opinion of the Orthodox bishop when considering house of prayer permit applications. According to ministry officials, once a "known" religion receives a house of prayer permit, applications for additional houses of prayer are numerous and are approved routinely. For example, in May the Ministry of Education and Religion granted permission for the operation of a Buddhist House of Prayer in Athens.

Minority religious groups have requested that the Government abolish laws that regulate house of prayer permits. Many provisions of these laws are not applied in practice, but local police retain the authority to bring to court minority churches that operate or build places of worship without a permit. In December 2000 in Thessaloniki, 16 churches charged with operating without a house of prayer permit were acquitted.

Leaders of some non-Orthodox religious groups claimed that all taxes on religious organizations were discriminatory, even those that the Orthodox Church has to pay, since the Government subsidizes the Orthodox Church while other groups are self-supporting. The Government also pays the salaries of the two official Muslim religious leaders ("muftis") in Thrace and provides them with official vehicles.

Several religious denominations reported difficulties in their dealings with the authorities on a variety of administrative matters. Privileges and legal prerogatives granted to the Greek Orthodox Church are not extended routinely to other recognized religions. The non-Greek Orthodox churches must make separate and lengthy applications to government officials on such matters as gaining permission to move places of worship to larger facilities. In contrast Greek Orthodox officials have an institutionalized link between the church hierarchy and the Ministry of Education and Religion to handle administrative matters.

The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne gives Muslims in Thrace the right to maintain social and charitable organizations ("wakfs") and provides for muftis (Islamic judges and religious leaders with limited civic responsibilities) to render religious judicial services.

The Treaty of Lausanne also provides that the Muslim minority has the right to Turkish-language education, with a reciprocal entitlement for the Greek minority in Istanbul of approximately 3,000 persons. Thrace has both Koranic and secular Turkish-language schools. Observers agree that the education provided in these schools is of lower quality than that in other Greek schools. Under a 1952 educational protocol, Greece and Turkey may exchange annually 35 teachers on a reciprocal basis for service in Istanbul and Thrace; however, due to the reduced needs of the small and aging Greek population in Istanbul, Greece has limited the exchanges to 16 teachers per country. In 1999 the Government approved 19 Turkish textbooks, which arrived in May 2000 for use in the secular Turkish-language schools (referred to as "minority" schools in Thrace). Under a 1960 bilateral protocol, Turkey provided copies of the approved texts for use in the schools of Thrace.

In Thrace over 8,000 Muslim children attended Turkish-language primary schools. An additional 150 attended 2 bilingual middle schools with a religious curriculum. Approximately

700 attended Turkish-language secondary schools, and approximately 1,300 attended Greek-language secondary schools. In 1999 the Government instituted an European Union-funded program for teaching Greek as a second language to Muslim children, primarily for those students in the Greek-language public schools, to improve their academic performance and chance of obtaining postsecondary education in Greece. In addition the Government offered further opportunities for minority students to learn Greek through preschool, kindergarten, after school, and summer school courses.

Other than in one multicultural elementary education "pilot school," the Government does not provide instruction in Greek as a second language to Turcophone children in the Athens area. Muslim parents report that their children are unable to succeed in school as a result of this policy. The Government maintains that Muslims outside Thrace are not covered by the Treaty of Lausanne and therefore do not enjoy those rights provided by the treaty.

The law permits the Minister of Education to give special consideration to Muslims for admission to universities and technical institutes (although not to military officer candidate school). Universities and technical institutes are required to create a certain number of places (0.5 percent) for Muslim students each year; 400 spaces were available for the 2000-01 school year, but only 35 Muslim students entered universities and technical institutes during the 2000-01 school year.

The Muslim population is concentrated in Thrace with small communities in Rhodes, Kos, and Athens (see Section 5).

The approximately 20,000 member Muslim community in Athens has no mosque or state-appointed cleric to officiate at various religious functions, including funerals. Members of the Muslim community often transport their deceased back to Thrace for religious burials. In 2000 the Parliament approved a bill that allows construction of the first Islamic cultural center and mosque in the Athens area; however, construction had not yet begun at year's end. According to official sources, a total of 287 mosques operate freely in Thrace, and there are also mosques on the islands of Rhodes and Kos. Construction of a long-delayed mosque in Kimmeria, Thrace, was completed in 1998, although its minaret remained unfinished due to local sensitivities; however, this has not affected the religious operation of the mosque.

Differences remain within the Muslim community and between segments of the community and the Government over the means of selection of muftis. In 1991 in accordance with the law, the Government, upon receiving recommendations from a committee of Muslim notables selected by the Government, appointed two muftis and one assistant mufti, all resident in Thrace, to 10-year terms. The Government argued that it must appoint the muftis because, in addition to their religious duties, they perform judicial functions in civil and domestic matters under Muslim religious law, for which the State pays them. In January the Mufti from Komotini was reappointed for another 10-year term, and in May the Mufti from Xanthi also was reappointed. Some Muslims accept the authority of the two officially appointed muftis; other Muslims, with support from Turkey, have "elected" two different muftis to serve their communities (although there is no established procedure or practice for election). The Government has prosecuted the "elected" muftis for usurping authority, and the courts repeatedly have convicted one of the elected muftis for usurping the authority of the official mufti; all of his respective sentences remained suspended pending appeal at year's end. On July 4, a Kavala court acquitted the mufti on three counts of "encroaching on the services of a religious functionary." He continued to minister to local Muslims during the year.

