

**IHF FOCUS: freedom of expression and media; torture, ill-treatment and police misconduct; conditions in prisons and detention facilities; religious intolerance; national minorities; citizenship and statelessness; intolerance, xenophobia, racial discrimination and hate speech; asylum seekers and immigrants; women's rights; rights of the child.**

Greece did not make much progress in furthering the protection of human rights during 2001. The extensive violation of minority rights continued despite sharp criticism from the relevant international bodies. In addition, Greece has been classified as one of the States with a democratic government that makes the least effort to combat trafficking in women, while also demonstrating one of the lowest levels of tolerance of freedom of expression.

Furthermore, there continued to be cases of flagrant police misconduct throughout the year, including irresponsible shootings both at immigrants trying to cross the border and at members of unpopular minorities. These often resulted in deaths. The dissemination of racist and xenophobic statements also added to the human rights problems in Greece during the year.

### Freedom of Expression and Media

Freedom House ranked Greece as the country displaying the least respect for freedom of speech out of all those countries with long-standing democratic traditions.<sup>2</sup>

◆ On 12 January the publisher of the daily *Adesmeftos Typos*, Dimitris Rizos, was sentenced to six months imprisonment (subsequently released on appeal) for slandering Kostas Mitsis, the publisher of another newspaper also called *Adesmeftos Typos*.

◆ On 2 February, Sotiris Bletsas from the Society for Aromanian Culture, received a suspended sentence of 15 months imprisonment and a DRS 500,000 (about 1,667 Euro) fine for allegedly disseminating false information at an Aromanian festival where he had distributed a publication from the European Union's semi-official Bureau for

Lesser Used Languages. The publication mentioned the existing minority languages in Greece, namely, Aromanian, Arvanite, Macedonian, Pomak, and Turkish. Mr Bletsas was subsequently acquitted on appeal on 18 December.

Journalists often faced abuses and interference with their work by politicians, businessmen and policemen.

◆ On 9 January, Stavros Papadopoulos, a New Democracy Party MP, assaulted Dimitris Kassapidis, a journalist and editor of the local magazine *Dromena* for writing a satirical article depicting the MP as a populist.

◆ On 30 March Manthos Evangeliou, a Star television correspondent and contributor to the Patras-based newspapers, *Kirikas* and *Yegonota*, was attacked in the city by Greek Coast Guards whilst photographing NATO ships anchored in the port for naval manoeuvres.

◆ On 3 April, *Eleftherotypia's* Makis Nodaras had his papers confiscated while covering a trial on a hit-and-run automobile manslaughter case of a Ukrainian worker by a wealthy local businessman.

◆ On 12 April, Fotini Panagopoulou, a journalist from the *Simaia* newspaper in Kalamata, was assaulted by Michalis Murgelas, an officer of the Municipal city police, after Ms Panagopoulou had photographed him.

### Torture, Ill-Treatment and Police Misconduct

Police brutality against immigrants and detainees continued to plague Greek society during 2001 as a result of the general situation of impunity of police misconduct. There were several cases of police shoot-

ings resulting in deaths: On 24 October the 21-year-old unarmed Romani man, Marinou Christopoulos, was murdered during a road check in Zefyri; on 21 November, the 20-year-old Gentjan Celniku, of Albanian background, was murdered during an identity check in central Athens; and on 1 December, the Albanian, Halim Munga, was killed near the Greek border. The 17-year-old Albanian, Afrim Salla, was “lucky” enough to stay alive, although paralyzed for life, after Greek soldiers opened fire on him near the town of Kastoria.

Roma were the most abused group in Greece, followed by the Albanians. However, more Albanians were killed by law enforcement officials. In addition, there were also cases of police attacks on ethnic Greeks. For example:

- ◆ In February, 16-year-old Refat Tafili was arrested in Athens. The severe mistreatment he allegedly was exposed to whilst in police custody resulted in a double rupture of his spleen and an emergency operation.

