

**GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR (GHM)**

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**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (Warsaw, 29 September - 10 October 2008)**  
**Working session 7: Tolerance and non-discrimination I (violence against women)**

2 October 2008

**Greece: Written contribution on the ordeal of vulnerable rape victims**

**Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM)** continues to be extremely concerned about the difficulties of rape victims from vulnerable groups (migrants, tourists, Roma, etc.) to effectively report their claims, be swiftly examined by medical personnel and hope for a speedy fair trial, especially if they have to travel to the place of the trial. A related trial that was to be held yesterday, but postponed because of a strike of court clerks, involving two women from Australia and one from Canada who had reported being raped in the summer of 2005, highlights very well the problems victims faced. A text written and interviews given by one of the alleged victims, Canadian **Natalie Karneef**, a writer who created a special blog ahead of the trial (<http://athensrapetrial.blogspot.com/>), are telling. The television interview to **CBC News: Montreal at Six**, in the long and in the short versions, is available at:

[http://www.cbc.ca/video/popup\\_eurovision.html?http://www.cbc.ca/montreal/media/video/newsatsixmontreal/20080924okekenatfull.asx](http://www.cbc.ca/video/popup_eurovision.html?http://www.cbc.ca/montreal/media/video/newsatsixmontreal/20080924okekenatfull.asx)

[http://www.cbc.ca/video/popup\\_eurovision.html?http://www.cbc.ca/montreal/media/video/newsatsixmontreal/20080924okekenat.asx](http://www.cbc.ca/video/popup_eurovision.html?http://www.cbc.ca/montreal/media/video/newsatsixmontreal/20080924okekenat.asx)

The interview to Greek daily "**Kathimerini**" and the text follow.

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**KATHIMERINI**

1 October 2008

**Rape victim slams state system**

[http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/w\\_articles\\_politics\\_100010\\_01/10/2008\\_100942](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/w_articles_politics_100010_01/10/2008_100942)

Greek authorities should push through the necessary reforms to facilitate the process for rape victims seeking justice, the 31-year-old Canadian victim of a sex attack has told Kathimerini after the trial of her alleged attacker was postponed for a third time this week.

"Authorities in Greece should realize that rape victims, after all they have been through, cannot be left waiting indefinitely in order to serve outdated laws," the 31-year-old said after authorities put off the trial of her alleged rapist, a Greek national, due to a strike by court staff.

The woman, a writer from Montreal, traveled to Greece to face in court the man charged with raping her – as well as a Danish woman and two Australians – in Athens in 2005. All the victims

said they had been offered drinks, which turned out to be laced with drugs, by a man who offered them to take them on a tour of the Acropolis.

The 31-year-old, who is engaged to a Canadian of Greek descent, said she had not received any support from Greek authorities and had relied on the help of the Greek Helsinki Monitor, a non-governmental organization. "With the exception of two members of the Greek Helsinki Monitor, no one else has responded to any of my queries over the past year," the woman told Kathimerini.

She added that she had been let down by the police and health workers. "Police said they couldn't do anything and sent me to hospital," the 31-year-old said, adding that three hospitals refused to carry out tests to determine whether there were any drugs in her system. The tests were carried out 24 hours after the attack which gave the substance enough time to leave the woman's system. "What I have learnt about the Greek system is that no one cares about anything or anyone," she said.

The 31-year-old, who has paid about 1,000 euros to visit Greece, said she should be entitled to some sort of compensation, at least to cover her travel costs. "But chiefly I would like confirmation that there will not be a third delay to the trial," she said. The hearing has been delayed twice – once in July due to lack of witnesses and on Monday due to a court workers' strike.

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[Natalie Karneef.com](http://NatalieKarneef.com)

**Monday, July 02, 2007**

### **Speaking Out**

Last February, I went to see a production of the Vagina Monologues at McGill University. They marked an "X" in black marker on my hand as I entered the theatre, but I noticed they were only doing this to some people.

