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1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

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GREECE

Greece is a constitutional republic and multiparty parliamentary democracy in which citizens choose their representatives in free and fair elections. The Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) holds the majority of parliamentary seats, and its leader, Constantine Simitis, has been Prime Minister since 1996. The New Democracy Party is the main opposition party. The judiciary is independent.

The national police and security services are responsible for internal security. Civilian authorities maintain effective control of all security forces. The police and security services are subject to a broad variety of restraints. Some members of the police and security forces nevertheless committed human rights abuses.

Greece has a market economy with a large public sector that accounts for some 40 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Residents enjoy a relatively advanced standard of living. Structural adjustment funds from the European Union (EU) account for approximately 4 percent of the country's GDP.

The Government respected the human rights of most citizens; however, problems remained in some areas, although there was some progress in others. Security force personnel sometimes abused suspects, residents, and illegal aliens. The Government continued to take corrective action to relieve severe overcrowding and harsh living conditions in some prisons. Police sweeps resulted in the temporary detention of immigrants under often squalid conditions. There are legal limits on the freedom of association of ethnic minorities. Religious leaders acknowledged further general improvement in government tolerance, but some restrictions on freedom of religion persisted: police continued to detain members of non-Orthodox religions for proselytizing. Alternative service for conscientious objectors now is available, although under conditions more onerous than those experienced by military draftees. The Government sometimes placed human rights monitors, including foreign diplomats, non-Orthodox religious groups, and minority groups under surveillance. Violence against

women and trafficking in women for the purpose of forced prostitution are problems. Discrimination against ethnic minorities remained a problem, although at a lower level than the previous year. The Government formally recognizes only the Muslim minority specified in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Although it reaffirmed individuals' right of self-identification, the Government still refuses to acknowledge formally the existence of non-Muslim groups, principally the Slavophones, under the term "minority." As a result, some individuals who define themselves as members of a minority find it difficult to express their identity freely and to maintain their culture, although problems in this area decreased somewhat during the year.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 -- Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

There were no reports of political or other extrajudicial killings by government officials.

The case of a Romani man killed by police in Partheni, Thessaloniki, in 1998 was not resolved by year's end. A trial of the policemen involved was pending 18 months later.

The 1998 case of a foreign student killed by a policeman is pending before a police disciplinary board. The accused police officer was charged with intentional homicide, and a trial was pending at year's end.

There was no resolution of the cases of seven doctors accused of manslaughter in 1998 in connection with the case of an alleged hostage-taker in an Athens hospital or of a policeman who in 1996 shot and killed a Romani man at a roadblock in Livadia.

In April a woman was killed by a bomb at the Athens Intercontinental Hotel.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Constitution specifically forbids torture, and a 1984 law (which has never been invoked) makes the use of torture an offense punishable by a sentence of 3 years' to life imprisonment; however, security force personnel occasionally abused suspects during arrest and interrogations and abused resident and illegal aliens. The police also abused Roma (see Section 5).

In August a man on Rhodes accused three policemen of beating him while in custody. The three accused officers were charged and await a trial hearing.

The 1998 case of three policemen who allegedly beat two Romani teenagers was pending trial at year's end (see Section 5). The 1996 case of five police officers who beat an Iraklion man remains pending.

Immigrants--mostly Albanian citizens--accused the security forces of physical, verbal, and other mistreatment (including the confiscation and destruction of their documents), particularly during police sweeps in May, June, and July to apprehend illegal immigrants. The detainees were held in squalid conditions. In June an Albanian citizen required 6 days of hospitalization after police reportedly beat him in Athens. The man's identity papers reportedly were confiscated. Also in June, an Albanian citizen reported that the police beat him badly, and that they also shouted ethnic and religious epithets at him, while another alleged that the police shot him in his apartment. At year's end, these cases were still under investigation by the Government.

Numerous anarchist and terrorist groups attacked a wide spectrum of targets, mostly commercial property, during the year, primarily to protest the NATO action in Kosovo. The firebombing of vehicles, drive-by shootings of buildings, and bombings at commercial establishments, mostly late at night, were widespread. A foreign company's office and a consulate in Thessaloniki were the targets of attempted bombings, as were the residences of the Dutch and German Ambassadors in Athens.

In October the Ministry of Public Order opened a Bureau of Internal Affairs to investigate cases of police misbehavior.

Conditions in some prisons remained harsh due to substantial overcrowding and outdated facilities. As of September, the Ministry of Justice reported that the total prison population was 7,511 (of whom 3,388 were foreigners), while the total capacity of the prison system was 4,542.

Non-EU illegal aliens awaiting deportation at the Drapetsona police detention center in Piraeus staged several hunger strikes to protest what was described by a human rights organization as a "lack of adequate exercise, lack of natural daylight, insufficient toilet and bathing facilities, severely limited access to medical treatment, and no access to social services." Poor conditions also were reported at the two other detention centers for illegal aliens.

The Ministry of Justice continued its program to improve prison conditions and expand capacity. A new center for the rehabilitation of narcotics addicts opened late in the year and admitted its first 100 inmates. The center is designed to house 350 inmates and is to cooperate with an organization for combating narcotics (OKANA) to provide detoxification and rehabilitation for inmates.

The Government is inconsistent in permitting prison visits by nongovernmental organizations (NGO's).

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The Constitution requires judicial warrants for all arrests, except during the actual commission of a crime, and the law prohibits arbitrary arrest orders; the authorities respected these provisions in practice. The police must by law bring persons who are arrested on the basis of a warrant or while committing a crime before an examining magistrate within 24 hours. The magistrate must issue a detention warrant or order the release of the detainee within 3 days, unless special circumstances require a 2-day extension of this time limit.

Defendants brought to court before the end of the day following the commission of a charged offense may be tried immediately, under an "expedited procedure." Although legal safeguards, including representation by counsel, apply in speedy procedure cases, the short period of time may inhibit defendants' ability to present an adequate defense. Defendants may ask for a delay to provide time to prepare their defense, but the court is not obliged to grant it. The expedited procedure was used in less than 10 percent of misdemeanor cases; it does not apply in felony cases.

The effective maximum duration of pretrial detention is 18 months for felonies and 9 months for misdemeanors. Defense lawyers assert that pretrial detention is exceedingly long and overused by judges. A panel of judges may grant release pending trial, with or without bail. Pretrial detainees made up 31 percent of those incarcerated, contributing to overcrowding, according to government sources. A person convicted of a misdemeanor and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment or less may, at the court's discretion, pay a fine instead of being imprisoned.

In the early summer, the police conducted large-scale sweeps and temporarily detained large numbers of foreigners under often squalid conditions while determining their residence status (see Section 5).