- ◆ In late May, 164 asylum seekers (including 20 women and 25 children) and others were towed away by the Greek Coast Guard in Crete, who allegedly assaulted most of the male migrants and inflicted injuries on at least 16 of them. Around the same time Piraeus coastguardsmen ran after and fired gunshots at five or six Kurdish detainees who had managed to escape into a schoolyard.

- ◆ On 15 June, police in Athens arrested Rom Andreas Kalamiotis for making too much noise with his friends. At the time of arrest, Mr Kalamiotis was allegedly beaten with truncheons and repeatedly insulted with racial slurs.

- ◆ In the night of 4-5 August, Nikos Theodoropoulos (19), Nikos Theodoropoulos (18), Nikos Tsitsikos (23), Vasileios Theodoropoulos (17), and Theodore Stefanou (16) were all arrested in connection with the robbery of an Argostoli kiosk. All young

Roma men alleged that they were beaten and repeatedly kicked by the policemen.

- ◆ On 1 November, in Zaharo, Yiorgos Panayotopoulos (16) was arrested with his relatives for carrying illegal arms. While in detention, a policeman reportedly beat Mr Panayotopoulos, placed a loaded gun to his head and threatened to assault him sexually.

### Conditions in Prisons and Detention Facilities

In 2001 the European Court of Human Rights convicted Greece for violation of Article 3 (prohibition of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment), in detention facilities<sup>3</sup> and prisons<sup>4</sup>. On 8 May, the UN Committee against Torture (CAT) stated that detention facilities in Greece were characterized by excessive and unjustified police violence, especially against minorities and foreigners; harsh detention regimes; and excessively prolonged detention of undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers awaiting deportation.

Overcrowding was the main problem in detention facilities – something that was acknowledged even by the Planning Directorate of the Ministry of the Environment, Planning and Public Works, which stated in July 2001 that around 8,295 inmates were accommodated in a space officially designated for no more than 5,267 detainees. Greece’s largest prison establishment, the Korydallos Prison Complex, was a case in point. In February, 2,193 inmates were spread between the 640 places available. This demonstrated that the situation in that prison had become even worse since the visit by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) in 1999. In addition, overcrowding was supplemented by “traditional” problems such as lack of physical exercise, ventilation, appropriate health care and vocational activities, as well as the widespread availability of drugs.

Asylum seekers were detained for long periods of time in conditions, which constituted torture and degrading treatment, including lack of proper ventilation and physical exercise, lack of proper food, insufficient supply of water, and overall unhygienic and unhealthy living conditions. In some cases asylum-seekers were physically assaulted and were almost never allowed to see a doctor to treat and document their injuries. In cases where asylum-seekers had expressly sought permission to contact the consulate of their country or to consult with a lawyer, they were allegedly not supplied with the appropriate phone numbers. The few who were permitted to consult a lawyer were not guaranteed confidential meetings, as none of the police establishments they were kept in offered facilities for that purpose. The CPT itself had confirmed this in its earlier visit to Greece.

Across almost all detention facilities, detainees were not informed of their rights in a language they understood, both during their arrest and – where applicable – during their subsequent trial: In addition, many were forced to sign documents in Greek, clearly unaware of their content. Later, in some cases, these documents were used as incriminating evidence against them and helped prepare their deportation orders. In the majority of cases, those detained were not shown the so-called Hellenic Police Information Bulletin, which contains – in two different versions and in 14 languages – a list of rights of detainees and deportees.

In May, the General Police Directorate of Attica (GADA) Holding Centre held 207 people, even though it was intended for a maximum number of 80. According to the Ombudsman, the excessively prolonged periods of detention (often for more than six months) of asylum-seekers there held in highly unhygienic conditions, were enough to draw the conclusion that the Greek authorities were violating the Constitution; Law 2778/1999 (Correctional Code) and 2910/2001 (on the entry and stay of aliens); and

all relevant torture and inhuman and degrading treatment provisions of international law, including Article 3 of the ECHR.

