

# **DENYING ETHNIC IDENTITY**

## **The Macedonians of Greece**

**Human Rights Watch/Helsinki  
(formerly Helsinki Watch)**

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***Human Rights Watch/Helsinki***

**Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, formerly Helsinki Watch, was established in 1978 to monitor and promote domestic and international compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki accords. It is affiliated with the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, which is based in Vienna. The staff includes Jeri Laber, executive director; Lois Whitman, deputy director; Holly Cartner and Julie Mertus, counsels; Erika Dailey, Rachel Denber, Ivana Nizich and Christopher Panico, research associates; Christina Derry, Ivan Lupis, Alexander Petrov and Isabelle Tin-Aung, associates. The advisory committee chair is Jonathan Fanton; Alice Henkin is vice chair.**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**This report is based largely on information gathered by a fact-finding mission in the Macedonian region in northern Greece in July 1993, organized and co-ordinated by the Minority Rights Group-Greece. The participants were Panayote Dimitras, representing the Minority Rights Group-Greece; Erik Siesby, head of the Danish Helsinki Committee; and Lois Whitman, the Deputy Director of Human Rights Watch/Helsinki. The report was written by Lois Whitman and edited by Jeri Laber, the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch/Helsinki.**

**The Greek Foreign Ministry, which initially refused to meet with the three groups making up the fact-finding mission, was subsequently very cooperative with Human Rights Watch/Helsinki in answering questions and providing information. Macedonian rights activists were very helpful in providing interviews and information, sometimes at considerable risk. In many cases activists and others interviewed by the mission requested that their names not be used, for fear of retaliation by authorities.**

## **FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>CSCE</b>	<b>Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe</b>
<b>ECHR</b>	<b>European Convention on Human Rights</b>
<b>FYRM</b>	<b>Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</b>
<b>ICCPR</b>	<b>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</b>
<b>MMBP</b>	<b>Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity</b>
<b>MMHR</b>	<b>Macedonian Movement for Human Rights</b>





## **INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSIONS**

**The Greek government views the term "Macedonian" as a geographic term that describes all Greek citizens living in the Macedonian region in northern Greece. The government denies the assertions of the ethnic Macedonians<sup>1</sup> in Greece that they are a minority group; officials refer to them as "Slavophone Greeks" or "bilinguals."<sup>2</sup> The Greek government asserts that there is only one minority in Greece—the Muslim (Turkish) minority in Western Thrace, whose existence was confirmed in the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 which established the rights of the Muslim minority in Greece and of the Greek minority in Turkey.**

**Ethnic Macedonians, on the other hand, take the term "Macedonian" to mean a person of Slavic descent who speaks, or whose ancestors spoke, Macedonian, and who has a culture and customs different from those of the Greek majority. According to anthropologists who have studied the area, Macedonian ethnic identity has existed since at least the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>**

**In July 1993, a fact-finding mission made up of representatives of three organizations, the Danish Helsinki Committee, Minority Rights Group-Greece, and Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, went to northern Greece to look into the situation of the Macedonian minority there. We interviewed ethnic Macedonians who consider themselves Macedonian, Macedonians who consider themselves Greeks of Macedonian origin, and Greeks not of Macedonian origin who identify themselves as Greek.**

**The mission's time was spent largely in the western part of the Greek Macedonian region; we interviewed dozens of people in Florina, Meliti, Kelli, Lofi, Akritas and Aridea, including mayors, village presidents, the nomarch (regional district head, or prefect), the bishop and several priests, human rights activists and ordinary citizens. The climate of fear was striking; a large number of people asked the mission not to use their names, for fear of losing their civil service jobs**

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<sup>1</sup> In this report the word "Macedonian" refers to a person who considers him- or herself to be a member of an ethnic Macedonian minority in the Macedonian region of northern Greece; it does not refer to a Macedonian from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia unless that is specifically stated.

<sup>2</sup> For a report on the treatment of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria, see Helsinki Watch newsletter: "Destroying Ethnic Identity: Selective Persecution of Macedonians in Bulgaria," 1991.