Exile is unconstitutional, and no cases have been reported since the restoration of democracy in 1974. In a significant step, the Government in 1998 repealed Article 19 of the Citizenship Code, which permitted it to revoke the citizenship of Greek citizens of non-Greek ethnic origin who traveled outside Greece. Between 1955 and 1998, according to then-Minister of Interior Papadopolous, some 60,000 citizens had lost their citizenship under the old law. The new law was not applied retroactively. About 400 individuals who had lost their citizenship in the past under Article 19 continued to reside in Greece. Following the repeal of Article 19, most of these individuals were issued identification documents characterizing them as stateless, but they were permitted to apply to reacquire Greek citizenship. Most of these 400 persons had not had their applications adjudicated by year's end (also see Section 2.d.).

Article 20 of the Citizenship Code, which permits the Government to strip citizenship from those who "commit acts contrary to the interests of Greece for the benefit of a foreign state," remained in force. In the past, this article affected Greek citizens abroad who asserted a "Macedonian" ethnicity. There were no reports of Article 20 being invoked by the Government during the year (also see Section 2.d.).

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for the independence of the judiciary, and it is independent in practice.

The judicial system includes three levels of civil courts, (first instance, appeals, and supreme) and three levels of criminal courts (first instance--divided into misdemeanor and felony divisions, appeals, and supreme), appointed judges, and an examining magistrate system, with trials by judicial panels.

The Constitution provides for public trials, unless the court decides that privacy is required to protect victims and witnesses or the cases involve national security matters.

Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence, the standard of proof beyond a reasonable doubt, the right to present evidence and call witnesses, the right of access to the prosecution's evidence, the right to cross-examine witnesses, and the right to counsel. Lawyers are provided to defendants who are not able to afford legal counsel only in felony cases. Both the prosecution and the defense may appeal.

Defendants who do not speak Greek have the right to a court-appointed interpreter. The low fees paid for such work often result in poor translation. Foreign defendants who depend on these interpreters frequently complain that they do not understand the proceedings of their trials. A non-Greek-speaking Albanian defendant reportedly received a 12-year prison sentence in a trial in which he had no interpreter; the case was under appeal at year's end.

The legal system does not discriminate on the basis of sex, religion, or nationality, with some exceptions: The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs may base its decision on "house of prayer" permit applications on the opinion of the local Orthodox bishop (see Section 2.c.); nonethnic Greek citizens are prohibited legally from settling in a large "supervised zone" near the frontier (although this prohibition is not enforced in practice); and a 1939 law (also not enforced in practice) prohibits the functioning of private schools in buildings owned by non-Orthodox religious foundations.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution prohibits invasion of privacy and searches without warrants, and the law permits the monitoring of personal communications only under strict judicial controls; however, these safeguards do not appear to be effective. The security services continued to monitor human rights groups (see Section 4), non-Orthodox religious groups, minority group representatives, and foreign diplomats who met with such individuals. Human rights activists reported suspicious openings and diversions of mail. As far as is known, the Government took no steps to stop such practices or to prosecute those involved.

Section 2 -- Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the Government generally respected these rights in practice. Legal restrictions on free speech nevertheless remain in force.

Articles of the Penal Code that can be used to restrict free speech and the press include Article 141, which forbids exposing the friendly relations of the Greek state with foreign states to danger of disturbance; Article 191, which prohibits spreading false information and rumors liable to create concern and fear among citizens and cause disturbances in the country's international relations and inciting citizens to rivalry and division, leading to disturbance of the peace; and Article 192, which prohibits inciting citizens to acts of violence or to disturbing the peace through disharmony among them. Those convicted in the past were allowed to convert their convictions into a fine of approximately \$14 (5,000 drachmae) per day.

In a 1997 case, two journalists were convicted of publishing classified government documents; their convictions were under appeal at the Supreme Court at year's end.

In May an editor in Kozani was given on appeal a 5-month suspended sentence and a fine for insulting the prefect-elect in a 1998 article. A court of first instance had previously sentenced the editor to longer jail time and a higher fine. In January another editor, Yannis Tzoumas, was acquitted on appeal of defaming a government minister, and his 4-month prison sentence was voided.

On matters other than the question of ethnic minorities, there is a tradition of outspoken public discourse and a vigorous free press. Satirical and opposition newspapers routinely attack the highest state authorities. Members of ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities freely publish periodicals and other publications, often in their native language. The Constitution allows for seizure (though not prior restraint), by order of the public prosecutor, of publications that insult the President, offend religious beliefs, contain obscene articles, advocate violent overthrow of the political system, or disclose military and defense information. However, seizures have been rare; none occurred during the year.

A dictionary published in 1998 generated several lawsuits from individuals who found certain definitions offensive. A court in Thessaloniki ordered the removal of one definition from future editions of the dictionary and threatened the author with a fine and imprisonment if he did not comply. In December 1998, the Supreme Court overturned the lower court's decision, ruling that the definitions were not offensive and could not be banned.

The Constitution provides that the state exercise "immediate control" over radio and television. Once the state monopoly on radio and television ended in 1989, numerous private stations began operations in an essentially unregulated market while the Government sought to draft and implement legislation on licensing and frequency allocations. The National Radio and Television Council (NRTC) has a decisive role in radio licensing but has only an advisory role in television licensing, where the Ministry of Press and Mass Media has final authority.

A 1995 law, not yet fully implemented, established ownership and technical frequency limits on electronic media; the Government and media outlets disputed application procedures and frequency allocations. In December the Government introduced draft legislation designed to legalize stations operating with pending applications; with more applicants than available frequency spectrum, not all stations will gain licenses. The Government occasionally shuts stations for violating intellectual property rights or interfering with civil aviation, military, and law enforcement transmissions. In December Channel Station 2000, an Evangelical radio station, was shut down. The station's owners stated that the closure was because of religious content (although other non-Orthodox stations continue to operate unhindered), whereas the Government asserted that the station's broadcasts sporadically interfered with military channels. State-run stations tend to emphasize the Government's views but also report objectively on other parties' programs and positions. Private radio and television stations operate independently of any government control over their reporting. Turkish-language television programs are widely available via satellite in Thrace.

The case of the television station Antenna was resolved against it. Antenna was appealing a \$350,000 (100 million drachmas) fine imposed by the NRTC in 1997 for allegedly contributing to the suicide of a man after his exposure on one of its shows.

The case of Radio Isik, a Turkish-language station in Komotini, charged with operating without a license in 1994 and 1995, was pending at year's end. The 1998 conviction of Abdulhalim Dede, the Muslim owner of Radio Isik for illegal construction of a new radio antenna intended to extend the range of the station, was upheld on appeal in June. The court reduced the sentence from 8 to 2 months in jail but suspended enforcement pending Dede's appeal to the Supreme Court.

Academic freedom is respected.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and the Government respects this right in practice. Police permits are issued routinely for public demonstrations, and there were no reports that the permit requirement was abused.

In January 30,000 demonstrators protested against proposed government education reforms, at times violently (see Section 5). In the spring several thousand demonstrators threw stones and gasoline bombs at the police to protest NATO actions in Kosovo.

The Constitution provides for the right of association, which the Government respected; however, legal restrictions on the titles of associations remain involving ethnic minorities (see Section 5).