In June, the detention centre on Asklipiou Street in Piraeus had 18 detainees, 11 of whom had been in detention awaiting deportation for 3 to 11 months in violation of Article 44(3) of the new Law 2910/01. The conditions under which visitors could communicate with the detainees were unacceptable: a detainee could talk to a visitor from behind bars in a corridor, surrounded by other detainees, and in the presence of police officers standing a few steps away. Responding to the persistent calls of the Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) and the Greek Ombudsman, in late July, the General Secretariat of the Attica Region examined the Piraeus detention centre files, including the files of another 59 detainees elsewhere, and ordered their release.

### Religious Intolerance

There were incidents of religious discrimination at all levels.

◆ The Medical Military Unit of Arta's canteen was scheduled as the location for a separate 14 December oath-giving ceremony for two Catholic Christians and three Muslims. They were officially segregated from their fellow conscripts, and were not permitted to take part in the official parade with all the rest due to the difference in their religion.

◆ In September, the Jehovah's Witnesses protested before the Ministry of Education and the Ombudsman's Office against an incident that allegedly took place at the Nea Mesimvria High School (Prefecture of Thessaloniki) where the teacher, Xanthi Albanaki, had shown her third grade students a video tape presenting their religion in a pejorative manner.

◆ On 4 December, 14 Pentecostal believers were tried for proselytism, following their formal application to obtain a license to run a house of worship. However, as a

result of the international outcry that the case generated they were acquitted.

### National Minorities

#### *Turkish Minority*

The word "Turkish" still created difficulties for those people who used it.

◆ On 6 June, the court of first instance in the County of Rodopi rejected the application of 42 women belonging to the Turkish minority, who were requesting permission to create an organization named Union of Turkish Women in Rodopi.

◆ On 25 January 2002, the Komotini Court of Appeals once again rejected the application for registration of the Turkish Union of Xanthi.

At the Komotini Celal Bayar minority high school, due to problems on the part of both Governments, Turkish teachers taught mathematics, physics and chemistry in Turkish using Greek textbooks. This contributed significantly to the poor level of education of minority children, of whom only a very small number have an adequate knowledge of either Greek or Turkish. The dropout rate in the Komotini minority school vividly reflected the difficulties minority education faced and the fact that students were poorly prepared for life at these schools. After 2000-2001 academic year, only 26% of students successfully completed the first year of secondary education; 30% did not pass and needed to retake the final exams in September; 44% dropped out, 7% of whom as a result of poor attendance. Approximately one out of five students who start the first year at the school, was able to reach the third year of secondary education (which was compulsory), and only one out of three of those who reached the third year, completed it.

#### *Macedonian Minority*

Greek authorities continued to deny the existence of the Macedonian minority and repress Macedonian activists, amidst almost

complete silence and even outright hostility towards that minority in Greek political life, media and society. Sometimes Greece's elaborate efforts to avoid international references to a Macedonian minority in Greece either failed (as in the case of the 2000 ECRI report), or succeed only partially (as in the case of the 2001 UN CERD concluding observations and recommendations).

Even the use of Macedonian first names was discouraged. In the rare cases when, despite the prevailing hostility, parents tried to give their children Macedonian names, the civil servants who are Orthodox priests refused to do so and equivalent Greek names were arbitrarily imposed on such children. At the same time the recovery of Macedonian and Bulgarian last names forcefully converted into their Greek equivalents in the 1920s and 1930s, was made impossible by the Greek authorities who deliberately harassed those individuals making such demands. The Greek Ombudsman asserted that during the first attempt to recover a Bulgarian name, the request was rejected and the individual was harassed. This was the case of Nicholas Stoidis, who applied to change his name and reinstate his grandfather's family name Stojanov, which had been forcefully "Hellenized" in 1913.

In 1990-1994 the Greek courts repeatedly denied registration to an organization called the "Home of Macedonian Civilization" (*Stegi Makedonikou Politismou*). Its appeal before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg was successful, and on 10 July 1998, Greece was found in violation of Article 11 of the European Convention protecting the freedom of association. Ever since then the Stegi has tried to register its claim, but the Florina Bar Association kept finding excuses for not appointing a lawyer to deal with the registration, despite eager entreaties by the Ombudsman. The Bar Association's refusal to appoint a lawyer was used as a pretext by the local courts for acting in the same manner.