Later, the actors assembled on stage and asked the members of the audience with an X on their hand to stand up. I, as well as about a third of the people in the auditorium, got out of our seats. We represented, they told us, the one out of every three women who has been the victim of gender-based violence. Then they asked everyone who knew someone who had been the victim of gender-based violence to stand, too.

There was nearly no one left sitting down.

I became aware of this sad statistic long ago, but there, standing amongst the others in that room, I realized I was shaking with rage. I wanted to cry, kick and scream as loudly as I was able, but when the audience - led by the actors - began to chant the V-day slogan, "Until the violence stops", I was too choked up to join in.

It was at that moment that I first considered telling this story here. But some of the most important people in my life still didn't know, and I didn't want them finding out through a blog. Bringing it up in casual conversation isn't the easiest, so for the most part, I stayed silent.

Until now.

On June 28<sup>th</sup>, The Gazette printed [this story](#), although my name wasn't used. On June 29<sup>th</sup>, CBC Montreal and Radio-Canada ran their own reports on the 6 o'clock news, revealing my name and identity.

I've always struggled with speaking out. Maybe that's why being a writer was a natural choice for me – a way, some might say, to be heard.

My story began the day after I arrived in Greece, in August, 2005. A man stopped me in the street and asked for directions. We began talking, and I eventually conceded to walking with him around the Acropolis, an area he seemed to know much about. He was friendly and told me he was a pilot for Air France, and that we might run into the stewardesses who worked with him, as they were out shopping. He liked to give tours to visitors to Athens, he said. He was proud of his heritage.

He wanted me to eat with him. Despite the fact that I was eating when we met, and I told him I wasn't hungry, he insisted that I try tiropita, a type of Greek cheese pastry, which he went off and bought. He even shared the pastry with me, so I didn't think I was taking a risk by eating it.

Then he took me to a bar. But by then, my grip on reality had already begun to fade.

I remember the rest of the afternoon in bits and pieces. I woke up in a strange room. He dropped me off at a hostel in a taxi. I passed out in a bunk bed and woke up again, 3 hours later. That's when I realized I had been drugged, and probably raped.

The officers at the first police station I went to that night turned me away, telling me there was nothing they could do. After explaining what happened at another station, I was taken to three hospitals, none of which would examine me. I wasn't examined until 24 hours after the incident, which means that whatever had been put into my system was already gone.

There are no words to describe the following two days. The dream I'd always carried of traveling through Greece alone had become a waking nightmare. Once I came to terms with what might have happened during those lost hours, I had to accept that I wouldn't know for another 3 months if I had been given an STD, or HIV.

In spite of this, I stayed in Greece. I spent a peaceful week in a mountain village with a friend from home and his relatives. I watched the sun rise on Mykonos, and set on Santorini. I saw the most magnificent thunderstorm from a remote island south of Crete, camping on a beach full of hippies, farther away from anywhere than I'd ever been. Despite how it began, the month I spent in Greece remains one of the most magical of my life.

The day I left, the friend I'd traveled with called from Canada and told me that an article had been published saying that Athens police had caught and charged a man for the drugging and raping of 4 women. Two were Australian, one was Danish, and one was Canadian.

The article was printed in The Gazette. In Montreal.

I hadn't truthfully expected the Athenian authorities to contact me, although they said they would if there was any news on the case. I was en route to London, where I planned to live for the next few months. I was stunned, but more than anything, I wanted to put it behind me. And when, that December, I was overjoyed to receive a clean bill of health, I thought I had.

Until almost 2 years later.

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007, I received a phone call from the Greek Embassy in Ottawa. They had a subpoena requesting my attendance as a witness at a trial in Athens, on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007.

Given the apparent lack of concern shown by the Greek law enforcement and medical system at the time of the incident, I was shocked, but glad, to discover that this trial was going ahead. When I signed for the subpoena, I asked how I should go about receiving my ticket and travel information, what the proceedings in court would entail, and how long I was being asked to stay in Athens.