Government authorities legally recognize the existence of the Muslim minority, but not other groups officially as " minorities." However, the 1990 Copenhagen document of the then-Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, to which the Government is a signatory, asserts that " to belong to a national minority is a matter of a person's individual choice." The Government affirmed an individual, but not a collective, right of self-identification during the year.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution establishes the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ (Greek Orthodoxy) as the prevailing religion; it also provides for the right of all citizens to practice the religion of their choice. The Government respects this right; however, non-Orthodox groups sometimes face administrative obstacles or legal restrictions on religious practice. The Constitution prohibits proselytizing and stipulates that non-Orthodox rites of worship may not disturb public order or offend moral principles.

The Orthodox Church wields significant political and economic influence. The Ministry of Education and Religion supervises the Church, and the Government provides some financial support by, for example, paying the salaries of clergy, subsidizing their religious training, and financing the construction and maintenance of Orthodox Church buildings.

The Orthodox Church is the only religion considered by law to be a " legal person of public law." Other religions are considered " legal persons of private law." In practice a

primary distinction is that establishment of other religions' " houses of prayer" is regulated by the general provisions of the Civil Code regarding corporations. For example non-Orthodox churches cannot, as religious entities, own property; the property must belong to a specifically created legal entity rather than to the church itself. In practice this places an additional legal and administrative burden on non-Orthodox religious community organizations, although in most cases this process has been handled routinely.

Two laws from the 1930's require recognized or " known" religious groups to obtain house of prayer permits from the Ministry of Education and Religion in order to open houses of worship. By law the Ministry may base its decision to issue permits on the opinion of the local Orthodox bishop. No formal mechanism exists to gain recognition as a known religion, but Ministry officials state that they no longer obtain the opinion of the local Orthodox bishop when considering house of prayer permit applications, that no completed applications were refused during 1999, and that none were pending at year's end. A tax bill passed in 1997 created three new taxes on churches and other nonprofit organizations. Leaders of some non-Orthodox religious groups claimed that all taxes on religious organizations were discriminatory, even those that the Orthodox Church has to pay, since the Government subsidizes the Orthodox Church while other groups are self-supporting.

Approximately 94 to 97 percent of the country's 10 million citizens are Greek Orthodox. With the exception of the Muslim community (some of whose rights, privileges, and government obligations thereto are covered by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne), the Government does not keep statistics on the size of religious groups within Greece. Ethnic Greeks account for a sizeable percentage of most non-Orthodox religions. The balance of the population is composed of Muslims (officially estimated at 96,000); Protestants, including evangelicals (who state they are approximately 30,000), Jehovah's Witnesses (50,000), Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Anglicans, Baptists, and nondenominational Christians; Catholics (approximately 50,000); Jews (approximately 5,000); and Scientologists (approximately 7,000). Approximately 300 members of the Baha'i Faith are scattered throughout the country. The majority are Greek citizens of non-Greek ethnicity.

The privileges and legal prerogatives granted to the Greek Orthodox Church are not extended routinely to other recognized religions. The non-Greek Orthodox churches must make separate and lengthy applications to government authorities on such matters as arranging appointments to meet with Ministry of Education and Religion officials and gaining permission to move places of worship to larger facilities. In contrast Greek Orthodox officials have an institutionalized link between the church hierarchy and the Ministry that handles administrative matters.

The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which is still in force, gives Muslims in Western Thrace the right to maintain social and charitable organizations (" wakfs") and provides for the function of muftis to render religious and some civil services.

The Muslim population, concentrated in Western Thrace with small communities in Rhodes, Kos, and Athens, is composed mainly of ethnic Turks but also includes Pomaks and Roma. Mosques operate freely in Western Thrace and on the islands of Rhodes and Kos.

Differences remain within the Muslim community and between segments of the

community and the Government over the means of selection of muftis (Islamic judges and religious leaders with limited civic responsibilities). Under a 1990 presidential decree, which was codified in a 1991 law, the Government appointed two muftis and one assistant mufti, all resident in Thrace. The appointments (effective in 1991) were based on the recommendations of a committee of Muslim notables selected by the Government. The Government argued that it must appoint the muftis because, in addition to their religious duties, they perform judicial functions in many civil and domestic matters under Muslim religious law, for which the State pays them.

Some Muslims accept the authority of the two officially appointed muftis; other Muslims, backed by Turkey, have "elected" two different muftis to serve their communities (although there is no established procedure or practice for "election"). Three times in 1998, the Government convicted one of the elected muftis for usurping the authority of the official mufti; he has appealed. Earlier convictions (11 over 4 years) against the same individual were upheld on appeal. All of the respective sentences remain suspended pending appeal. The other elected mufti, who was convicted in 1991 of usurping the authority of the official mufti, appealed to the European Court of Human Rights. In December the Court ruled that the conviction violated his freedom of religion and self-expression, but it avoided the question of his legal status as mufti.

Controversy between the Muslim community and the Government also continues over the management and self-government of the wakfs (Muslim charitable organizations) regarding the appointment of officials as well as the degree and type of administrative control. A 1980 law placed the administration of the wakfs in the hands of the appointed muftis and their representatives. In response to objections from some Muslims that this arrangement weakened the financial autonomy of the wakfs and violated the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, a 1996 presidential decree put the wakfs under the administration of a committee for 3 years as an interim measure pending the resolution of outstanding problems. The committee remains in place although the decree expired in April.

Muslim activists complained that the Government regularly lodges tax liens against the wakfs although they are in theory tax-free religious foundations. Legislation to create a national land and property registry passed in 1996 and upon coming into full effect in 1999 requires the wakfs, as with all property holders, to register all of their property with the Government. The legislation permits the Government to seize any property that owners are not able to document; there are built-in reporting and appeals procedures. To date the Government has not sought to enforce either the liens or the registration requirement.

Protestant groups constitute the second largest religious group after the Greek Orthodox Church. Some groups, such as the evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses, consist almost entirely of ethnic Greeks. Other groups, such as the Latter-Day Saints and Anglicans, consist of an approximately equal number of ethnic Greeks and non-Greeks. Non-Greek citizen clergy reported difficulty renewing their visas during the period covered by this report, but these visas eventually were renewed. As part of new obligations under the Schengen Treaty and the Treaty of Amsterdam, all non-European Union citizens face a more restrictive visa and residence regime than they did in the past.

Although Jehovah's Witnesses are recognized as a "known" religion, they continued to face some harassment in the form of arbitrary identity checks (although reduced from

1998), difficulties in burying their dead, and local officials' resistance to their construction of churches (which in most cases was resolved quickly and favorably). In January a European Court of Human Rights case was resolved when the Government admitted surveillance of an adherent and promised that it would never conduct surveillance of Jehovah's Witnesses again.

In previous years the armed forces consistently refused to exempt Jehovah's Witnesses' clergy from mandatory military service. In 1998 a law providing an alternative form of mandatory national service for conscientious objectors took effect. All clergy now are exempt from any service. The law provides that conscientious objectors may work in state hospitals or municipal services for 36 months. Conscientious objector groups generally characterized the legislation as a positive first step but criticized the 36-month alternative service term, which is double the regular 18-month period of military service. In one case, an application was submitted late and the applicant was instructed to appear for mandatory military service. The applicant appealed this decision; the results of the appeal are pending.

