

OSCE IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON THE HUMAN DIMENSION ISSUES

**9 October 2006, Working Session 10, 10:00-13:00
Citizenship and Political Rights**

Presentation of the representative of the Home of Macedonian Culture

Thank you Mr. Moderator.

Since we are talking about citizenship today, I would like to bring to your attention discrimination which exists in Greece today with respect to citizenship.

During the Greek Civil War of 1946-1949, thousands of Greek citizens fled Greece. Following the end of the war, all those who left Greece during this period were stripped of their Greek citizenship and property. In 1982 the Greek government passed an amnesty law (Law 106841) which declared that political exiles who fled during the Civil War and were stripped of their citizenship are allowed to return, providing they are "*Greeks by genus*".

In 1985, Law 1540 was passed in which political exiles who fled during Civil War were allowed to reclaim confiscated property, provided they are "*Greeks by genus*". The term "Greeks by genus" is a reference used by the Greek government for all those who identify themselves as being ethnic Greek. Hence, ethnic Macedonians who are also political refugees and have had their Greek citizenship rescinded and/or properties confiscated are excluded from enjoying the rights granted under these laws, therefore severely questioning the very standing of the laws based on grounds of equity and fairness.

Moreover, the construction of the wording as relating to these laws is not benign, it has clear intent to discriminate against all those who belong to the category of people classified as political refugees and who are not "*Greeks by genus*". 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 and the ones to have suffered the most. The individuals excluded by these two laws mostly reside in the Republic of Macedonia, Australia and Canada.

We believe that the term “*Greeks by genus*” in these two laws, which are still in force today, are in breach of the fundamental principle of non-discrimination and paragraph 31 of the Copenhagen document which states that:

“Persons belonging to national minorities have the right to exercise fully and effectively their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law.”

In light of this, the Greek government must amend this law and end the discrimination against the political refugees from the Greek civil war who are not Greek by ethnicity. In closing I ask for the assistance of the OSCE to assist in this matter and ensure that Greece is fulfilling its commitments to not discriminate against members of ethnic minorities.

I thank you for your attention.