

**2008 OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING**  
**Working Session 5: National Minorities**

*Statement of the Home of Macedonian Culture*

My statement today shall focus on the rights of Macedonian national minority of Greece.

In line with Greek nationalist ideology, successive Greek governments have failed to acknowledge the existence of a distinct Macedonian ethnic identity and Macedonian language. The attitude of Greek authorities to the very concept of minority rights deserves particular attention. For example, a few years ago an official Greek government representative, when asked before a Council of Europe Committee why Greece has yet to ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, stated that Greece considers that the Framework Convention was “a useful tool for the disintegration of the Soviet Union” and for the “bringing down of the Milosevic regime” but is irrelevant today. The Greek representative also noted that if Greece were to ratify the Framework Convention, “there would be no improvement for the man on the street just more work for the Greece in the Council of Europe.”

While the Greek government does not exist recognise of a Macedonian minority, it does recognise the existence of a small group of persons who identify as such. However according to the Greek government because they are so small in numbers, they cannot be considered a minority. One might ask, how does the Greek government know the size of the Macedonian minority? The approach of the government is to equate the size of this group with the number of votes received by the European Free Alliance – Rainbow, the political party of the Macedonian Minority of Greece. It should be noted that ethnic Macedonians vote for many parties and not just exclusively for EFA-Rainbow.

Moreover, the most internationally accepted method of measuring the number of persons belonging to a linguistic or national minority is not through electoral results but through a national census. Unfortunately questions of linguistic and ethnic identity are excluded from Greek census. We strongly encourage the Greek government to make this possible at the next census in 2011.

Even if the results of a future census were to show that the Macedonian minority only numbers a few thousand persons they would still be entitled to cultural rights. Of a total population of 70,000,000 people in Turkey, the Greek orthodox minority numbers less than 3,000 people. Of course this minority is no less deserving of basic linguistic rights, which by the way they already enjoy.

The contradiction of the Greece's position on the existence or non-existence of a Macedonian minority is found in various discriminatory laws that have been enacted by the Greek state.

One such law concerns Macedonian political refugees who still to this day are denied repatriation to Greece. During the Greek Civil War of 1946-1949 thousands of Greek citizens fled the country. Following the end of the war, all those who left Greece during this period were stripped of their citizenship and property.

In 1982 the Greek government passed an amnesty law which declared that political exiles who fled during the Civil War and were stripped of their citizenship are allowed to return provided they are "Greeks by origin". The term "Greeks by genus" is a reference used by the Greek government for all those who identify themselves as ethnic Greeks. Hence, ethnic Macedonians and others who left Greece under the same conditions as the ethnic Greeks and had their citizenship and property confiscated have been excluded from enjoying rights granted under these laws.

Given that ethnic Macedonians predominantly make up this category of people, it is indisputable that they have been the ones targeted by this exclusivist definition. Many of the individuals excluded by these two laws reside in OSCE member states such as the United States of America, Canada and the Republic of Macedonia. The term "Greeks by genus" in this law, which is still in force today, is a violation of the fundamental principle of non-discrimination.

In conclusion Mr Moderator, the Home of Macedonian Culture urges Greece to review these discriminatory laws and practices and afford recognition to its Macedonian minority.

I thank you for your attention.