### *Roma Minority*

In May 2001, Interior Minister Vaso Papatreou announced a comprehensive Plan of Action for the Roma of Greece. The new programme rests essentially on two pillars: the “infrastructure” pillar, which primarily addresses the housing problem; and the “services” pillar consisting of programmes to be carried out either by the competent central administration agencies (such as education and vocational training programmes) or by the local authorities (e.g. cultural and health programmes).

The housing problem of the Roma population in Greece was particularly acute even in the so-called “model settlements” designed by the Government. The Ghonou settlement (Thessaloniki) – sheltering the 2,500 Romani tent dwellers, who, in 1998, were evicted from Evosmos in Thessaloniki – was the first serious effort by the Greek State to provide accommodation to homeless Romani families.

Even there, however, Roma have been experiencing problems that are typical of other “non-model” settlements: insufficient space, partial lack of electricity or huge electricity bills, insufficient water supply, inadequate means of communication such as telephones, poor medical service and access to schools. In spite of the many reports to the Ombudsman, most of the problems were not solved as of early 2002. It was thus clear from this that if “model settlements” have such problems, one can easily imagine the extent and nature of problems that regular Roma settlements are faced with.

Worst of all were those consequences faced by the Roma when their property was set to be demolished and they subsequently faced eviction. This was generally due to the fact that they usually resided on land – either privately or publicly owned – that did not belong to them.

◆ On 29 August, a bulldozer and a dump truck from the Municipality of Patras demolished four sheds in the Glykada Riganokam-

pos Roma settlement of Patras, without even removing the belongings of the sheds’ owners who were all absent at the time. Konstantinos Georgopoulos, a 42-year-old Rom who was present in the settlement, and whose shed was adjacent to those of his son which were razed down, died as a result of the a heart condition, apparently aggravated by immense psychological stress he experienced during the demolition.

◆ In August, those non-Roma inhabitants of the Ano Liosia (near Athens) settlement who suffered from the flood and earthquake disasters entered their comfortable new apartments offered to them by the municipality. At the same time the area’s 200 Romani families who lived next to a garbage dump were subjected to intensified harassment by the local authorities.

◆ On 13 September, the municipality of Aspropyrgos (west of Athens) demolished the sheds of half a dozen Roma residing there without authorization. This event followed the demolition on 14 July 2000 of most of the Aspropyrgos huts, in the presence of the Mayor of Aspropyrgos and the police. This action was qualified as illegal by the Ombudsman who, in early 2001, appealed to the courts and regional and national administration to sanction the mayor. However, these authorities remained silent, thus, encouraging the mayor to repeat his deed in September.

Surveys made in many Romani settlements indicated that the percentage of illiteracy among Roma was staggering. According to a survey conducted by D.E.P.O.S., only 23% of the Romani children enrolled in secondary schools had ever been to the school and only 4.3% of the ones who had started school continued to attend it. Similarly, only 21% of primary school Roma children had been to school and only 13% of the ones who started, continued to attend. A study on 10 Roma settlements within the Comprehensive Programme of

Action in the Corinthia Prefecture claimed that only 106 out of the 225 children in Examilia, were registered at school for the 2001-2002 school year. In Zevgolio, only 90 out of the 263 children were registered.

Against the background of this discouraging data came the statements of the Greek delegation to the 2001 OSCE Human Rights Implementation Meeting, according to which the dropout rate for Roma schoolchildren had fallen from 75% for the pre-1996 period to 25% for the year 2000. Yet, data from various localities showed that these estimates were, if anything, vastly exaggerated.

### **Citizenship and Statelessness**

The issue of Greece's stateless persons of non-ethnic Greek origin remained unresolved despite the introduction of Law 2910/2001. Article 69 (6) of the law stipulated that anyone born before 1984 to a mother who was a Greek citizen at the time of birth, automatically becomes a Greek citizen from the day of the request.