They told me they didn't know. No one seemed to know, in fact, and it took several phone calls, made by my partner's father, who happens to speak fluent Greek, to find someone at the prosecutor's office in Athens who spoke English and was somewhat willing to give me the information I needed.

She told me that it was impossible to say how long the trial would last, and that they couldn't tell me whether I would be cross-examined and blamed for the incident. I could come the day before the trial and find out, but when I pointed out that the trial began on a Monday, meaning I would have to arrive on a Friday, she told me they wouldn't cover my hotel costs for any days preceding the trial.

In fact, I would have to purchase the plane ticket and pay for my accommodations myself. The hotel had to be 2nd class, she added, and she didn't know what that meant, but she could give me a number to call and find out. A number in Greece.

Then, I was to obtain official documents in Greek, attesting to the economy status of my plane ticket and 2<sup>nd</sup>-class hotel, and giving the official Canadian dollar-to-Euro exchange rate for the first day of the trial.

I was to present these documents, and then I would be reimbursed - but not for a minimum of 2 months.

In answer to my concerns about the trial itself, I was told that I wouldn't be given a photo line-up to identify the man, and that the defendant was no longer in custody. I was informed that I would not, aside from a translator in the courtroom, be given any form of assistance or protection during my stay.

After that phone call, I got in touch with as many Canadian officials I could find. It's thanks to them that I've been able to obtain the information I have. But as of this writing, despite a request made by the Department of Justice, the Hellenic Republic Ministry of Justice has refused to front the money for my trip.

Through the Canadian Embassy in Greece, who have been in contact with the prosecutor's office, I've learned that one of the women has already gone through the proceedings. The accused was given 5 and a half years in prison for drugging and sexually assaulting her. He has served 18 months, and is now out on parole. One of the other two women will not be attending the trial, and the other, last I heard, was undecided.

The conditions under which I told the Greek authorities I would participate were denied. I was not willing to travel to Athens for an undetermined length of time, only to walk blindly into a trial where I would, as the Embassy eventually revealed, be cross-examined a lawyer who is, in their words, "of the worst kind". I was not willing to part with my own money for an open ticket and a hotel, and wait at least two months to see it again. And I would not accept their suggestion that I stay in Athens alone, without support or legal assistance of any kind, while the man who did this to

me walks freely in the streets. So while the trial began today, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, in Athens, I am at home, writing this.

Since the story ran in The Gazette on Thursday, complete strangers have come forth with offers of financial and moral support. To them, I am grateful beyond words. Especially because I know that there are far, far worse horrors going on in the world.

But sometimes, we have no choice but to fight our battles. Because for every one who's fighting, there are far more who can't. This is about more than airfare and a hotel bill, and it's about more than just me.

It's about the other 3 women who came forward in this case. And the ones who didn't.

It's about every woman who has traveled to another country and has had this happen to her.

Most importantly, this is about the women it hasn't happened to.

Yet.

A serial rapist is walking the streets of Athens. The Greek government, which represents a country that is a major tourist destination and a part of the European Union, is being given the chance to show that they value and respect the rights of women.

I am doing everything in my power to try to bring this man to justice and prevent him from raping again.

They can do everything in theirs to make sure of it.

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*I have made a request to have this trial postponed in the hopes that the Greek authorities will change their stance. If you would like to voice your concern, here are links to the e-mail addresses of several Greek Embassies and Consulates in Canada:*

General Consulate of Greece in Montreal

[info@grconsulatemtl.net](mailto:info@grconsulatemtl.net)

Embassy of Greece in Ottawa

[embassy@greekembassy.ca](mailto:embassy@greekembassy.ca)

Consulate General of Greece in Toronto

[toronto.consulate@greekembassy.ca](mailto:toronto.consulate@greekembassy.ca)

The Consulate of Greece in Vancouver

[info@vancouver.grconsulate.ca](mailto:info@vancouver.grconsulate.ca)

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