<sup>3</sup> See section on Denial of Ethnic Identity, below.

or being harassed by police.

The mission also journeyed to Bitola in the southern region of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to interview ethnic Macedonian political refugees from Greece who have been denied the right to regain their citizenship or property (taken from them after the Greek Civil War) or to visit relatives and friends in northern Greece.

Each of the groups that took part in the mission is producing its own report.

On the basis of the evidence obtained during the fact-finding mission, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has concluded that:

\* an ethnic Macedonian minority with its own language and culture exists in northern Greece;

\* the Greek government has denied the ethnic identity of the ethnic Macedonian minority in violation of international human rights laws and agreements. This is evidenced by open statements by Greek officials; by the government's denial of the existence of a Macedonian language; by the government's refusal to permit a "Center of Macedonian Culture;" and by the government's refusal in the recent past to permit the performance of Macedonian songs and dances;

\* freedom of expression is restricted for ethnic Macedonians in violation of international human rights laws. Some rights activists have been prosecuted and convicted for the peaceful expression of their views; although some of these charges were eventually dropped due to a recent change in the law, some convictions are still in effect;

\* the Greek government discriminates against the ethnic Macedonian minority in violation of international laws and agreements to which it is a party;

\* ethnic Macedonian political refugees who fled northern Greece after the Greek Civil War, as well as their descendants who define themselves as "Macedonians," are denied permission to regain their citizenship, to resettle, or to visit northern Greece; in contrast, political refugees who define themselves as Greeks are permitted to do so;

\* **the teaching of the Macedonian language is not permitted;**

\* **ethnic Macedonians were discriminated against in employment in the public sector in the past, and may suffer from such discrimination at present; the Greek government should examine its employment practices to determine whether such discrimination exists today;**

\* **ethnic Macedonians, and particularly Macedonian rights activists, are harassed by the government, followed and threatened by security forces, and subjected to economic and social pressures resulting from government harassment; this has led to a marked climate of fear in which many ethnic Macedonians are reluctant to assert their Macedonian identity or to express their views openly.**

**Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has made a number of recommendations to the Greek government; they are detailed at the end of this report.**

## **BACKGROUND**

Located in the center of the Balkan peninsula, the geographic region of Macedonia is divided among Bulgaria, Greece, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRM).<sup>4</sup> It has been a "source of conflict in the Balkans since the 19th century."<sup>5</sup> Currently it is the focus of an acrimonious dispute between the governments of Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia over the right to the name "Macedonia" and certain historical symbols.<sup>6</sup> The greater geographic area of Macedonia contains Slavs, Greeks, Bulgarians, Turks, Romany (Gypsies), Vlachs and others. Whether most of its inhabitants are a distinct Macedonian ethnic group, rather than Bulgarians, Greeks or Serbs, continues to be a subject of disagreement.<sup>7</sup>

For nearly five centuries, most of the Balkan peninsula was ruled by the Ottoman Empire. After the break-up of the Ottoman Empire and at the conclusion of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), Macedonia was divided among Bulgaria (sometimes known as Pirin Macedonia, for the Pirin Mountains), Serbia (Vardar Macedonia, for the Vardar River) and Greece<sup>8</sup> (Aegean or Greek Macedonia<sup>9</sup>); a small area was given to Albania.

Greek Macedonia is a rugged, mountainous area in northern Greece of bitterly cold winters and extremely hot summers. Its population is made up

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<sup>4</sup> The geographic region of Macedonia is generally considered to be the area bounded by the Skopska Crna Gora and the Shar Planina mountains on the north; the Rila and Rhodope mountains on the east; the Aegean coast including Thessaloniki, Mount Olympus and the Pindus mountains on the south; and by Lake Ohrid and the Prespa lakes on the west.

<sup>5</sup> Duncan M. Perry, "Macedonia: From Independence to Recognition," RFE/RFL Research Report, Vol. 3, No. 1, 7 January 1994, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> Following a dispute with Greece over the name "Macedonia," the country was admitted to the United Nations under the temporary name, "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRM)." The dispute over the country's name has not yet been finally resolved.