Controversy between the Muslim community and the Government also continued over the management and self-government of the wakfs (Muslim charitable organizations), regarding the appointment of officials as well as the degree and type of administrative control. A 1980 law placed the administration of the wakfs in the hands of the appointed muftis and their representatives. In response to objections from some Muslims that this arrangement weakened the financial autonomy of the wakfs and violated the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, a 1996 presidential decree put the wakfs under the administration of a committee for 3 years as an interim measure pending the resolution of outstanding problems. The interim period was



extended in 1999. In the past, Muslim activists complained that the Government regularly lodges tax liens against the wakfs, although they are tax-free religious foundations in theory. Under a 1999 national land and property registry law, the wakfs, as with all property holders, must register all of their property with the Government. The law permits the Government to seize any property that owners are not able to document; there are built-in reporting and appeals procedures. The wakfs were established in 1560; however, due to the destruction of files during the two world wars, the wakfs are unable to document ownership of much of their property. They have not registered the property, so they cannot pay assessed taxes. The Government has not sought to enforce either the assessments or the registration requirement.

Non-Orthodox citizens have claimed that they face career limits in the military, police, and fire fighting forces, and the civil service, due to their religions. In the military, generally only members of the Greek Orthodox faith become officers, leading some members of other faiths to declare themselves Orthodox. There is no prohibition against Muslims becoming officers; however, few Muslim officers have advanced to the rank of reserve officer, and there were reports of pressure exerted on Greek Orthodox military personnel not to marry in the religious ceremony of their non-Orthodox partner, lest they be passed over for promotion. In addition the rigorous training conditions they must meet to advance also require a solid educational background and fluency in Greek, posing an obstacle for many Muslims.

The rate of employment of Muslims in the public sector and in state-owned industries and corporations is much lower than the Muslim percentage of the population. Muslims in Thrace claim that they are hired only for lower level, part-time work. The Government claims and Muslims and Christians agree that a lack of fluency in written and spoken Greek and the need for university degrees for high-level positions limit the number of Muslims eligible for government jobs.

Although Jehovah's Witnesses are recognized as a "known" religion, they continued to face some harassment in the form of arbitrary identity checks, difficulties in burying their dead, and local officials' resistance to their construction of churches (which in most cases was resolved quickly and favorably).

Evangelical parishes are located throughout the country. Members of missionary faiths report that they are subject to harassment and police detention due to constitutional and legal prohibitions on proselytizing. Church officials expressed concern that antiproselytizing laws remain on the books, although such laws no longer hinder their ministering to the poor and to children. Church leaders report that their permanent members (nonmissionaries) do not encounter official discriminatory treatment. However, the police regularly detained Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses after receiving local complaints that individuals were engaged in proselytizing. In most cases, these individuals were held for several hours at a police station and then released with no charges filed. Many reported that they were not allowed to call their lawyers and that they were abused verbally by police officers for their religious beliefs.

The Government decided in 2000 to remove the notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards. This sparked a national debate on the role of the Church in society that continued during the year.

Religious instruction in Orthodoxy in public primary and secondary schools is mandatory for all Greek Orthodox students. Non-Orthodox students are exempt from this requirement; however, Jehovah's Witnesses have reported some instances of discrimination related to attendance at religious education classes or other celebrations of religious or nationalistic character. Members of the Muslim community in Athens were seeking Islamic religious instruction for their children. Neighborhood schools offered no alternative supervision for the children during the period of religious instruction. The community complained that this forces the parents to have their children attend Orthodox religious instruction by default.

The law prohibits the functioning of private schools in buildings owned by non-Orthodox

religious foundations; however, this law has not been enforced in practice.

#### d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The Constitution provides for these rights, and the Government generally respects them in practice.

A section of the Citizenship Code, Article 20, permits the Government to strip citizenship from those who "commit acts contrary to the interests of Greece for the benefit of a foreign state." While the law as written applies equally to all citizens regardless of ethnic background, it has been enforced, in all but one case, only against citizens who identified themselves as members of the "Macedonian" minority. The Government has not revealed the number of Article 20 cases that it pursued. There were no reports of such cases during the year. Dual citizens who are stripped of Greek citizenship under Article 20 sometimes are prevented from entering the country using the passport of their second nationality.

In 1998 the Government repealed Article 19 of the Citizenship Code, which permitted it to revoke the citizenship of citizens of non-Greek ethnic origin who traveled outside the country. Between 1955 and 1998, according to government officials, approximately 60,000 citizens lost their citizenship, and approximately 400 individuals, mainly Muslims in Thrace, who lost their citizenship under Article 19 continued to reside in the country. Following the repeal of Article 19, the authorities issued most of these individuals identification documents characterizing them as stateless but permitted them to apply to reacquire citizenship. Most of these 400 persons had not had their applications adjudicated by year's end.

In April Parliament passed a new immigration bill, and in June the Government launched its second campaign to legalize all immigrants who fulfill the requirements of the law (proof of residence in Greece from before June 2, 2000). Legislative amendments, the decentralized registration process, and improved services for applicants such as a help line run by the Ministry of Interior, made the process more successful than the Government's first effort in 1998. Over 350,000 illegal migrants applied during this second legalization process.

The law provides for the granting of asylum and refugee status in accordance with the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. A 1999 presidential decree significantly expanded the rights of asylum seekers and brought the law into compliance with the standards of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on asylum procedures; however, in practice this legislation remained largely unenforced. The Government cooperates with the office of the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees.

Individuals recognized as refugees under the terms of the U.N. convention are eligible for residence and work permits necessary to settle permanently. During the first 6 months of the year, 1,162 individuals submitted applications for refugee status; 55 individuals were recognized as refugees. Another 18 were granted temporary residence on humanitarian grounds until return to their countries becomes possible. At the end of 2000, 2,378 applications remained pending--more than double the number at the end of the previous year.