Even though the procedure was successfully applied in ascertaining the citizenship of children with ethnic Greek parents, it did not help Sezgin Durgut, a stateless person, who accordingly applied for citizenship directly after the respective law came into force (on 5 June 2001), but only after multiple reports to the Ombudsman, did the authorities agree to grant him citizenship at the beginning of 2002. At the same time, however, many Greeks who were deprived of citizenship on the basis of the now abolished Article 19 of the Citizenship Code were not reinstated as citizens by the end of the year.

### **Intolerance, Xenophobia, Racial Discrimination and Hate Speech**

Throughout the year it became evident that the police and society in general were willing to tolerate racism and anti-Semitism in Greece.

◆ On 10 January, a Misdemeanor Court in Athens composed of three members postponed for the seventh time the trial of six members of the neo-Nazi organization Chrysi Avgghi (Golden Dawn), who in 1996 had inflicted serious bodily harm on four members of the Trotskyite Workers Socialist Party. The trial was rescheduled for 18 September 2001. In September the trial was postponed yet again for 26 April 2002.

◆ The police carried out several racially motivated, "blanket" raids such as the one on the Roma settlement of N. Alikarnassos in Crete.

Greek media were also actively engaged in the dissemination of hate speech especially against the Roma and Albanians.

◆ On 6 October *To Vima* claimed that the Zeyfiri, Menidi and Ano Liosia suburbs of Athens – populated mainly by Roma – were portrayed as "virtual havens for criminals."

The media were also behind the circulation of anti-Semitic "news" in Greece such as "4,000 Jews had been warned and did not go to their offices on 11 September, the day of the terror attack in New York."

### **Asylum Seekers and Immigrants**

There was a substantial increase in the number of asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants arriving in Greece during the year. This resulted in tougher policies and attitudes of the Greek authorities, often acting in violation of the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the new Recommendation of the Council of Europe. The UNHCR's Greece publicly confirmed this fact. Moreover, on 8 November, Greece and Turkey signed a Protocol allowing Greece to return immigrants from third countries who had entered its territory via Turkey, and for Turkey to do the same with any immigrants entering via Greece.

The harsh policy towards asylum seekers and immigrants remained unchanged, despite the fact that more than 75% of the

approximately 7,000 aliens, who had been detained by the Hellenic Coast Guard since the beginning of 2001, came from countries that are generally known to broadly violate human rights such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Sierra Leone.

Even after the introduction of Law 2910/2001, the Greek state fell short of fulfilling its responsibilities due to permanent misinterpretation and misapplication of the laws. By the year's end, most of the country's 600,000-1,000,000 undocumented immigrants remained without documents despite the 1997 legalization initiative on the part of the Greek authorities to solve that problem. In a special report in December on the problems resulting from the application of Law 2910/2001, the Greek Ombudsman's Office criticized the Ministry for Internal Affairs, Public Administration and Decentralization for the fact that it had not processed 600 pending applications for residence permits on humanitarian grounds, which had been received initially by the Ministry of Public Order for more than six months earlier. The Ombudsman defined the "action" of the Ministry of the Interior as a policy of silent denial of some of the functions, which the latter was obliged to perform.

The immigrants, most of whom had been living in Greece for over 20 years, comprised a group of Egyptians, Chinese and Pakistanis who had come to Greece on the basis of international agreements; employees of companies founded on the basis of the Law on Foreign Investment; and family members of Greek citizens who have come from Africa on passports issued by the Greek Embassy. 2001 was fraught with stories such that of the undocumented migrant from Ghana, James Deboa, who on 5 April attempted to commit suicide in desperation of his situation. He had been held in detention in the Polygiros Halkidiki (Northern Greece) police station for two months awaiting deportation. He was unable to pay for an air ticket to

Ghana, and NGOs, several fellow countrymen and his country's embassy were refusing to lend him the money.

Apart from the terrible conditions in detention and holding centres in Greece, the biggest problems that undocumented aliens arriving in the country faced was the fact that the Greek authorities often resorted to dishonesty in order to deny them their rights.

