

**EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF SOCIAL RIGHTS  
COMITE EUROPEEN DES DROITS SOCIAUX**



8 October 2004

**Collective Complaint No. 15/2003  
European Roma Rights Center v. Greece**

**Case Document No. 8**

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM  
THE EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTER (ERRC)  
ON THE MERITS**

**registered at the Secretariat on 8 October 2004**





1386 Budapest 62, P.O. Box 906/93, Hungary  
Phone: (36-1) 413-2200; Fax: (36-1) 413-2201  
E-mail: [ccahn@errc.org](mailto:ccahn@errc.org)  
<http://errc.org>

8 October 2004

Mr. Regis Brillat  
Secretariat General  
Directorate General of Human Rights -- DG II  
Secretariat of the European Social Charter  
The Executive Secretary  
Council of Europe  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex  
France

Fax: (33 3) 88 41 37 00

Dear Mr. Brillat,

Attached please find written responses, as provided by ERRC partner organisations in Greece, to the questions posed by the Committee to the ERRC. Attached please also find a table detailing actions undertaken in individual settlements, also provided by ERRC partner organisations. We would be grateful if you would provide these to the Committee. We will also bring paper copies for the President, as well as for the Greek government delegation, for Monday's hearing.

Thank you in advance for all efforts.

Sincerely,

Claude Cahn  
Programmes Director

**ANSWERS BY ERRC PARTNER ORGANISATION GREEK HELSINKI  
MONITOR (GHM) AND COORDINATED ORGANIZATIONS AND  
COMMUNITIES  
FOR ROMA HUMAN RIGHTS IN GREECE (SOKADRE)**

**TO THE QUESTIONS ADDRESSED TO THE ERRC AND TO THE GREEK  
GOVERNMENT BY THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF SOCIAL RIGHTS:**

- 1. Please provide information on the estimated number of Roma in Greece, settled and itinerant, and as a percentage of the total population.**

In the Greek census, there are no questions on ethnicity, language or religion; hence no official figures exist for Roma or any other minority. Greek state estimates vary widely from 250,000-300,000<sup>1</sup> down to 63,000.<sup>2</sup> NGOs estimate Roma population at about 300,000-350,000, i.e. around 3% of the total population.

- 2. Please provide information on the percentage of settled Roma whose housing needs have been met, and on the percentage of itinerant Roma whose housing needs have been met.**

No official statistics are available. It is known that there are no housing facilities for itinerant Roma created anywhere for the – small in any case -- population of Roma who maintain an itinerant or nomadic lifestyle, Ministerial Decision No.23641/3/7/2003 [hereafter "MD"] notwithstanding. Among settled Roma, it is estimated that around half live in what can be considered as adequate housing.

- 3. Please provide information on how many “camping sites/settlement sites” are available for itinerant Roma.**

No such sites meeting the criteria of the MD exist. The state DEPOS agency’s 1999 study found 8,800 itinerant Roma mostly camping in sub-standard settlements inhabited by settled Roma.

- 4. Please provide information on the number of Roma who are currently living in sub-standard housing/settlements.**

No official statistics are available. If one considers sub-standard all housing not meeting the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights criteria for adequate housing, then it is estimated that about 100,000 Roma live in sub-standard conditions. It should be noted that the state has already announced that it will give 9,000 housing loans to Romani families living in sub-standard conditions (which should correspond to over 50,000 Roma), and it is known that numerous Romani families have not applied for loans, for the most part apparently because they fear that they will not be able to repay such loans.

---

<sup>1</sup> See document by the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government (EETAA), *Integrated Action Plan for the Social Integration of the Greek Gypsies (Olokliromeno Programma Drasis gia tin Koinoniki entaxi ton Ellinon Tsinganon)*, Athens: April 2001, p 5.

<sup>2</sup> See Greek Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization letter to GHM Ref No 26477 of July 10, 2003.