The Government generally does not recognize the concept of first asylum rights for refugees. The UNHCR expressed concern that very few applicants are granted asylum without UNHCR involvement. Interpretation services are lacking, as are adequate personnel who would ensure timely access to the asylum process for those who seek it. The UNHCR also expressed concern that there exists no publicly funded legal aid system for free counseling for asylum seekers and refugees.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that thousands of individuals from Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, and Iran enter the country illegally each year; only a small percentage eventually apply for official asylum or refugee status. In June Port Authority personnel reportedly abused 164 migrants who came ashore in Hania, Crete (see Section 1.c.). During July, August, and September, over

900 additional smuggled individuals who arrived by boat on Greek islands applied for asylum. On November 5, the coast guard intercepted and assisted a disabled, Turkish-flag vessel that carried 714 persons believed to be heading for Italy. Most applied for asylum, and after initially refusing to allow their applications, the Government sent them to refugee camps or reception facilities for processing. Some of those who did not apply for refugee or asylum status remained illegally, often living in camps or in NGO shelters where conditions range from adequate to very poor. Others proceeded to Western Europe, often applying for asylum there. A large group of persons waiting to board boats to Italy gathered at the port of Patras throughout the year and remained there in squalid conditions at year's end.

The Government generally does not seek out such individuals for deportation; largely because until November Greece and Turkey did not have a readmission agreement, and the Government found it practically impossible to deport formally individuals who entered Greece from Turkey. In July the UNHCR visited the Greek-Turkish land border (a military zone) to ascertain whether a group of 250 persons from various African countries were detained there. While no evidence was found at the time, some of those persons who had been deported from Turkey to Greece and back again, arrived in Greece and applied for asylum.

Deportations of both illegal and legal immigrants, abusive treatment by police, and inconsistencies and inequities in the way employers provide wages and benefits to domestic and foreign workers were common. The police conducted many large-scale sweeps of neighborhoods populated by immigrants, temporarily detaining large numbers of individuals while determining their residence status. The detainees were held in squalid conditions: A report by Human Rights Watch in December 2000 cited severe overcrowding and a lack of sufficient exercise, sleeping accommodations, adequate food, or medical care. The only government-funded center for asylum seekers was old and in need of repair.

No refugees were deported to countries where they credibly feared prosecution.

The Organization for the Employment of Human Resources (OAED), a government agency, reported that by 2000, 386,000 illegal aliens, out of an estimated total alien population of 700,000, had applied for legal status or a "white card," under a program designed to regularize the residency status of illegal, (usually economic) immigrants. A few, mostly Albanian, white card holders were able to meet all the requirements of the law and receive a "green card," which serves as a residence permit and allows the immigrants to live and work in the country for a limited period of time. The OAED issued 159,807 green cards by July 2000. Approximately 80 percent of the green cards issued were of 1-year duration. A new application is required to extend the card for an additional year. Holders of a white card may reside and work legally on a short-term basis while meeting the other requirements necessary to obtain a green card. According to press reports, the obstacles of a complex bureaucracy and the unwillingness of employers to pay social security contributions were the primary reasons for the limited ability of white cardholders to advance to the green card application process. The OAED estimated that out of a total of 386,000 white cardholders in 1998, 163,000 simply dropped out of the green card application process. Legislation provides for the green card program to remain in effect until the end of the year. Press reports estimated that it would take 3 years to process the applications already submitted.

### Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercise this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage. Greece is a multiparty democracy headed by Prime Minister Constantine Simitis of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), who was elected in free and fair elections in September 1996 and again in April 2000. Parliament elects the President for a 5-year term. Members of the unicameral 300-seat Parliament are elected to maximum 4-year terms by secret ballot. Opposition parties function freely and have broad access to the media. Voting is mandatory for those over age 18; however, there are many conditions under which citizens may be exempted from voting, and penalties are not applied in practice.

Romani representatives report that local authorities sometimes deprived Roma of the right to vote by refusing to register them; however, Romani representatives also report that some municipalities encourage Roma to register. Municipalities may refuse to register Roma who do not fulfill basic residency requirements, which many Roma have trouble meeting.

The percentage of women in government or politics does not correspond to their percentage of the population, although no legal restrictions hinder their participation. During the year, women held 2 of 20 ministerial positions in the Government and 2 of 29 subministerial positions. Of the 300 members elected to Parliament in April 2000, 31 were female.

While citizens exercised their political rights, there occasionally were charges that the Government limits the right of some individuals, particularly Muslims and Slavo-Macedonians, to speak publicly and associate freely on the basis of their self-proclaimed ethnic identity. However, in the 2000 parliamentary elections, a Muslim was elected in Thrace, from PASOK. A second Muslim, also from PASOK, became an M.P. in September 2000 after winning a court challenge to the eligibility of a seated M.P. for violating a constitutional provision.

Responsibility for the oversight of all rights provided to the Muslim minority under the Treaty of Lausanne (including education, zoning, administration of the wakfs, and trade) belongs to a government-appointed regional administrative official, the periferiarch of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. Some minority members have charged that oversight by this office rather than by elected local governors reduced their ability to use the democratic process to influence decisions that affect them. The Government stated that it made the change because the central authorities could administer Greece's treaty obligations more effectively. Elected nomarchs govern at the provincial level. These officials work in close cooperation with both elected mayors and local leaders (Christian and Muslim). Members of the Muslim community noted that this decentralization has been a positive factor in local and regional development.

#### Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A wide variety of domestic and international human rights groups operate in the country, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. While the Government permits domestic human rights organizations to operate, cooperation with them varies. The Government usually cooperates with international human rights groups, has good working relations with them, and if possible, takes their views into account.

The government ombudsman's office received 781 complaints in the first 8 months of the year directly related to human rights issues, of which 455 were processed successfully. Human rights cases constituted 26 percent of all cases, an increase of 30 percent compared with the full year in 2000. The office has proved to be an effective means for resolving human rights and religious freedom concerns.

#### Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution provides for equality before the law irrespective of nationality, race, language, religious or political belief; however, government respect for these rights was inconsistent in practice.

##### Women

Violence against women is a problem. The law does not specifically prohibit domestic violence. The incidence of violence against women reported to the authorities is low; however, the General Secretariat for Equality of the Sexes (GSES), an independent government agency that operates the only shelter for battered women in Athens, believes that the actual incidence is "high." According to press and academic estimates, there were approximately 4,500 cases of rape in 1999. Reportedly only 6 to 10 percent of the victims contact the police, and only a

small fraction of the cases reaches trial. Conviction rates on rape charges are low for those accused for the first time, but sentences are harsh for repeat offenders. Spousal rape is a crime.

The GSES claims that police tend to discourage women from pursuing domestic violence charges and instead undertake reconciliation efforts. The GSES also claims that the courts are lenient when dealing with domestic violence cases. GSES, in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Order, continued training courses for police personnel on how to treat domestic violence victims.

Facilities for battered women and their children often are staffed inadequately to handle cases properly, but many facilities hired new personnel during the year. Two government shelters provide services in Athens and Piraeus, including legal and psychological advice. Battered women also may go to state hospitals and regional health centers throughout the country. In June 2000, the Secretariat began operating a 24-hour emergency telephone hot line for abused women; a campaign to publicize the service was underway. An interministerial committee composed of the GSES, the Ministry of Public Order, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Ministry of Justice, serves as an information-sharing forum on women's issues.

Prostitution is legal. Prostitutes must register at the local prefecture and carry a medical card that is updated every 2 weeks. While the number of Greek women entering the profession declined, according to the police and academic sources, trafficking in women for prostitution, mostly from the former Soviet republics, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania, increased sharply (see Sections 6.c. and 6.f.). It is estimated that fewer than 1,000 prostitutes are ethnic Greeks, and approximately 20,000 are of foreign origin--most in the country illegally. Most prostitutes who have been arrested are foreigners who were apprehended for noncompliance with legal requirements. While national data on such arrests is not available, police reports estimate that 1,311 women were arrested as illegal immigrants from January to September. Media reports implicated several police officers as participants in prostitution rings. The press alleged on a number of occasions that police accepted bribes from traffickers or pimps or forced illegal immigrants to have sex with them and then channeled them into prostitution rings (see Section 6.f.).

The law specifically prohibits sexual harassment. Trade unions report that lawsuits for sexual harassment are very rare: According to the unions, only four women have filed such charges in the past 3 years. In all four cases, the courts reportedly imposed very lenient civil sentences. The General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) women's section reports that sexual harassment is a widespread phenomenon, but that women are discouraged from filing charges against perpetrators by family members and coworkers since they believe they might be socially stigmatized.

The law provides for equal pay for equal work; however, the National Statistical Service's latest data, for the fourth quarter of 1998, show that women's salaries in manufacturing were 71 percent of those of men in comparable positions; in retail sales, women's salaries were 88 percent of those of men in comparable positions.

Although relatively few women occupy senior positions, women have begun to enter traditionally male-dominated occupations such as the legal and medical professions in larger numbers. However, women still face discrimination when they are considered for promotions in both the public and private sectors. Women also are underrepresented in labor unions' leadership. According to the women's section of the GSEE, 58.6 percent of the country's long-term unemployed are women, while women constitute only 38 percent of the work force. To ameliorate the situation, the GSES established two regional employment offices for women in Thessaloniki and Patras in 2000. It also continued to provide vocational training programs for unemployed women and programs to reinforce entrepreneurship, subsidies to women for setting up an enterprise, information and counseling to unemployed women, and it created childcare facilities to assist unemployed women to attend training courses and look for a job.

## Children

The Government is committed strongly to children's rights and welfare; it amply funds a system of public education and health care. Education is free and compulsory through the ninth grade, but the legislation does not provide for enforcement or penalties. University education is public and free at all levels. New universities have opened in the provinces, along with new departments in already existing universities.

During the year, the Ministry of Education reported that the illiteracy rate was dropping among Roma children: The school enrollment rate of Romani children increased by 17 percent, and the dropout rate decreased to 75 percent as a consequence of an identity card system, set up by the Ministry, which allows students to change schools more easily as their parents move. The Greek Helsinki Monitor and POSER, the organization that represents the views of the Romani community, challenged this statistic. The idea of setting up satellite elementary schools near Romani camps has been set aside in favor of the policy of integration (except for preschool centers). Ethnic Greek parents in some schools have resisted the acceptance of many Romani children.

Several government organizations have responsibility for children's issues. The National Organization for Social Care has a nationwide network of offices and is active in the field of child protection. The services of this organization were regionalized in order to provide greater access to child welfare services and funding prioritized according to regional needs.

There is no societal pattern of abuse of children; however, research by the Institute for Child Health (ICH) revealed a high percentage of socially accepted physical punishment (viz., spanking) by parents. No national data exist on the incidence of child abuse; authorities other than police are not required to report such cases. Societal abuse of children in the form of pornography is rare. Child prostitution is a growing phenomenon, particularly in some parts of immigrant communities of central Athens.