◆ 36-year-old Zarema Bekmourzaeva from Chechnya, mother of three young children, had obtained a Schengen visa from the Greek Embassy in Moscow. With that visa Ms Bekmourzaeva entered Norway and submitted an asylum application on 18 April, which was later transferred to the Greek authorities on the basis of Article 5(2) and (4) of the Dublin Convention. On 5 October the Greek authorities claimed that Ms Bekmourzaeva had denied herself the right to apply for asylum by signing a note of refusal in both English and Russian. She denied having signed anything in Russian. However, even if the statement by the Greek asylum authorities that Ms Bekmourzaeva had already relinquished her right to apply for asylum was correct, this should not have prevented her from reapplying on the basis of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Greek President's decree 61/1999. After 10 days and two deportation attempts, which Ms Bekmourzaeva passively resisted, she was taken to the Women's Detention Centre in Amygdaleza.

◆ Rasul Kawa, a Kurd from Iraq, had entered Greece in 1997. After numerous travails Mr Kawa made use of the possibility under the new Law on Immigrants 2910/2001, according to which all undocumented immigrants – regardless of their current status – were given the chance to legalize their stay in Greece if they could prove that they had already been in Greece for one year. Even though the temporary residence card that he was subsequently given was



valid until 16 January 2002, in September Mr Kawa was arrested and detained at Athens airport on his way back from Syria where he had met up with his family. This was done on the basis of an administrative deportation order against him, which proscribed him from entry into the country, because he had been placed on an "Undesirable Persons' List", and on the basis of his previous conviction, for which he had already served his prison sentence. On 11 November 2001, Mr Kawa was sent to Cyprus and from there to Damascus, Syria, a country amicable towards Saddam Hussein's regime – a fact that made his compulsory return to Iraq very likely.

### Women's Rights

Despite the creation of anti-trafficking initiatives at international and regional levels, as well as in bilateral and multilateral agreements among European States, Greece has failed to take the measures necessary to tackle its own trafficking problems. The Government has essentially pursued a "crime control" approach to trafficking. The U.S. State Department report released on July 12 gave Greece the lowest rating possible – along with Burma, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Turkey – for failing to combat trafficking, protect victims, or at the very least publicly acknowledge that trafficking in Greece was a problem.

The main concerns included the lack of comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation; the small number of prosecutions for trafficking under existing criminal laws; lack of witness protection programmes for trafficked victims to facilitate their participation in prosecutions; absence of government-sponsored services for trafficked women, including shelter, medical care, psychological support, and assistance for other basic needs; on-going detention and prosecution of trafficking victims; and even continuing complicity of police officers in the trafficking of women.

The new law 2910/2001 on immigrants and refugees did not mention trafficking in women, and had no specific provisions regulating immigrant women obtaining visas for legal employment in the entertainment sector. The absence of any mechanism for women to enter Greece for legal employment as dancers, barmaids, and other jobs in the entertainment sector, left immigrant women extremely vulnerable to traffickers upon entry into Greece.

The low number of prosecutions under existing criminal laws combined with the absence of comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation in Greece made it difficult to determine how many police officers were complicit in the trafficking of immigrant women. The first annual report of the Internal Affairs Bureau of the Greek police, issued in February, recorded 146 charges made against 74 police officers. Approximately half of the charges involved police complicity in activities related to undocumented migrants. Such activities included granting residence permits to undocumented immigrants and various degrees of involvement in the so called "prostitution rings." It was often the case that as soon as police corruption cases were made public, the facts often lead to evidence of complicity in the trafficking in women for forced prostitution. The Greek media routinely reported on police involvement in offences that were not officially called "trafficking" under the Greek Criminal Code, but under close review revealed police complicity in trafficking.

### Rights of the Child

On paper Greece had ample legislation protecting the rights of the child. In practice, however, Greece rarely implemented and enforced these laws. This was most evident in the area of education, where there were compulsory education laws but these were not enforced; in the area of juvenile justice, where safeguards to protect minors during arrest and deten-



tion were not followed; and in the area of child labour, where 5,800 children aged between 2 and 15 worked on the streets every day, despite the existence of laws prohibiting child labour. Of these 5,800 children, 67 % did not attend school at all and another 13 % attended school only occasionally.

