

GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR (GHM)

Address: P.O. Box 60820, GR-15304 Glyka Nera
Telephone: (+30) 2103472259 Fax: (+30) 2106018760
e-mail: office@greekhelsinki.gr website: <http://cm.greekhelsinki.gr>

PRESS RELEASE

11 March 2006

**Greece: “Garlic and Watermelons” premieres in Thessaloniki
– a documentary on the evicted Roma ahead of 2004 Athens Olympic Games**

Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) notes the World Premiere of the documentary “**Garlic and Watermelons**” in the **Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival** on 13 and 17 March 2006.

It focuses on the travails of the Marousi Roma community evicted in 2002 to make way for a venue of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. The Greek state’s contract with the Roma community to provide them initially with rent subsidy and then with permanent relocation was never honored amidst widespread indifference. Back subsidies were paid until the Games every few months after international outcry; since the Games Roma were forgotten.

GHM, the Roma’s only supporter, filed complaint reports with the Athens Prosecutor in September 2003: two preliminary inquiries were launched in October 2003 (Ref. No. ABM Θ2003/12305 and ΣΤ03/10800); two and a half years later they have not been concluded (article 31 of the Code of Criminal Procedure sets a maximum limit of eight months), showing that Roma in Greece often face a travesty of justice. GHM also filed a complaint with the Greek Ombudsman in August 2003 (Ref. No. 13939/03); the ensuing investigation has not been concluded either, as with numerous other complaints on Roma issues pending for years, indicating that the very efficient in other matters Ombudsman has no particular interest in Roma cases.

When queried by UN and Council of Europe (CoE) human rights bodies in 2004 and 2005 (UN CESCR, UN HRC and CoE ECSR), Greece unabashedly claimed falsely that these Roma have been relocated successfully or that rent subsidies have been paid regularly. In a landmark decision published in June 2005, the CoE’s European Committee of Social Rights found that the insufficiency of permanent dwellings, lack of temporary camping sites and forced evictions of Roma in Greece constitute a violation of Article 16 of the European Social Charter. GHM which gave evidence to the ECSR included in it the Marousi Roma case. Greece has ignored this conviction and continued not providing adequate housing and even evicting the Roma in general; while it continues not honoring its contract with the Roma community evicted for the Olympic Games.

On the occasion of this World Premiere, GHM calls on media and international organizations concerned to focus on this case of blatant human rights violations and breach of contract by giving coverage or sending protest to Greek, EU, CoE and UN competent authorities.

Film producers can be reached at Lauren@thepattern.net