Penal law prohibits the mistreatment of children and sets penalties for violators, while welfare legislation provides for preventive and treatment programs for abused children and for children deprived of a family environment; it also seeks to ensure the availability of alternative family care or institutional placement. There was a gradual decline in the number of ethnic Greek children in public care; however, children of ethnic minority groups (i.e., Albanians) who work in Greece entered public care because of abuse or abandonment.

Children's rights advocacy groups claim that the protection of high-risk children in state residential care centers is inadequate and of low quality. They cite lack of coordination between welfare services and the courts, inadequate funding of the welfare system, and poor staffing of residential care centers as systemic weaknesses in the treatment of child abuse. Athens has two municipal shelters for battered children. Child health specialists note that the number of children in residential care facilities is decreasing, while the number in foster care is rising. With EU funding, special care is available for juvenile offenders, Romani children, children from remote mountain and island areas, and children with disabilities.

During the year, the number of street children who panhandle or peddle at city intersections on behalf of adult family members or for criminal gangs decreased. The Government successfully implemented measures throughout the year to combat this phenomenon, which included the institutional placement of children up to 12 years old, therapeutic consultations with their families, and the deportation of illegal immigrant juveniles 12 to 17 years old. Street children were arrested and detained regularly by police prior to being placed in these programs. However, it is believed widely that even those who were deported managed to return eventually to the country and the streets. In August 2000, police detained a group of 35 Roma children from Albania, between the ages of 3 months and 11 years, who were begging or being exploited by adult beggars in the streets. Police apprehended 20 adults, identified as parents. Police believe that this was the largest child exploitation ring ever uncovered in the country. The group of Roma was deported in August. A children's NGO, A Child's Smile, claims that many street children are victims of abuse. Based on the findings of a study it

carried out in Thessaloniki in 1999, the majority of street children are between the ages of 8 and 14. Approximately 60 percent of such children are from Albania, and most have been separated from their parents, who remained in their native country. Someone posing as their guardian or parent brings them to Greece. In most cases, their parents, faced with extreme financial difficulties in Albania, agreed to send their child to Greece in exchange for a small percentage of their child's monthly earnings.

#### Persons with Disabilities

Legislation mandates the hiring of persons with disabilities in public and private enterprises that employ more than 50 persons; however, the law reportedly is enforced poorly, particularly in the private sector. The law states that persons with disabilities should account for 3 percent of employees in private enterprises. In the civil service, 5 percent of administrative staff and 80 percent of telephone operator positions are reserved for persons with disabilities. Recent legislation mandates the hiring of persons with disabilities in the public sector from a priority list. They are exempt from the civil service exam, and some have been appointed to important positions in the civil service. There is no societal discrimination against persons with disabilities.

The Construction Code mandates physical access for persons with disabilities to private and public buildings, but this law, also, is enforced poorly. Many public buildings had not complied with the proposals of the interministerial committee on accessibility by year's end. A 1997 survey showed that over 60 percent of public buildings were not accessible. Ramps and special curbs for persons with disabilities were constructed on some Athens streets and at some public buildings, and sound signals have been installed at some city street crossings. During the year, the Ministry of Public Works installed special sound equipment for 200 traffic lights in Attika that were selected by the Association for the Blind. The Government continued to replace old city buses with new accessible buses. Athens subway lines provide full accessibility.

#### Religious Minorities

Ethnic Greeks tend to link religious affiliation very closely to ethnicity. In the minds of many, an ethnic Greek is also Orthodox Christian. Non-Orthodox citizens have complained of being treated with suspicion or told that they were not truly Greek when they revealed their religious affiliation. Non-Orthodox citizens also have claimed that they face career limits in the military and the civil service due to their religions (see Section 2.c.).

Members of minority faiths have reported incidents of societal discrimination, such as local bishops warning parishioners not to visit clergy or members of minority faiths, and neighbors requesting that the police arrest missionaries for proselytizing. Some non-Orthodox religious communities claim that they have been unable to communicate with officials of the Orthodox Church and that the attitude of the Orthodox Church toward their faiths has increased social intolerance towards their religions. The Orthodox Church issued a list of practices and religious groups, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Evangelical Protestants, Scientologists, Mormons, Baha'is, and others, which it believes to be sacrilegious. Officials of the Orthodox Church have acknowledged that they refuse to enter into dialog with religious groups considered harmful to Greek Orthodox worshippers; church leaders instruct Orthodox Greeks to shun members of these faiths.

In March Archbishop Christodoulos blamed "the Jews" for the Government's decision to remove notation of religious affiliation on national identity cards (see Section 2.c.). The Government distanced itself from Christodoulos' statement.

In April vandals desecrated the Jewish cemetery of Trikala. The police investigated but were unable to identify any suspects.

## National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

An increase in xenophobia has paralleled an increase in the number of non-Greeks living and working in the country. Antiforeigner sentiment is directed mainly at Albanians, who make up approximately 5 percent of the population. Of the approximately 800,000 aliens in the country, approximately 500,000 are Albanians, 90 percent of whom are legalized. The Government launched a second legalization process during the year, allowing undocumented immigrants who had lived in Greece for more than a year to apply for residence and work permits. While this legalization has decreased official cases of discrimination, Albanian immigrants faced widespread societal discrimination. For example, the population regularly blamed Albanians for the reported rise in crime in the last few years. The sometimes difficult relationship between Albania and Greece intensified the problem. Debate also has arisen over Albanian immigrants' rights to Greek national identity. For example, a controversy occurred in some areas during the year over whether Albanian pupils would be allowed to carry the Greek flag in national day parades: eventually they were allowed to do so.