In March 2001, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) recommended that Greece pursue multilingual and multicultural education in its schools. Not only did the Greek Government take no steps to enforce these recommendations and teach Romani, Turkish, Macedonian, Albanian and other immigrant languages, but also did not help in any way alleviate the racism and xenophobia that plagued Greek schools. A Euro-barometer survey conducted in spring 2001 in all 15 EU countries showed that 44% of Greeks, aged between 15-24 years, thought that the number of foreigners in Greece was too large (vs. 29 % who thought the same throughout all the EU countries); an additional 25% expressed the opinion that they wanted foreigners to be deported (vs. 8% for the EU).

In this atmosphere, immigrant children were subjected to assimilationist "intercultural" education like the one carried out at the 76<sup>th</sup> Elementary School of Athens (in the Patisia neighborhood), where more than half of the students were foreigners – mostly Albanians and Africans. These students started school every day with a morning Orthodox Christian prayer. Moreover, it was frequently reported that immigrants, including immigrant children, were christened Orthodox and assumed common Greek names, in an obvious effort to get a better chance in a society that has been exhibiting xenophobia and has traditionally promoted – if not directly imposed – the assimilation of minorities.

In 2001, more than 50 alien minors, aged between 12-17, applied for residence permits at the municipalities of the prefec-

ture of Athens. These children all lived essentially by themselves.

◆ Gendi (17) from Albania, resided and worked in Mesolongi. He left his parents in Albania and had been working in the agricultural sector. His employer did not want to give him his revenue stamps because he was a minor, OGA (Agricultural Insurance) could not give him a certificate, and the Centre for Immigrants did not even allow him to submit an application form because of his age.

The fate of minors was relieved when a few days before the 2 August deadline for the legalization of undocumented migrants the State reverted its policy and allowed children above 15 to legalize their presence. However, it was too late for most of them to do this.

Most experts on child abuse in Greece conceded that there are approximately 4,000 new cases of child abuse each year. They even believe that the actual number is much larger due to underreporting of cases. Every year some 100 children die as a result of mistreatment within the family. In addition, there is a drastic shortage of social workers in the Prefectures in Greece, which prevents social institutions from adequately protecting children who have been abused. As of the end of 2001, there was one social worker for approximately every 70,000 inhabitants, while in Western Europe the number was one for every 2,500 inhabitants.

Sexual abuse of children was also a serious problem, despite the threat of criminal prosecution. Against the background of sexual abuse as a taboo subject and its being underreported, a study by the Institute of Child's Health, based on a sample of 743 students, found that 17% of the girls and 7% of the boys had been sexually abused. The average age for when abuse commenced was 11.5 years of age, and usually carried out by someone at least five years older. Therapy was not offered as an

alternative to a penal sentence for juvenile sexual offenders, thus limiting the possibilities of rehabilitation.

◆ In November 2001, a court in Drama publicly tried a 13-year-old female defendant, forced into prostitution by her mother. The court did not secure the presence of a special juvenile judge as required by law. In addition, the media were very intrusive in their coverage of the case, as well as

in the case of another 13-year-old, an alleged victim of sexual abuse. Later in November, a third case of alleged sexual abuse of a 13-year-old minor by her teacher got similar publicity. The absence of sanctions against persons, who discloses the identity of sexually abused minors, enables the repetition of such phenomena and leads to the impunity of the perpetrators of sexual abuse of children.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Based on the upcoming Greek Helsinki Monitor/Minority Rights Group - Greece report, *Human Rights in Greece: Joint Annual Report for 2001-2002*. For details and sources of information, see the original report at [www.greekhelsinki.gr](http://www.greekhelsinki.gr)

<sup>2</sup> See [www.freedomhouse.org/research/survey2002.htm](http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/survey2002.htm)

<sup>3</sup> *Dougoz v. Greece*, Judgment and Decision of 6 March 2001,

<sup>4</sup> *Peers v. Greece*, Judgment and Decision of 19 April 2001.