Jehovah's Witnesses also noted two recent cases in which custody of a child was awarded to a Greek Orthodox parent, in part due to the fact that the other parent was a member of Jehovah's Witnesses. In September 1998, an Athens court awarded custody of a child to its father; media reporting stated that because blood transfusions were prohibited by Jehovah's Witnesses, should the child need one, the mother might object and thus endanger the child's health.

Evangelical parishes are located throughout Greece. Members of missionary faiths report difficulties due to antiproselytizing laws. Church officials express concern that antiproselytizing laws remain on the books, although such laws no longer hinder their ministering to the poor and to children.

According to leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Church has approximately 300 local adherents, about half of whom are of Greek ethnicity. About 60 foreign missionaries arrive each year for 2-year terms. Church leaders report that their permanent members (nonmissionaries) do not encounter discriminatory treatment. However, the police occasionally detained Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses after receiving complaints that individuals were engaged in proselytizing. According to Mormon leaders, police detain their missionaries at least once every 2 weeks. The missionaries always are released the same day without being charged. In most cases, these Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses were held for several hours at a police station and then released with no charges filed. Many reported that they were not allowed to call their lawyers and that they were verbally abused by police officers for their religious beliefs. In 1998 the European Court of Human Rights found the Government in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights for convicting Protestants of proselytizing in past cases. There were no proselytizing-related court cases during the year.

Scientologists, most of whom are located in the Athens area, practice their faith through the Center for Applied Psychology (KEFE), a registered nonprofit philosophical organization. According to the president of the KEFE, the group chose to register as a philosophical organization because legal counsel advised that the Government would not recognize Scientology as a religion. In a step toward gaining recognition as a religion, Scientologists applied for a House of Prayer permit in October 1998. The application was

pending at the Ministry of Education at year's end.

A 1995 police search of Scientology headquarters revealed a file of press clippings on Greek opposition to Scientology. The file was confiscated and 15 KEFE board members subsequently were charged with " unprovoked factual insult." In May an Athens court acquitted the 15 Scientology board members of the charges.

The Bishop of Athens heads the Roman Catholic Holy Synod. CARITAS, an order of nuns providing charity services, and the Missionaries of Charity (Mother Teresa's order) also operate in the country. Legal recognition of the Catholic archdiocese of Athens, earlier denied, was granted in July.

The Jewish community numbers approximately 5,000 adherents; the majority are of Greek ethnicity and live in the Athens region. A local government official opposed the rededication of a synagogue in Hania, Crete, that was closed during World War II. The synagogue will also serve as a cultural center. Central government and Greek Orthodox officials attended the rededication in October.

Religious instruction in Orthodoxy in public primary and secondary schools is mandatory for all Greek Orthodox students. Non-Orthodox students are exempt from this requirement. However, Jehovah's Witnesses have reported some instances of discrimination related to attendance at religious education classes or other celebrations of religious or nationalistic character.

The Government took no action to implement or repeal a 1991 law mandating that citizens declare their religion on new standardized identity cards based on EU standards, which could be used for internal EU travel. Current identity cards contain a space for religion that may be left blank.

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The Constitution calls for freedom of movement within and outside the country and the right to return; however, Muslim leaders asserted that Muslims face administrative obstacles regarding their voter registration when seeking to change their legal residence within or to the region of Thrace.

A section of the Citizenship Code, Article 20, permits the Government to strip citizenship from those who " commit acts contrary to the interests of Greece for the benefit of a foreign state." While the law as written applies equally to all Greeks regardless of ethnic background, to date it has been enforced, in all but one case, only against citizens who identified themselves as members of the " Macedonian" minority. The Government has not revealed the number of Article 20 cases that it pursued. There were no reports of such cases during the year. Dual citizens who are stripped of Greek citizenship under Article 20 sometimes are prevented from entering the country using the passport of their second nationality.

The Government offers asylum under the terms of the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. It cooperates with the local office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In June a presidential decree took

effect that significantly expanded the rights of asylum seekers and brought the law into compliance with UNHCR minimum standards on asylum procedures.

Individuals recognized as refugees under the terms of the U.N. convention are eligible for the residence and work permits that are necessary to settle permanently. In the first 9 months of 1999, 1,130 individuals submitted applications for refugee status; 99 individuals were recognized as refugees. Of those refused refugee status, 286 were granted temporary residence on humanitarian grounds until return to their countries becomes possible.

Reports indicated that the Government at times deported asylum seekers back to their country of origin before they could submit formal applications for asylum. In December 1998, the UNHCR criticized the lack of a coherent, functioning asylum process and the fact that the Government continued to deport forcibly some potential asylum seekers back to their country of origin (or to the country from which they entered Greece) before they could submit formal applications for asylum. After a 1998 increase, such cases dropped in 1999 as the Government more effectively patrolled the country's sea and land borders.

The Government usually does not recognize the concept of first asylum.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that hundreds of individuals from Turkey, Iraq, and Iran enter Greece illegally each year; only a small percentage eventually apply for official refugee status. Some of those who do not apply remain illegally, often living in government camps where conditions vary from adequate to very poor. Others proceed to Western Europe, often applying for asylum there. The Government usually does not seek out such individuals for deportation; since Greece and Turkey do not have a readmission agreement, the Government finds it practically impossible to deport individuals who enter Greece from Turkey.

Albanian immigrants compose over three-fifths of the alien population. Deportations of both illegal and legal immigrants, abusive treatment by police, and inconsistencies and inequities in the way employers provide wages and benefits were common. In the early summer, the police conducted large-scale sweeps of neighborhoods populated by immigrants, temporarily detaining large numbers of individuals under often squalid conditions while determining their residence status (see Section 5).

In the last half of 1998, between 300 and 600 Iraqi Kurds set up camp in a square in central Athens, claiming that the Government was not providing them adequate assistance. In February the police moved the Kurds to an abandoned military base outside the city. All but 17 of the Kurds fled the base and disappeared. They are presumed to be scattered throughout the Athens area. None has returned to the square.

Through April 15, the Organization for the Employment of Human Resources (OAED), a government agency, reported that 201,235 illegal aliens, out of an estimated population of 700,000, applied for legal status or a "green card." The new program was designed to regularize the residency status of illegal, often "economic," immigrants. The green card serves as a residence permit and allows the immigrants to live and work in the country for a limited period of time. The OAED estimated that there would be a total of 235,000 illegal aliens applying for the green card by year's end; 80 percent of the green cards issued so far are of 1-year duration. A new application is required to extend the card for

an additional year. Holders of a "white card" may reside and work legally on a short-term basis while meeting the other requirements necessary to obtain a green card. Press reports cite the obstacles of a complex bureaucracy and the unwillingness of employers to pay social security contributions as primary reasons for the limited ability of white card holders to advance to the green card application process. The OAED estimated that out of a total of 386,000 white card holders in 1998, 186,000 simply dropped out of the green card application process. Legislation provides for the green card program to remain in effect until the end of 2001. Press reports estimated that it would take 3 years just to process the applications already submitted.