Significant numbers of Greek citizens identify themselves as Turks, Pomaks, Vlachs, Roma, Arvanites (Orthodox Christians who speak a dialect of Albanian), or "Macedonians" or "Slavomacedonians." Most are integrated fully into society. The Government formally recognizes only the "Muslim minority" specified in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne (see Section 2.c.), although it stated publicly in 1999 that members of that minority could identify themselves individually as belonging to different ethnic groups. Most of the Muslim minority (officially estimated to number 98,000) are ethnically Turkish or Turcophone and live in Thrace. The Muslim minority also includes Pomaks and Roma. Many Greek Muslims, including Pomaks, identify themselves as Turks and say that the Muslim minority as a whole has a Turkish cultural consciousness.

The Government has failed to acknowledge formally the existence of non-Muslim ethnic groups, principally Slavophones, under the term "minority." The Government has affirmed an individual, but not a collective, right of self-identification. As a result, some individuals who define themselves as members of a minority find it difficult to express their identity freely and to maintain their culture. Use of the terms "Tourkos" and "Tourkikos" ("Turk" and "Turkish") is prohibited in titles of organizations, although individuals legally may call themselves "Tourkos." To most Greeks, the words "Tourkos" and "Tourkikos" connote Turkish identity or loyalties, and many object to their use by Greek citizens of Turkish origin. In June a court in Rodopi denied the registration of the "Political Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi." In December 2000, the Supreme Court overturned a 1999 Xanthi appeals court decision that upheld a 1986 trial court's order to close the "Turkish Union of Xanthi" because of the use of the word "Turkish" in the organization's name. The Supreme Court stated that the court's decision should be based on the organization's activities and not its name, and it ordered the appeals court to review the case. A hearing was held in November, but no ruling had been issued by year's end.

Northwestern Greece is home to an indeterminate number--estimates range widely, from under 10,000 to 50,000 or more--of citizens who speak a Slavic dialect at home, particularly in Florina province. A small number identify themselves as belonging to a distinct ethnic group and assert their right to "Macedonian" minority status. Their assertions have generated strong objections among the 2.2 million non-Slavophone Greek inhabitants of the northern Greek region of Macedonia, who use the same term to identify themselves. The Government does not recognize the Slavic dialect as a "Macedonian" language distinct from Bulgarian. Members of the minority asserted that the Government pursues a policy designed to discourage use of their dialect. The Government is concerned that members of the "Macedonian" minority may have separatist aspirations. Greece's dispute with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia over that country's name heightened this sensitivity.

Roma continued to face discrimination from some local authorities and society at large. An interministerial committee headed by the Ministry of Interior is responsible for coordinating government projects for Roma; it estimated the total Romani population to be between 85,000 and 120,000. Nonofficial sources estimate the total at 250,000 to 300,000. Most of the Roma



in Thrace are Muslims; elsewhere the majority are Greek Orthodox. Many Roma are settled permanently, mainly in the Athens area. Others are either mobile, working mainly as agricultural laborers, peddlers, and musicians throughout the country, or they live in camps. The number of Roma who move around the country continued to decrease gradually as families settled mainly into slums and camps around major cities.

The European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) claimed that Roma are subject to systematic police abuse (see Section 1.c.), mistreatment while in police custody, and regular raids and searches of Roma neighborhoods for criminal suspects, drugs, and weapons.

In 1999 the Ministry of Interior completed a survey of the housing needs of the Roma and in September started to erect prefabricated houses, totaling approximately 1,000. Also in September, the Minister of Interior announced a \$283,707,106 (105 billion drachma) program to address Roma needs and to promote Roma integration, including housing, subsidized mortgage loans, and infrastructure in Roma camps, employment schemes, cultural and sports activities, and welfare allowances.

Roma frequently face discrimination in employment and in housing, particularly when attempting to rent accommodations. The approximately 400 Roma families in Tyrnavos, Thessaly, live in tents because the authorities refuse to include the area in city planning. There were approximately 70 Romani camps with a total population between 100,000 and 120,000 persons. Most Romani camps have no running water, electricity, garbage disposal, or sewage treatment. The Roma of Tyrnavos, Thessaly, attempted to build their own lavatories in order to improve their living conditions, but local authorities pulled them down and imposed fines for violating construction codes. The Ministry of Defense allocated land in 1996 and houses in 2000 at a former army camp (Gonou) for the Roma of Evosmos, Thessaloniki.

Local authorities harassed and threatened to evict Roma from their camps or other dwellings, and the NGO Greek Helsinki Monitor reported that many communities of Romani tent-dwellers were evicted during the year. The Helsinki Monitor reported that in September seven Romani shacks in Aspropyrgos were demolished by municipal authorities who claimed that the shacks were located on private property. The Ministry of Interior, NGO's, and the Ombudsman intervened with the Mayor afterwards, arguing that demolition required a judicial decision.

Romani representatives reported that some local authorities have refused to register Roma as residents in their municipalities. Until registered with a municipality, no citizen can vote or exercise other civic rights such as obtaining an official marriage, commercial, or driver's license, or contributing to social security.

The Government considers the Roma a "socially excluded" or "sensitive" group, not a "minority." As a result, government policy is to encourage the integration of Roma. The Prime Minister has designated a member of his staff to coordinate the efforts of all government ministries having a role in their integration, and the Ministry of Interior established an interministerial committee in March with the same aim. Nevertheless poverty, illiteracy, and social prejudice continued to plague large parts of the Romani population; these problems were most severe among migrant Roma or those who lived in slums. The illiteracy rate among Roma is estimated at 80 percent, and according to an NGO, the average Romani family's income was approximately \$205 (76,000 drachma) per month. The research also concluded that the average life expectancy of Roma is below 60 years of age.