<sup>7</sup> Duncan Perry, p. 119.

<sup>8</sup> About 50 percent of Macedonian territory now lies within the borders of Greece; 40 percent in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and 10 percent in western Bulgaria.

<sup>9</sup> The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia refers to that area as "Aegean Macedonia;" the Greek government as "Greek Macedonia." In this report we use both terms.

largely of two groups of Greek citizens. One group consists of ethnic Macedonians, often called locals (dopii), a Slavic people whose ancestors settled in the area around the sixth century and who speak, or whose ancestors spoke, Macedonian. The other major group is the Greeks, many of whom are referred to as "refugees" (prosfiges), descendants of Greeks who were settled in the area during the 1920s.

Before World War I, Macedonians were the largest ethnic group in Aegean Macedonia,<sup>10</sup> but between 1913 and 1926 major population shifts significantly changed the demographic make-up of the region. After the region's incorporation into the Greek state in 1913, many Greek civil servants, teachers and military personnel moved north and settled there. Moreover, during the post-Balkan Wars period, thousands of Macedonians and Serbs voluntarily left Greek Macedonia for Bulgaria; the Minority Rights Group puts the number at about 15,000. After the Greek-Bulgarian convention of November 1919, between 52,000 and 72,000 additional Slavs left for Bulgaria.<sup>11</sup> Simultaneously, hundreds of thousands of Greeks from Turkey, Bulgaria and Vardar Macedonia were resettled in northern Greece; estimates of the numbers involved range from 500,000 to 618,000<sup>12</sup>. Thus the ethnic character of Aegean Macedonia changed greatly; Macedonians became a numerical minority, and the number of people in Aegean Macedonia who had "a sense of Greek national identity," rather than Macedonian identity, increased substantially.<sup>13</sup>

During the years between World Wars I and II, Greece followed a policy of assimilating the Macedonian minority and Hellenizing the Macedonian region in

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<sup>10</sup> Of 1,073,549 inhabitants in 1912, 326,426 were Macedonians and 240,019 were Greeks. Turks, Pomaks, Albanians, Vlachs, Jews and Gypsies made up the rest. Minority Rights Group, *Minorities in the Balkans*, London 1989, p. 30, citing Todor Simovski, "The Balkan Wars and their Repercussions on the Ethnical Situation in Aegean Macedonia," *Glasnik*, Vol. XVI, No. 3, Skopje, 1972, note 53, p. 191.

<sup>11</sup> Minority Rights Group, *Minorities in The Balkans*, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Council for Research into South-Eastern Europe, *Macedonia and its Relations with Greece*, Skopje, 1993, p.71.

<sup>13</sup> Loring M. Danforth, "Claims to Macedonian identity: the Macedonian question and the breakup of Yugoslavia," *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 9, No. 4, August 1993, p. 4.

northern Greece.<sup>14</sup> The government changed place names and personal names from Macedonian to Greek,<sup>15</sup> ordered religious services to be performed in Greek, and altered religious icons.<sup>16</sup>

Under the Metaxas dictatorship in Greece (1936-1941), conditions of the Macedonian minority deteriorated markedly. More than 5,000 Macedonians from the Yugoslav border area were interned, the use of the Macedonian language was forbidden, and Macedonians were required to attend night school to learn Greek.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, many of those who spoke Macedonian were fined or beaten.

Evangelos Kofos reports that

The Metaxas regime, haunted by the specter of Slavism and communism, initiated a policy of accelerated assimilation.

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<sup>14</sup> Evangelos Kofos, the Special Counsellor on Balkan Affairs in the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reports that

[t]he Greek state, like other Eastern European countries of the interwar period, had pursued a policy of assimilation of ethnic groups. After World War I, and some hesitation in the early 1920s, it had decided to treat the remaining Slav-speakers as Slavophone Greeks.

Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*, Aristide D. Caratzas, Publisher, New Rochelle, N.Y., 1993, page 255.

<sup>15</sup> Decree No. 332 of 1926 ordered the Slavic names of towns, villages, mountains and rivers changed to Greek names. See Appendix A for a list of place names changed according to Decree 332.