**5. Please provide information on any significant improvements to the living conditions or relocation to better settlements for any of the communities cited in the ERRC's submission.**

In its Third Report on Greece, published in June 2004, the Council of Europe's European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) noted:

*"67. ECRI notes with concern that since the adoption of its second report on Greece, the situation of the Roma in Greece has remained fundamentally unchanged and that overall they face the same difficulties – including discrimination - in respect of housing, employment, education and access to public services. As concerns housing in particular, there still remain numerous Roma camps removed from all infrastructure in which the Roma live under unacceptable conditions. This is true, for example, of the Aspropyrgos camp near Athens. At the end of 2002 the Greek authorities informed the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe that "all necessary measures have been taken in order that the Roma/Gypsy settlement of Aspropyrgos is provided with all public facilities"<sup>3</sup>. Having visited the spot, it can nevertheless be ascertained that in October 2003 the people living in this camp had not been re-housed and the authorities had still not provided them with access to running water or electricity. Moreover, they are under constant threat of expulsion without any alternative accommodation being offered to them. The Spata camp near Athens is clearly situated on a giant waste site covered only by a layer of earth a few centimetres high. Roma that were expelled from their camps were resettled in prefabricated houses at Spata by the authorities. This camp is still not connected to electricity or running water, three years after the relocation. This situation poses inter alia serious health problems, particularly for the children who live in the camp."<sup>4</sup>*

Deputy Minister of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization Athanasios Nakos, stated on 25 June 2004: *"All of us remember the commitments made in 1996, to the effect that within ten years, no Gypsy will be living in a tent. Unfortunately today, 8 years later, the everyday reality of the Greek Gypsies belies, in the most unequivocal manner, those commitments. (...) In the field of housing and infrastructure, the steps that were made are small. It can also be said that the intervention in the sectors of education, health, employment, culture and sports was minimal or non-existent. In light of the above, today's situation of the Greek Gypsies and the problems they face daily, do not make us proud. Reports by international organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) describe the situation with dark colors."<sup>5</sup>*

In an appendix we list the 27 settlements referred in the submission and the (almost invariable absence of any) improvement in each.

**6. As regards forced evictions: please provide recent statistics on the number of Roma forcibly evicted from settlements or land they occupy.**

ECRI's Third Report on Greece notes as follows:

<sup>3</sup> See Report by Mr Alvaro Gil-Robles, Commissioner for Human Rights, on his visit to the Hellenic Republic from 2 to 5 June 2002, CommDH(2002)5

<sup>4</sup> The report is available at [http://www.coe.int/T/E/human\\_rights/Ecri/I-ECRI/2-Country-by-country\\_approach/Greece/Greece\\_CBC\\_3.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/Ecri/I-ECRI/2-Country-by-country_approach/Greece/Greece_CBC_3.asp#TopOfPage)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.mpa.gr/article.html?doc\\_id=464049](http://www.mpa.gr/article.html?doc_id=464049)

*“68. ECRI is concerned over allegations that forcible collective evictions of Roma families have taken place without any resettlement alternative being proposed. ECRI finds especially alarming reports to the effect that some of these evictions are unlawful and/or are followed by immediate destruction of the camps by bulldozer, despite the fact that all the personal possessions of the families remain there.”*

The Greek state’s response to the statement cited above was: *“concerning the statement in the ECRI’s report “that forcible collective evictions of Roma families have been taken place without any resettlement being proposed” we would like to draw your attention to the fact that such incidents, if occurred occasionally, concerned cases of land-grabbing of private or public spaces by the Roma who have been pushed back by virtue of relevant judicial decisions.”*<sup>6</sup>

There are no statistics on forced evictions in Greece, aggregate or disaggregated by ethnicity, and to the best of our knowledge the government is not monitoring this issue. This issue alone is cause for concern. Numerous forced evictions of Roma without the effective provision of alternative adequate housing have taken place in recent years, including in the country’s three main cities’ Romani communities: Aspropyrgos, Spata, Marousi – next to the Olympic Stadium, in Athens; Evosmos, Kalamaria in Thessaloniki; and Riganokampos in Patras.