The integration of Roma into social security systems also is quite low. It is estimated that 90 percent of Roma are not insured by the public social security systems, since they are unable or unwilling to make the required contributions. Like other qualified citizens, indigent Roma are entitled to free health care; however, their access at times is hindered by the fact that their encampments are located far from public health facilities. Research conducted in 2000 by the NGO Doctors of the World found that 98 percent of Roma in some camps were infected by hepatitis A, and 68 percent by hepatitis B. The rate of infection of other citizens is extremely low, since most are vaccinated. The Municipality of Pyrgos, Peloponnese, issued health cards to the Roma living permanently in the area and established a preschool center close to the

Roma camp near the Alfeios River.

At a 1999 Implementation Review Meeting in Vienna of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Greek delegation recognized that the situation of Roma in Greece was "unsatisfactory and unacceptable" and committed the Government to remedy the situation. Government representatives identified as impediments to progress the lack of a unified voice from the Roma community and the widespread social prejudice against them. The Ombudsman's Office stated that the Romani community needs to take more initiative.

The Ministry of Health and Welfare continued work on projects to address the chronic problems of the Romani community. The projects included training courses for civil servants, policemen, and teachers to "increase sensitivity to the problems of the Roma," the development of teaching materials for Romani children, and the establishment of six youth centers in areas close to Romani communities.

## Section 6 Worker Rights

### a. The Right of Association

The Constitution and the law provide for the right of association, and workers exercised this right. All workers, with the exception of the military, have the right to form or join unions. Police have the right to form unions but not to strike. Approximately 26 percent of wage earners (nearly 650,000 persons) are organized in unions. Unions receive most of their funding from a Ministry of Labor organization, the Workers' Hearth, which distributes mandatory contributions from employees and employers. Workers, employers, and the state are represented in equal numbers on the board of directors of the Workers' Hearth. Approximately 10 public sector unions have dues withholding provisions in their contracts, in addition to receiving Workers' Hearth subsidies.

Over 4,000 unions are grouped into regional and sectoral federations and 2 umbrella confederations, 1 for civil servants (ADEDY) and another, the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), for private sector employees. Unions are highly politicized, and there are party-affiliated factions within the labor confederations; however, neither political parties nor the Government control day-to-day operations. There are no restrictions on who may serve as a union official.

Legal restrictions on strikes include a mandatory period of notice, which is 4 days for public utilities and 24 hours for the private sector. Legislation mandates a skeleton staff during strikes affecting public services, such as electricity, transportation, communications, and banking. Public utility companies, state-owned banks, the postal service, Olympic Airways, and the railroads also are required to maintain a skeleton staff during strikes. The courts have the power to declare strikes illegal, although such decisions seldom are enforced; however, unions complain that this judicial power serves as a deterrent to some of their members from participating in strikes. The courts declared some strikes illegal during the year for reasons such as failure of the union to give adequate advance notice of the strike or the addition of demands by the union during the course of the strike; however, no striking workers were prosecuted.

Many strikes took place during the year. Although most strikes were fairly brief, they affected productivity and disrupted daily life in the center of Athens. Strikes by public sector employees, including mass transport employees, lasted between 1 and 5 days and primarily concerned securing timely pay increases and greater job security. Labor unions organized large demonstrations and rallies in April and May to protest government plans to reform the social security system.

Unions are free to join international associations and maintain a variety of international affiliations, and almost all do so.

#### b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law provides for the right to organize and bargain collectively in the private sector and in public corporations, and unions exercise these rights freely. There are no restrictions on collective bargaining for private sector employees.

Civil servants have the right to organize and bargain collectively with the Ministry of Public Administration. The civil servants confederation conducted official negotiations with the Ministry of Interior for the first time in 1999.

The law provides for mediation procedures, with compulsory arbitration as a last resort. A National Mediation, Reconciliation, and Arbitration Organization is used in the private sector and public corporations (the military and civil service excluded). While mediation is voluntary, failure to agree during mediation makes arbitration compulsory, as decided by the mediation organization.

Antiunion discrimination is prohibited. The Labor Inspectorate or a court investigates complaints of discrimination against union members or organizers. Court rulings have mandated the reinstatement of improperly fired union members.

Three free trade zones operate according to European Union regulations. The labor laws apply equally in these zones.

#### c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The Constitution prohibits forced or compulsory labor; however, women were trafficked into the country for the purpose of prostitution (see Sections 5 and 6.f.). The Government may declare the "civil mobilization" of workers in the event of danger to national security, life, property, or the social and economic life of the country. The International Labor Organization (ILO) Committee of Experts has criticized this power as tantamount to forced labor. The Government did not resort to civil mobilization during the year.

The Constitution prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor although no legislation specifically prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, and girls are trafficked into the country for the purpose of prostitution (see Sections 5 and 6.f.). There are also reports that Romani children are forced into begging (see Section 5).

#### d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The minimum age for employment in the industrial sector is 15 years, with higher limits for certain activities. The minimum age is 12 years in family businesses, theaters, and the cinema. These age limits are enforced by occasional Labor Inspectorate spot checks and generally are observed; however, families engaged in agriculture, food service, and merchandising often have younger family members assisting them, at least part time.

In November the Government ratified ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labor.

The Constitution contains a blanket prohibition of compulsory labor; however, no specific legislation explicitly prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, and there were reports of such practices among Romani children (see Sections 5 and 6.c.). Trafficking in girls for prostitution also was a problem (see Section 6.f.).