Law No. 87 of 1936 ordered Macedonians to change their names to Greek names. (Report from Association of Refugee Children from Aegean Macedonia (undated), p. 2.)

<sup>16</sup> The Greek Official Gazette published an order on July 15, 1927, decreeing the erasure of all old Slavic inscriptions from churches; church services in the Slavic language were forbidden, and Slavs (Macedonians) were forbidden to use the Slavic (Macedonian) language. (Conversation with Kole Mangov, leader of organization "Dignity," in Skopje, FYRM, July 1993.)

<sup>17</sup> Minority Rights Group, *Minorities in the Balkans*, p. 30.

**Applied by incompetent and short-sighted civil servants, it antagonized even Slavophones of the Greek faction. To peasants of Bulgarian orientation (ethnic Macedonians) it served as proof that the Greek state could not offer them a national shelter. In 1941, the occupation of Greece by the Germans and the entrance of Bulgarian troops in eastern Macedonia and Thrace offered the opportunity for accumulated bitterness to reach maturity.<sup>18</sup>**

**In 1959, several Macedonian villages introduced "'language oaths' . . . administered in several Macedonian villages, which required Macedonians to swear that they would renounce their 'Slavic dialect' and from then on speak only Greek."<sup>19</sup>**

**The July 1993 fact-finding mission to northern Greece talked with older Macedonians who vividly recalled that period—compulsory language classes and beatings of those who refused to comply.**

**During the Greek Civil War (1946-49) that followed World War II, many in Greek Macedonia who identified themselves as Macedonians fought with the communists (Partisans) and were defeated. During and after the war thousands of ethnic Macedonians fled; many thousands went to Yugoslavia. The number of those who fled has been estimated by Kofos, reflecting the Greek point of view, at 35,000.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Macedonian sources contend that the number reached 213,000, and assert that some of the refugees were forcibly exiled.<sup>21</sup> Thousands of these refugees were reportedly children between the ages of two and fourteen;<sup>22</sup> some parents of the children later said that the children had been**

<sup>18</sup> Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*, p. 255.

<sup>19</sup> Danforth, *Anthropology Today*, p. 4. The villages in which oaths were required in 1959 were Kardha (Ptolemaida District), Kria Nera (Kastorian prefecture), and Atrapos (Florina prefecture).

<sup>20</sup> Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*, p. 186.

<sup>21</sup> Council for Research into Southeastern Europe of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, *Macedonia and its Relations with Greece*, Skopje, 1993, p. 82.

<sup>22</sup> Minority Rights Group, *Minorities in the Balkans*, p. 31.

taken from them by force, while others stated that they had sent the children voluntarily to protect them from the war.

A few years earlier, in August 1944, Yugoslav Marshal Tito had established the People's Republic of Macedonia as one of the republics of the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; its capital was Skopje. Within the next few years the Macedonian language was standardized, and a Macedonian Orthodox Church recognized.<sup>23</sup> Ethnic Macedonians living in Greek Macedonia, many of whom called themselves "Bulgarians"

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<sup>23</sup> Danforth, *Anthropology Today*, p. 4. The Macedonian Orthodox Church formally split from the Serbian Church in the 1960s.



before that time, increasingly began to refer to themselves as "Macedonians."<sup>24</sup>

In 1947 those who had fought against the government in the civil war and fled Greece were deprived of their citizenship<sup>25</sup> and their property.<sup>26</sup>

In 1982, a Greek ministerial decree<sup>27</sup> provided that "all Greeks by genus (i.e. of Greek origin) who during the Civil War of 1946-1949 and because of it have fled abroad as political refugees may return to Greece, in spite (of the fact) that Greek citizenship has been taken away from them."<sup>28</sup> In 1985, a law was enacted that permitted political refugees who were "Greek by origin" to reclaim their property, thus excluding Macedonians from doing so.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Danforth, *Anthropology Today*, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Decree LZ/1947; later by Law 2536/1953.

<sup>26</sup> Decrees M/1948, N/1948, and Law 2536/1953.

