

2008 OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
Working Session 4: Rule of Law - Prevention of Torture

Statement of Rainbow – Organisation of the Macedonian minority of Greece

Thank you Mr Moderator.

Ladies and Gentlemen, during the dictatorship in Greece more than 30 years ago, the Ministry of Justice of the Military Junta ordered the Public Prosecutor to identify and investigate Greek citizens who called for freedom of expression, personal liberties and the establishment of a democratic system. Such citizens were accused of being “anti-Greek” elements and “traitors” and accordingly they were jailed for their so-called “crimes against the state. These methods were not something unique to the Greek dictatorship. They were and are present in every totalitarian regime.

Thirty years later, in 2008, Greece is no longer a dictatorship, but is a full member of the international community. Despite this, in April 2008 a Deputy in the Greek Parliament, Mr Plevris of the political party LAOS, a well known and openly anti-Semitic and anti-American, anti-European political party, made a submission to the Ministry of Justice accusing the European Free Alliance – Rainbow, the political party of the Macedonian minority of Greece being “anti-Greek” and “traitors”.

Unfortunately the Ministry of Justice has referred the allegations to the Public Prosecutor at the Supreme Court and requested this office to conduct an investigation of European Free Alliance – Rainbow, a member of a fourth largest political group in the European Parliament. This political party calls for freedom of expression, personal liberties and the strengthening of the democratic system, including the recognition of human rights and fundamental freedoms for ethnic and linguistic minorities.

Does this sound like a group of “anti-Greek traitors”? No of course not. But we fear that the Public Prosecutor might invoke 138 of the Criminal Code and accuse members of the minority of treason. The punishment for this crime is life imprisonment.

Mr Moderator, the real purpose behind this investigation is to torment and harass Macedonian minority activists. In another more recent example of harassment, a few weeks ago the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues made an official visit to Greece. Among the many meetings that the UN delegation held, it also met with a group of Macedonian minority activists in the town of Edessa/Voden in Northern Greece. Following the conclusion of the meeting, the Chief of Police in the town visited members of the Macedonian minority and intimidated them by asking a series of questions such as:

- Why did you meet the UN Expert?
- What did you say to the UN Expert?
- Who was the organizer of this meeting, etc, etc?

This was yet attempt on the part of the state authorities to intimidate Macedonian minority activists.

Mr Moderator, the use of more sophisticated form of physiological torture may not be as horrific as physical beating as we have heard in other situations however the effect is the same. This form of torture has the effect of discouraging minority activists from speaking out against undemocratic policies of the government.

We hope that in future if the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities should visit Greece, minority activists will not be subject to harassment on the part of the state authorities for speaking out against Greece's treatment of its Macedonian minority.

I thank you for your attention.