#### e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Collective bargaining between the GSEE and the Employers' Association determines a nationwide minimum wage. The Ministry of Labor routinely ratifies this minimum wage, which has the force of law and applies to all workers. The minimum wage of \$19.50 (7,221 drachma) daily and \$435.50 (161,138 drachma) monthly, effective July 1, provides a decent standard of

living for a worker and family. The maximum legal workweek is 40 hours in the private sector and 37 1/2 hours in the public sector. The law provides for at least one 24-hour rest period per week, mandates paid vacation of 1 month per year, and sets limits on overtime.

Legislation provides for minimum standards of occupational health and safety. Although the GSEE characterized health and safety legislation as satisfactory, it stated that enforcement, which is the responsibility of the Labor Inspectorate, was inadequate. The Labor Inspectorate operates under a central authority. Workers do not have the legal right to remove themselves from situations that they believe endanger their health; however, they do have the right to lodge a confidential complaint with the Labor Inspectorate. Inspectors have the right to close down machinery or a process for a period of up to 5 days if they see safety or health hazards that they believe represent an imminent danger to the workers.

Foreign workers are protected by law, but in practice their wages usually are lower, and they work longer hours.

#### f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not specifically criminalize trafficking in persons, although other statutes in the Penal Code could be used to prosecute such cases, and Greece is both a transit and destination country for trafficked women and girls, primarily for sexual exploitation and domestic service. Local police corruption facilitates trafficking in the country.

Trafficking in women and girls for prostitution in the country increased sharply in the last few years. An academic observer estimated that approximately 40,000 women, most between the ages of 12 and 25, are trafficked to the country each year for prostitution. At any given time, 16,000 to 20,000 trafficked women or girls are in the country, according to unofficial estimates. Major countries of origin include Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Romania. Women from North Africa (Tunisia and Algeria), Asia (Thailand and the Philippines), the Dominican Republic, Moldova, Kazakhstan, and Serbia, and the Middle East also were trafficked to the country.

According to a Panteion University study, over 85,000 trafficked women have worked in the country in the past decade. Of female prostitutes, 75 percent are not told why they are being brought to Greece. Some women arrive as "tourists" or illegal immigrants who seek work and are lured into prostitution by club owners who threaten them with deportation. Some women are kidnaped from their homes by their fellow countrymen and smuggled into Greece where they are "sold" to local procurers. In the past, prostitutes remained in the country from 2 to 6 months, but rarely more than 2 years; however, an academic observer has found that prostitutes typically remain in the country for up to 33 months. The victims of this practice are often minors. Trafficked women often are confined to apartments, hotels, and clubs against their will, are not registered with the Government, and are forced to surrender their passports to their local "owner." Frequently connections exist between illegal prostitution and other criminal activities. According to observers traffickers "own" approximately 80 percent of the illegal prostitutes in Greece.

Local police corruption also played a role in facilitating trafficking into the country. NGO's reported that some police officers are on the payrolls of organized crime networks involved in trafficking. Media reports have implicated several police officers as participants in prostitution rings. For example, the Kathemerini newspaper reported during the year that an aide to the former Minister of Public Order, a former chief of the Omonia police precinct, and a police sergeant were arrested in connection with a racket that provided protection to brothels and nightclubs in Athens from 1995 to 1997. At year's end, judicial action on the case remained pending. The newspaper Eleftherotypia reported that several police officers were arrested in November 2000 in connection with a ring that reportedly imported up to 1,200 women from neighboring countries. At year's end, legal action on these cases remained pending. During the year, a number of police officers were arrested in connection with trafficking offenses; most arrests were in small towns, villages, and border areas.

There are no specific laws that deal with trafficking. Instead, trafficking is considered a subunit of the broader issue of organized crime. A new organized crime law, implemented in June, enhances prosecutors' ability to charge traffickers: it states that the abduction or illegal detention of a woman without her consent for the purpose of involving her in "acts of debauchery" is a crime. But the crime must involve at least three perpetrators for this law to be used. The lack of laws has made the prosecution of trafficking difficult. Arrests and court cases for prostitution by unlicensed foreign women (in the country illegally), and cases against their traffickers, increased but remain at a very low level. Fines and sentences for traffickers are minimal.

In the past, foreign women illegally in the country who were apprehended by the authorities for prostitution were placed in a deportation center or deported immediately by train, plane, or on foot. Approximately 2,400 trafficked women were deported during the year; however, many were brought back quickly into the country, according to official sources. New immigration and organized crime laws were passed in May and June that increased protection for women who press charges against their traffickers by allowing them to remain in the country legally and setting aside any previous convictions. The new laws were being implemented at year's end.

The Ministry of Public Order took initiatives for training new police officers to identify trafficked women. Trafficking experts conduct this training, which began in September, at local police academies. Also the Government began stiffening its border controls, in part because of European Union Schengen Treaty requirements; however, many women continued to be brought into the country from the Balkans and the former Soviet Union. In April an interministerial committee was formed with the objective of establishing a separate police task force on trafficking, drafting national legislation, and promoting a nationwide antitrafficking campaign.

Trafficking in women received significant amounts of media attention during the year. In a July report, HRW criticized the Government for the absence of comprehensive legislation against trafficking, few prosecutions of traffickers, a lack of witness protection and services programs for victims, their continued detention and deportation, and the continuing complicity of police officers in trafficking.

During the year, the NGO, Doctors of the World, and the local Intergovernmental Organization for Migration office began working on trafficking issues, along with some domestic NGO's.