Section 3 -- Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

Greece is a multiparty democracy whose Constitution provides for full political rights for all citizens and for the peaceful change of governments and of the Constitution. The Government headed by Prime Minister Constantine Simitis of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) won in free and fair elections in September 1996. Parliament elects the President for a 5-year term. Voting is mandatory for those over age 18, but there are many conditions that allow citizens not to vote, and penalties are not applied in practice. Members of the unicameral 300-seat Parliament are elected to maximum 4-year terms by secret ballot. Opposition parties function freely and have broad access to the media.

Women are underrepresented in government and politics, although no legal restrictions hinder their participation. Women held 2 ministerial positions in the Government and only 1 of 29 subministerial positions. Of the 300 members of Parliament, 17 were women.

While the Government generally respects citizens' political rights, there are occasionally charges that it limits the right of some individuals to speak publicly and associate freely on the basis of their self-proclaimed ethnic identity, thus impinging on the political rights of such persons. However, in the 1996 parliamentary elections, three Muslim deputies were elected in Thrace, one each from PASOK, New Democracy, and the Coalition of the Left. Romani representatives report that local authorities sometimes deprive Roma of the right to vote by refusing to register them. However, Romani activists also report that some municipalities encourage Roma to register. Municipalities can refuse to register Roma who do not fulfill basic residency requirements, which many Roma have trouble meeting.

In 1996 the Government transferred responsibility for oversight of all rights provided to the Muslim minority under the Treaty of Lausanne (including education, zoning, administration of the wakfs, and trade) from elected local governors to a government-appointed regional administrative official, the periferiarch of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. Some minority members charged that the transfer reduced their ability to use the democratic process to influence decisions that affect them. The Government stated that it made the change because the central authorities could administer Greece's treaty obligations more effectively.

Section 4 -- Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

The Government allows domestic human rights organizations to operate, but cooperation with them varies. In principle it does not prohibit foreign diplomats from meeting with

officials and other citizens, including critics of official policy. However, the security services on occasion monitor contacts of human rights groups, including listening in on conversations held between those groups and human rights investigators and diplomats and questioning contacts (see Section 1.f.). Monitors view this as a form of intimidation that deters others from meeting with investigators.

A government ombudsman's office, which opened in 1998, by the end of August received 855 complaints directly related to human rights issues, of which 462 were processed. Human rights cases constituted 20 percent of all cases, an increase from 12 percent in 1998.

Section 5 -- Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Religion, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The Constitution provides for equality before the law irrespective of nationality, race, language, religious or political belief; however, government respect for these rights in practice was uneven.

The Government formally recognizes only the "Muslim minority" specified in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, although it stated publicly in August that members of that minority could identify themselves individually as belonging to different ethnic groups. However, the Government failed to acknowledge formally the existence of non-Muslim ethnic groups, principally Slavophones, under the term "minority." As a result, some individuals who define themselves as members of a minority find it difficult to express their identity freely and to maintain their culture.

Women

Violence against women and trafficking in women are growing problems. The incidence of violence against women reported to the authorities is low; however, Athens' Equality Secretariat, which operates the only shelter for battered women in Athens, believes that the actual incidence is "high." According to press and academic estimates, there were approximately 4,500 cases of rape in 1999. Reportedly only 6 to 10 percent of the victims contact the police, and only a small fraction of the cases reaches trial. Conviction rates on rape charges are low for first time accused, but sentences are harsh for repeat offenders.

The General Secretariat for Equality of the Sexes (GSES), an independent government agency, asserts that police tend to discourage women from pursuing domestic violence charges and instead undertake reconciliation efforts, although they are neither qualified for nor charged with this task. The GSES also claims that the courts are lenient when dealing with domestic violence cases. The GSES, in cooperation with Ministry of Public Order, conducted three training courses during the year for police personnel on how to treat domestic violence victims.

Facilities for battered women and their children exist but often are staffed inadequately to handle cases properly. A government shelter (the only residential facility for battered women and their children) provides relevant services in Athens, including legal and psychological advice. Battered women also can go to state hospitals and regional health centers. Late in the year, the GSES opened a new facility in Pireaus and announced plans to open two other facilities in Thessaloniki and Epirus soon. There is still no emergency

telephone hot line for abused women to call for help. A joint committee composed of the GSES, the Ministry of Public Order, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Ministry of Justice was established during the year to focus on women's issues.

Prostitution is legal. Prostitutes must register at the local police station and carry a medical card that is updated every 2 weeks. While the number of Greek women entering the profession has declined steadily over the years, according to the police and academic sources, trafficking in women for prostitution, mostly from the former Soviet republics, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania, has increased sharply in recent years (see Section 6.f.). It is estimated that there are approximately 20,000 prostitutes.

While national data on arrests of prostitutes is not available, police and media reports estimate that 1,500 women were arrested for prostitution during the year, about 5 times the number for the same period in 1998. Most are foreigners who were apprehended for noncompliance with legal requirements. Media reports implicated several police officers as participants in prostitution rings. The local press alleged on a number of occasions that policemen sometimes accepted bribes from traffickers or pimps or forced illegal immigrants to have sex with them and then channelled them into prostitution rings. The vice squad unit of the police was disbanded temporarily in part as a result of these allegations.

Trade unions report that lawsuits for sexual harassment are very rare: according to the unions, only four women have filed such charges in the past 3 years. In all four cases, the courts reportedly imposed very lenient civil sentences. The General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) women's section reports that sexual harassment is a widespread phenomenon, but that women are discouraged from filing charges against perpetrators by family members and coworkers.

Women enjoy broad constitutional and legal protections, including equal pay for equal work. The National Statistical Service's most recent data (the second quarter of 1998) show that women's salaries in manufacturing were 70.8 percent of those of men in comparable positions; in retail sales, women's salaries were 88 percent of those of men in comparable positions.

Although there are still relatively few women in senior positions, in recent years women entered traditionally male-dominated occupations such as the legal and medical professions in larger numbers. However, women still face discrimination when they are considered for promotions in both the public and private sectors. According to the women's section of the GSEE, 58.6 percent of the country's long-term unemployed are women, while women constitute only 38 percent of the work force. Women also are underrepresented in labor union decisionmaking centers. To ameliorate the situation, the GSES established two regional employment offices for women in Thessaloniki and Patras and plans to open three more offices.

Children

The Government is committed to providing adequate basic health and education services for children. Education is compulsory through the ninth grade and free through university.

In January thousands of high school students, their teachers, and trade union supporters

demonstrated to protest a government education reform that would require the students to take exams more frequently and in more subjects to gain admission to college, academic standards that had been applied in the past. More than 30,000 protesters blocked streets in Athens and hurled firebombs at buildings and the police. The student protests started in November 1998 and continued during the first 2 months of 1999; they diminished after that. The students also occupied and refused to leave some schools.