<sup>27</sup> Decree Number 106841 of December 29, 1982.

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix B for full text.

<sup>29</sup> Law No. 1540/85. See Appendix C for full text.

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has been unable to obtain accurate figures on the number of people "of Greek origin" who availed themselves of the 1982 law, but the number is in the thousands.<sup>30</sup> Those who considered themselves Macedonians, although born in Greece, or children of parents born in Greece, were not permitted to return, even, for the most part, to visit.

To this day, ethnic Macedonian families are divided, with some members living in the FYRM and others in Aegean Macedonia. Those living in the FYRM are for the most part refused admittance to Greek Macedonia, while those living in Greek Macedonia are normally allowed to visit the FYRM, but frequently suffer harassment at the hands of Greek border officials.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See section on discrimination, below.

<sup>31</sup> See section on harassment, below.

## **DENIAL OF ETHNIC IDENTITY**

**The Greek government denies that a Macedonian minority exists in Greece. It refers to ethnic Macedonians as "Slavophones" or "Slav-speakers." The official Greek position is that the Greek state is ethnically homogeneous, the only exception being the Muslim minority in western Thrace (the Turkish minority<sup>32</sup>) whose existence was confirmed in 1923 by the Lausanne Treaty.**

**A publication issued by the Greek Foreign Ministry, *The Macedonian Affair: A Historical Review of the Attempts to Create a Counterfeit Nation*, Institute of International Political and Strategic Studies (undated; apparently issued in 1991), states:**

**Greece rejects the claim advanced by Skopje for recognition of a "Macedonian" minority for the very simple reason that since the Greek-Bulgarian exchange of populations in 1919 and the departure of the "Slav-Macedonians" in 1949 there has been no Slav minority in Greece ....**

**In the past, there were undoubtedly persons with a Slavic national consciousness, who sometimes behaved as Bulgarians and sometimes as Slav-Macedonians. But after the Second World War and the end of the Greek Civil War, these persons took refuge elsewhere, principally in Yugoslavia . . . a very small group still speak(s) the dialect in Greece. (Page 30.)**

**The position of the Greek government is reflected in statements by local Greek officials as well. Florina Nomarch (head of the regional department, or prefecture) Nikolas Koukoulas<sup>33</sup> told the fact-finding mission in July 1993: "There**

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<sup>32</sup> See Helsinki Watch report, *Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Turks of Greece*, August 1990; and Helsinki Watch newsletter, "Greece: Improvements for Turkish minority; problems remain," April 1992. The Greek government recognizes the Muslim minority only as a religious group; it denies them the right to identify themselves as a "Turkish" minority.

<sup>33</sup> Mr. Koukoulas was replaced as nomarch after the mission's visit, following the election of a new national government.

**is no minority here; everyone in the Macedonian region is Greek."<sup>34</sup> The Mayor of the city of Florina, Anastasios X. Kotsopoulos, told the mission: "There are no minorities in Greece; everyone is Greek."**

#### **THE NUMBER OF ETHNIC MACEDONIANS**

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<sup>34</sup> This interview, like all others referred to in this report, unless otherwise specified, took place in the Macedonian region of northern Greece in July 1993.

**The number of ethnic Macedonians in northern Greece is a matter of dispute. Ethnic Macedonian activists in northern Greece assert that half of the population of Aegean Macedonia is of Macedonian descent—that is, about one million.<sup>35</sup> The government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia sets the figure at between 230,000 and 270,000.<sup>36</sup>**

**The Greek government reports that**

**(A)ccording to the last available Greek population figures, the population of the thirteen nomarchies (regional departments) of Macedonia was 2,121,953. . . There is no classification of the population of Greece in official censuses according to the language spoken. The last census to include such figures was in 1951 when 41,000 inhabitants throughout Greece were listed as Slav-speakers. Since then, emigration abroad as well as urbanisation trends common to all agricultural regions of Greece in the 1950s and 1960s, have sharply reduced these numbers.<sup>37</sup>**

**The 1992 *Country Report* issued by the United States Department of State declares that**

**In northern Greece is home to a small number (unofficial estimates range from well under 10,000 to nearly 50,000) of Greek citizens who are descended from speakers of a Slavic dialect. Some still speak that dialect, and a few identify themselves as "Macedonians."<sup>38</sup>**

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<sup>35</sup> Conversations with human rights activists in northern Greece in July 1993.