---

<sup>6</sup> The report is available at [http://www.coe.int/T/E/human\\_rights/Ecri/1-ECRI/2-Country-by-country\\_approach/Greece/Greece\\_CBC\\_3.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/Ecri/1-ECRI/2-Country-by-country_approach/Greece/Greece_CBC_3.asp#TopOfPage)

	<b>Romani communities</b>	<b>Main problems observed</b>	<b>Improvements/relocations carried out, measures implemented, updated information</b>
1	Gerambella, Pyrgos (Peloponnesse)	settlement destroyed following arson attack	None
2	Ano Liosia, Greater Athens	bad living conditions, evictions carried out	None
3	Aspropyrgos, Greater Athens	appalling living conditions, lack of access to water/electricity,	None
		multiple actual or attempted evictions	
4	Aghia Paraskevi, Greater Athens	bad living conditions, lack of access to water/electricity, attempted evictions	None
5	Halandri, Greater Athens	bad living conditions, lack of access to water/electricity	None
6	Marousi, Greater Athens	non-honouring of agreement signed between the Roma and the Mayor	None, monthly subsidy payment delayed; relocation not initiated
7	Nea Alikarnassos, Herakleion, Crete	appalling living conditions, lack of access to water/electricity,	None, municipality prevents relocation of Romani community
		attempted evictions, prevention of relocation	
8	Riganokampos, Patras (Peloponnesse)	appalling living conditions, lack of access to water/electricity, attempted eviction	None
9	Halastra, Greater Thessaloniki	appalling living	The Roma were to be

		conditions, lack of access to water/electricity	provided with 35 prefabricated houses.1
--	--	---	---



10	Nea Kios (Peloponnesse)	bad living conditions	None
11	Karakonero, city of Rhodes,	appalling living conditions, lack of access to water/electricity	None
12	Kalamaria, Greater Thessaloniki	settlement destroyed following alleged illegal eviction	None, court case served without Roma or NGO testimony
13	Spata, Greater Athens	inadequate living conditions, lack of access to water/electricity	None; residents with no tenure certificates as settlement illegal
14	Echedoros, Greater Thessaloniki	roads in disrepair	150,000 Euros earmarked for paving roads 2
15	Menemeni, Greater Thessaloniki	unsuitable location	Not known
16	Mavrika, Karditsa (central Greece)	unsuitable location	None
17	Mesolonghi, (mainland Greece)	lack of support from local authorities	Greek Ombudsman ruled settlement illegal; relocation necessary. <sup>3</sup>
18	Akti Dymaion, Patras (Peloponnesse)	appalling living conditions, lack of access to water/electricity	None
19	Herakleia, Serres (northern Greece)	bad living conditions, lack of adequate access to water/electricity	None
20	Bournazi, Katerini (northern Greece)	appalling living conditions, lack of access to water/electricity	Not known
21	Zefyri, Greater Athens	partly inadequate living conditions	100,000 Euros earmarked for infrastructure work. <sup>4</sup>
22	Komotini, (north-eastern Greece)	appalling living conditions, lack of adequate access to water/electricity	September 3, 2004, announcement of future relocation. <sup>4</sup>
23	Lehaina, (Peloponnesse)	bad living conditions	None
24	Kalamata / Messini, (Peloponnesse)	bad living conditions	160 prefabricated houses earmarked <sup>1</sup> ; no relocation initiated to date

25	Tripolis, (Peloponnesse)	bad living conditions	66 prefabricated houses earmarked <sup>1</sup> ; no relocation initiated to date
26	Serres, (northern Greece)	bad living conditions	Relocation not completed <sup>5</sup>
27	Argostoli, (island of Cephalonia)	appalling living conditions	None

### NOTES

Communities Nos 11, 24 according to the 1996 National Policy Framework for Greek Gypsies, were to be relocated "immediately". Three others -nos 15, 16 and Theba (central Greece)- were also be relocated immediately. They were indeed relocated many years later to, and are still in, unsuitable locations or face significant problems.

### SOURCES

- <sup>1</sup> Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization letter to GHM, dated July 10, 2003, Ref. No. 26477
- <sup>2</sup> September 9, 2004 Ministry of Interior Press Release, available in Greek at [http://www.mpa.gr/article.html?doc\\_id=477541](http://www.mpa.gr/article.html?doc_id=477541)
- <sup>3</sup> Greek Ombudsman's Findings Reports 14178/27.9.2000, 14116/26.9.2000, 8332/18.6.2001; memorandum to the Prefect 19-1-2004
- <sup>4</sup> *Apogeumatini Athens based daily newspaper, dated September 3, 2004.*
- <sup>5</sup> Macedonian Press Agency on September 24, 2004  
[http://www.mpa.gr/article.html?doc\\_id=482377](http://www.mpa.gr/article.html?doc_id=482377)  
reported on a fatal incident among Roma living in the settlement