Several government organizations have responsibility for children's issues. The National Welfare Organization, which has a nationwide network of offices, is active in the field of child protection. Legislation in 1998 combined the National Welfare Organization with two similar entities early in 1999 to provide better services. The services of the new single organization were regionalized to provide greater access to child welfare services and funding prioritized according to regional needs.

Penal law prohibits the mistreatment of children and sets penalties for violators, while welfare legislation provides for preventive and treatment programs for abused children and for children deprived of a family environment; it also seeks to ensure the availability of alternative family care or institutional placement.

There is no societal pattern of abuse of children. No national data exist on the incidence of child abuse; authorities other than police are not required to report such cases. Past sampling--although without verified, up-to-date statistics--suggest problems with child and sexual abuse. In a 10-year clinical study of 200 cases of abused children, the Institute of Child Health (ICH) reports that 59.5 percent involved physical abuse, 20 percent involved neglect, and 21 percent involved children who were not abused at the time but had a history of abuse. (The study did not cover victims of sexual abuse.) An ICH prevalence study of child sexual abuse among 740 university students revealed an incidence rate of 7 percent among boys and 17 percent among girls prior to age 18. Societal abuse of children in the form of pornography and child labor is rare. Child prostitution is a growing phenomenon, particularly in some parts of immigrant communities of central Athens. Child health specialists say that some social groups, such as Roma and illegal immigrants, are underserved.

Children's rights advocacy groups claim that the protection of high-risk children in state residential care centers is inadequate and of low quality. They cite lack of coordination between welfare services and the courts, inadequate funding of the welfare system, and poor staffing of residential care centers as systemic weaknesses in the treatment of child abuse. To address this problem, two municipal shelters for battered children opened in Athens during the year. Child health specialists note that the number of children in residential care facilities is decreasing, while the number in foster care is rising.

In recent years, the number of street children who panhandle or peddle at city intersections on behalf of adult family members or for criminal gangs increased. According to the Ministry of Public Order, 78 percent of these children are Albanian, 12 percent are from other Balkan countries, and 10 percent are Romani. Early in the year, the Government implemented measures to combat this phenomenon. The measures included the institutional placement of children up to 12 years old, therapeutic consultations with their families, and the deportation of juveniles 12 to 17 years old. The measures had visible results for only a very short period. It is widely believed that even those who were deported managed to return eventually.

People with Disabilities

Legislation mandates the hiring of disabled persons in public and private enterprises that employ more than 50 persons. However, the law reportedly is enforced poorly, particularly in the private sector. The law states that disabled persons should number 3 percent of staff in private enterprises. In the civil service, 5 percent of administrative staff and 80 percent of telephone operator positions are reserved for disabled persons. Recent legislation mandates the hiring of disabled persons in the public sector from a priority list. The disabled are exempt from the civil service exam. Persons with disabilities have been appointed to important positions in the civil service.

The Construction Code mandates physical access for disabled persons to private and public buildings, but this law, too, is enforced poorly. A 1997 survey showed that over 60 percent of public buildings are not accessible to persons with mobility problems. Ramps and special curbs for the disabled have been constructed on some Athens streets and at some public buildings, and sound signals have been installed at some city street crossings. Since 1993 the Government has been replacing old city buses with new ones with stairs specially designed for the disabled. The new Athens subway lines were designed to provide full access for the disabled. Religious Minorities

Non-Orthodox citizens have complained of being treated with suspicion or told that they were not truly Greek when they revealed their religious affiliation. Non-Orthodox citizens have claimed that they face career limits within the military and the civil service due to their religions. In the military, generally only members of the Greek Orthodox faith become officers, leading some members of other faiths to declare themselves Orthodox. Only two Muslim officers have advanced to the rank of reserve officer.

Claims of discriminatory denial of Muslim applications for business licenses, tractor ownership, or property construction have diminished greatly in recent years, and there were no reports of such claims during the year (see Section 5-National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities).

Members of minority faiths have reported incidents of societal discrimination, such as local bishops warning parishioners not to visit clergy or members of minority faiths and neighbors requesting that the police arrest missionaries for proselytizing.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

An increase in xenophobia paralleled an increase in the number of non-Greeks living and working in the country. Antiforeigner sentiment is directed mainly at Albanians (who make up over three-fifths of the alien population). Deportations of both illegal and legal immigrants, abusive treatment by police, and inconsistencies and inequities in the way employers issue wages and benefits are common. In the early summer, the police conducted large-scale sweeps of neighborhoods populated by immigrants and members of ethnic minorities, temporarily detaining large numbers of individuals under often squalid conditions while determining their residence status. Landlords in Athens and other parts of the country routinely refuse to rent to Albanians, even to that country's diplomats. Following the September Athens earthquake, legal permanent residents (holders of green cards) were not issued earthquake allowances and were told to wait, despite having all the proper documentation from civil engineers regarding the damage to their housing.

There are communities that identify themselves as Turks, Pomaks, Vlachs, Roma, Arvanites (Orthodox Christians who speak a dialect of Albanian), and "Macedonians" or "Slavomacedonians." Most are integrated fully into society. The Government formally recognizes only the "Muslim minority" specified in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, applying the term to several different ethnic communities. Most of the Muslim minority (officially estimated to number 96,000) is ethnically Turkish or Turcophone and lives in Western Thrace. The Muslim minority also includes Pomaks and Roma. Many Greek Muslims, including Pomaks, identify themselves as Turks and say that the Muslim minority as a whole has a Turkish cultural consciousness. While use of the terms "Tourkos" and "Tourkikos" ("Turk" and "Turkish") is prohibited in titles of organizations, individuals legally may call themselves "Tourkos." To most Greeks, the words "Tourkos" and "Tourkikos" connote Turkish identity or loyalties, and many object to their use by Greek citizens of Turkish origin. The 8-month prison sentence of a dozen Muslim teachers, convicted in 1996 for using the name "Turkish Teachers of Western Thrace" in a union document, remained suspended pending appeal. In March an appeals court upheld a 1986 trial court decision ordering the closure of the "Turkish Union of Xanthi" because of the use of the word "Turkish" in the organization's name.

The Treaty of Lausanne provides that the Muslim minority has the right to Turkish-language education, with a reciprocal entitlement for the Greek minority in Istanbul (now reduced to about 3,000). Western Thrace has both Koranic and secular Turkish-language schools. Government disputes with Turkey over teachers and textbooks caused the secular schools serious problems in obtaining faculty and teaching materials in sufficient number and quality. Under a 1952 educational protocol, Greece and Turkey may exchange annually 35 teachers on a reciprocal basis for service in Istanbul and Western Thrace. Due to the dwindling needs of the small and aging Greek population in Istanbul, in recent years the Greek side limited the exchanges to 16 teachers per country. Complaints from Muslim leaders that Greek bureaucratic barriers prevented the Turkish teachers from working in Thrace decreased during the year.

The Government approved 19 Turkish textbooks for use in the secular Turkish-language schools. Under a 1960 bilateral protocol, Turkey should provide copies of the approved texts for use in the schools of Western Thrace. However, the books did not arrive in time for the beginning of the fall 1999 semester. In January and March, appeals courts in Thrace acquitted and dismissed cases against Muslim parents convicted between 1992 and 1994 of destroying government-edited, Turkish-language textbooks provided to their children in violation, according to the parents, of the 1960 protocol.

In Western Thrace over 8,000 Muslim children attended Turkish-language primary schools. An additional 150 attended 2 bilingual middle schools with a religious curriculum. Approximately 700 attended Turkish-language secondary schools, and approximately 1,300 attended Greek-language secondary schools. Many Muslims reportedly went to high school in Turkey due to the limited number of places in the Turkish-language secondary schools, which are assigned by lottery. In 1999 the Government instituted an EU-funded program for teaching Greek as a second language to Muslim children, primarily in the Greek-language schools, to improve their academic performance and chance of obtaining postsecondary education in Greece.

Government incentives encourage Muslim and Christian educators to reside and teach in isolated villages. However in August in education reform legislation the Government

cancelled the program of incentives for Christian educators teaching temporarily in minority schools. Teachers Union representatives complained that the move would discourage Christians from seeking temporary teaching positions in minority schools. The law permits the Minister of Education to give special consideration to Muslims for admission to universities and technical institutes. Universities and technical institutes are required to create a certain number of places for Muslim students each year; 376 spaces were available in 1999. Under this law, 123 Muslim students entered Greek universities and technical institutes during the year. Approximately 1,700 other Muslim students entered via the national examination process open to all Greeks and were attending universities and technical schools.

The rate of employment of Muslims in the public sector and in state-owned industries and corporations is much lower than the Muslim percentage of the population. In Xanthi and Komotini, while Muslims hold seats on the prefectural and town councils, no Muslims are regular employees of the prefecture. Muslims in Western Thrace claim that they are hired only for lower level, part-time work. The Government says that a lack of fluency in written and spoken Greek and the need for university degrees for high-level positions limit the number of Muslims eligible for government jobs.

Public offices in Thrace do their business in Greek; the courts provide interpreters as needed. The office of the nomarch (governor) in Rodopi prefecture, where many ethnic Turks live, has Turkish-language interpreters available.

Claims of the discriminatory denial of Muslim applications for business licenses, tractor ownership, or property construction diminished greatly in recent years, and there were no reports of such claims during the year. However, the provision of basic public services (electricity, water, and telephones) in Muslim villages lagged behind that of non-Muslim areas but continued to improve during the year.

Other than in one multicultural elementary education " pilot school," the Government does not provide instruction in Greek as a second language to Turcophone children in the Athens area. Muslim parents report that their children are unable to succeed in school as a result of this policy. The Government maintains that Muslims outside Thrace are not covered by the Treaty of Lausanne and therefore do not enjoy those rights provided by the treaty.

Muslim leaders also asserted that the Government routinely withholds permission from Muslims seeking to change their legal residence, which determines where they vote, from rural to urban communities within Western Thrace or from elsewhere in Greece to Thrace. They said that permission to change legal residency from Western Thrace to elsewhere in Greece was granted readily, and charged that the practice was part of a government policy to encourage Muslim emigration from the region and to prevent the urban concentration of Muslims in Thrace.

The Government refuses to acknowledge formally the existence and " minority" status of ethnic groups, principally Slavophones, other than the Muslim minority specified in the Treaty of Lausanne. As a result some individuals who define themselves as members of a minority find it difficult to express their identity freely and to maintain their culture. Northern Greece is home to an indeterminate number (estimates range widely, from under 10,000 to 50,000 or more) of citizens who are descended from Slavophones. Some still

speaking a Slavic dialect, particularly in Florina province. A small number of them identify themselves as belonging to a distinct ethnic group, which they call "Macedonian," and assert their right to minority status. (These self-described ethnic "Macedonians" are hereafter referred to as "Macedonians.") Their assertions generate strong objections among the 2.2 million ethnically and linguistically Greek inhabitants of the northern Greek region of Macedonia, who use the same term to identify themselves. The Government refuses to recognize the Slavic dialect as "Macedonian" and denies that it is a language distinct from Bulgarian. Members of the minority assert that the Government pursues a policy designed to discourage use of their dialect. Greek sensitivity on this issue stems from concern that members of the "Macedonian" minority may have separatist aspirations. Greece's dispute with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia over that country's name heightened this sensitivity. Complaints of government harassment and intimidation directed against these persons decreased significantly.

In July three Muslim Members of Parliament and a number of Greek human rights organizations issued a letter calling on the Government to recognize legally the right of self-identification for members of all minorities, including the Muslim and "Macedonian" minorities. Senior government officials in August reaffirmed an individual, but not a collective, right of self-identification. The Government continued to maintain officially that the only "minority" in Greece is the Muslim minority specified in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.

The General Secretariat for Adult Education (GSAE), a government agency, estimates the total Romani population to be 150,000 to 200,000. Nonofficial sources estimate the total at 250,000 to 300,000. Most of the Roma in Western Thrace are Muslims; elsewhere the majority are Greek Orthodox. Many Roma are settled permanently, mainly in the Athens area. Others are either mobile, working mainly as agricultural laborers, peddlers, and musicians throughout the country or live in camps. The GSAE reports that the number of Roma who move around the country is decreasing gradually as families settle mainly into slums and camps around major cities. There are approximately 70 Romani camps with a total camp population between 100,000 and 120,000 persons.

Roma frequently face discrimination in employment and in housing, particularly when attempting to rent accommodations. They experience police abuse more frequently than some other groups. There was no progress in the case of two policemen who shot and killed a Rom in April 1998 in Partheni who refused to stop his car for inspection. The trial of a policeman accused of beating two Romani teenagers in Mesolonghi in May 1998 had yet to begin by year's end.

Romani representatives report that some local authorities refuse to register Roma as residents in their municipalities. Until registered with a municipality, no citizen can vote or exercise other civic rights such as obtaining an official marriage, commercial, or driver's license, or contributing to social security.

Most Roma camps have no running water or electricity, much less garbage disposal or sewage treatment. Many exist under the harassment and threat of eviction by local authorities. For example a camp of some 60 Roma just north of Athens was declared illegal several times by local authorities despite the families' presence there for 10 to 30 years.

The Ministry of Defense allocated land and houses at a former army camp in Gonou for the Roma of Evosmos, Thessaloniki, to occupy for the next 5 years. (The 3,500 Roma were evicted in 1998 from their home of some 30 years and then evicted from 4 other sites in the following 15 days.) However, necessary renovations to the camp had not yet been made by year's end. Human rights monitors charge that the Government delayed renovating the camp in reaction to the protests of neighboring residents who do not want the Roma in their vicinity.

In February the deputy mayor of Aspropyrgos led a group of local officials in bulldozing and burning the camp of a neighboring settlement of approximately 100 Roma who had settled on a resident's private property. Reportedly, 3 days before the incident, the same local government official ordered the Roma's water supply cut off.

Government policy is to encourage the integration of Roma. The Prime Minister has designated a member of his staff to coordinate the efforts of all government ministries having a role in their integration. Poverty, illiteracy, and social prejudice nevertheless continue to plague large parts of the Romani population; these problems are most severe among the Roma who are mobile or who live in slums. Although the GSAE conducts education and training programs for them, the illiteracy rate among Roma is estimated at 80 percent. The Ministry of Education established a system of identity cards designed to permit students to change schools easily as their parents move and is developing a system of satellite schools for Romani settlements.

The integration of Roma into social security systems is quite low. It is estimated that 90 percent of Roma are not insured by the public social security systems, since they are unable or unwilling to make the required contributions. Like other qualified citizens, indigent Roma are entitled to free health care. However, their access to health care at times is hindered by the fact that their encampments are located far from public health facilities.

The Ministry of Health and Welfare continued work on projects to address the chronic problems of the Roma community. The projects include training courses for civil servants, policemen, and teachers to "increase sensitivity to the problems of the Roma," the development of teaching materials for Roma children, and the establishment of youth centers in areas close to Roma communities. The Ministry already has established six such centers.

Section 6 -- Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The Constitution and the law provide for the right of association. All workers, with the exception of the military, have the right to form or join unions. Police have the right to form unions but not to strike.

Approximately 26 percent of workers (nearly 650,000 persons) are organized in unions. Unions receive most of their funding from a Ministry of Labor organization, the Workers' Hearth, which distributes mandatory contributions from employees and employers. Workers, employers, and the state are represented in equal numbers on the board of directors of the Workers' Hearth. Approximately 10 public sector unions have dues-

withholding provisions in their contracts, in addition to receiving Workers' Health subsidies.

Over 4,000 unions are grouped into regional and sectoral federations and 2 umbrella confederations, 1 for civil servants and 1, the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), for private sector employees. The GSEE and the Civil Servants' Confederation (ADEDY) announced in 1998 that they would merge in 2000. Unions are highly politicized, and there are party-affiliated factions within the labor confederations, but day-to-day operations are not controlled by political parties or the Government. There are no restrictions on who may serve as a union official.

Legal restrictions on strikes include a mandatory period of notice, which is 4 days for public utilities and 24 hours for the private sector. Legislation mandates a skeleton staff during strikes affecting public services, such as electricity, transportation, communications, and banking. Public utility companies, state-owned banks, the postal service, Olympic Airways, and the railroads also are required to maintain a skeleton staff during strikes.

The courts have the power to declare strikes illegal, although such decisions seldom are enforced. However, unions complain that this judicial power serves as a deterrent to some of their members from participating in strikes. The courts declared some strikes illegal during the year for reasons such as failure of the union to give adequate advance notice of the strike or the addition of demands by the union during the course of the strike. However, no striking workers were prosecuted.

Fewer strikes took place during the year than ever before, and those that occurred were fairly brief and nondisruptive. Strikes by public sector employees, including mass transport employees, lasted between 1 and 5 days and primarily concerned securing timely pay increases and providing greater job security.

Unions are free to join international associations and maintain a variety of international affiliations.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Legislation provides for the right to organize and bargain collectively in the private sector and in public corporations. These rights are respected in practice. There are no restrictions on collective bargaining for private sector employees.

In 1997 and 1998 civil servants were accorded the right to organize and bargain collectively with the Ministry of Public Administration. The civil servants confederation conducted official negotiations with the Ministry of Interior for the first time in 1999.

In response to union complaints that most labor disputes ended in compulsory arbitration, legislative remedies were enacted in 1989 providing for mediation procedures, with compulsory arbitration as a last resort. Legislation in 1992 established a National Mediation, Reconciliation, and Arbitration Organization and applies to the private sector and public corporations (the military and civil service excluded).

Antiunion discrimination is prohibited. The Labor Inspectorate or a court investigates

complaints of discrimination against union members or organizers. Court rulings have mandated the reinstatement of improperly fired union organizers.

Three free trade zones operate according to EU regulations. The labor laws apply equally in these zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The Constitution prohibits all forced or compulsory labor, including that performed by children, and the Ministry of Justice enforces this prohibition; however, women and girls are trafficked into the country for the purpose of forced prostitution (see Section 6.f.). The Government may declare the "civil mobilization" of workers in the event of danger to national security, life, property, or the social and economic life of the country. The International Labor Organization (ILO) Committee of Experts has criticized this power as violating the standards of ILO Convention 29 on forced labor. The Government did not resort to civil mobilization during the year.

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The minimum age for employment in the industrial sector is 15 years, with higher limits for certain activities. The minimum age is 12 years in family businesses, theaters, and the cinema. These age limits are enforced by occasional Labor Inspectorate spot checks and generally are observed. However, families engaged in agriculture, food service, and merchandising often have younger family members assisting them, at least part time. The Constitution contains a blanket prohibition of compulsory labor. Although no specific legislation explicitly prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, such practices are not known to occur (see Section 6.c.).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Collective bargaining between the GSEE and the Employers' Association determines a nationwide minimum wage. The Ministry of Labor routinely ratifies this minimum wage, which has the force of law and applies to all workers. The minimum wage of \$21.30 (6,700 drachma) daily and \$476.90 (149,730 drachma) monthly, effective July 1, is sufficient to provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. The maximum legal workweek is 40 hours in the private sector and 37½ hours in the public sector. The law provides for at least one 24-hour rest period per week, mandates paid vacation of 1 month per year, and sets limits on overtime.

Legislation provides for minimum standards of occupational health and safety. Although the GSEE has characterized health and safety legislation as satisfactory, it charged that enforcement, the responsibility of the Labor Inspectorate, was inadequate. Recent legislation places the Labor Inspectorate under a central authority in compliance with ILO Convention 81. Workers do not have the legal right to remove themselves from situations that they believe endanger their health. However, they do have the right to lodge a confidential complaint with the Labor Inspectorate. Inspectors have the right to close down machinery or a process for a period of up to 5 days if they see safety or health hazards that they believe represent an imminent danger to the workers.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law does not specifically criminalize trafficking in persons, but other statutes in the Penal Code are used to prosecute such cases. Arrests and court cases for prostitution by unlicensed foreign women, and cases against their traffickers, reportedly have increased.

Trafficking in women for prostitution in Greece has increased sharply in recent years. While the Government is stiffening its border controls, in part because of the EU Schengen Agreement requirements, there are fissures through which many women are brought into the country from neighboring Bulgaria, Albania, or the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

According to a Panteion University study, 75 percent of foreign female prostitutes are not told why they are being brought to Greece. Some women arrive as "tourists" or illegal immigrants who seek work and are lured into prostitution by club owners who threaten them with deportation. Some women are kidnaped from their homes by their fellow countrymen and smuggled into Greece where they are "sold" to local pimps. The victims of this practice are often minors. Frequently, connections exist between illegal prostitution and other criminal activities.

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