<sup>36</sup> Pamphlet, "Republic of Macedonia," included in information packet issued by the government of FYRM, 1993.

<sup>37</sup> Response to written questions put by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki to the Greek Foreign Ministry, November 30, 1993.

<sup>38</sup> *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1992*, U.S. Department of State, February 1993, p. 795.

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki was unable to determine with any certainty the total number of ethnic Macedonians in Greek Macedonia (including those who have primarily a Greek consciousness), or the number of ethnic Macedonians who have not become assimilated and who identify themselves primarily as Macedonian. One Greek newspaper reported in 1992 an estimate that of the 53,000 people living in the district of Florina, the largest group, 65 percent, referred to themselves as "dopii" (locals), or "local Macedonians."<sup>39</sup>

#### **MACEDONIAN ETHNIC IDENTITY**

Macedonian ethnic identity appears to have begun to develop in the nineteenth century. By 1903 a small number of intellectuals called for the recognition of the Slavs in Macedonia as a separate nationality.<sup>40</sup> By the end of World War II and the establishment of the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Macedonian ethnic consciousness was widespread in northern Greece.

Many of those who identify themselves primarily as Macedonians have intense feelings about the issue. A Macedonian rights activist who did not want his name used told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki: "If you say to someone from Meliti, 'You are not Macedonian,' he will kill you. This is especially true among the older people. The younger people are more assimilated."

Ethnicity—the combination of language, religion, stories of one's ancestors, customs, songs and dances—is a powerful force. Pavlos Voskopoulos, a member of the human rights group, the Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity (MMBP), told the fact-finding mission:

**I am a Macedonian. I am different from other Greek citizens. I have a different culture; I got it from my father and my grandfather. I speak a different language. I grew up speaking Macedonian at home and Greek in school. I was born in 1964; until I was six years old I spoke only Macedonian. Especially in the villages, people talk in Macedonian.**

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<sup>39</sup> *Ethnikos Kyrix*, April 9, 1992, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> Danforth, *Anthropology Today*, p. 7.

**The heart of the matter is that we just want to be accepted and recognized as a different ethnic group. We believe that recognizing different ethnic groups is a richness for Greece and for Europe. For eighty years the government has tried to make us Greeks.**

**Georgos Natsulis, thirty-nine, a worker in the fur business in Kastoria, told the mission:**

**My family's name was originally Nachev; they were forced to change it in the 1920s to a Greek name. Two years ago I tried to change it back. I went to the nomarch's office to do it; I was told that it was a "foreign-sounding" name, and that I could not change it. I didn't appeal the decision. In theory it is possible to appeal such a thing, but I know from talking with others that there is no way I could win. Even [rights activist] Christos Sideropoulos won't try to go back to his Slavic name. Of course there's no problem if you want to change your name from one Greek name to another.**

**Asked by a member of the mission whether a local ethnic Macedonian couple could give their child a Slavic name like Boris, a small group of men sitting in a coffee house in the village of Lofi laughed heartily. One replied:**

**You couldn't possibly do that. When a baby is born you take the birth certificate without a name to the church and tell the priest what you want the baby's name to be. The church accepts only Greek names. So in order for the baby to be properly registered with the government, you have to give it a Greek name.**

**Asked by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki whether parents would be allowed to give their children Slavic names, the Greek Foreign Ministry replied:**

**Name-giving in Greece is, in essence, a private affair and the state has no jurisdiction over it. The names of children are chosen by the parents or the godparents and are sanctioned by religious ceremonies (Christian, Jewish, Moslem). Those not**

**belonging to a religious denomination may have their children named by a civic procedure. Only abusive names are excluded by law to protect the child's personality. Consequently, names such as [Boris] may be found, although rarely, among Greek citizens.**

**However, when asked by the mission in Florina whether a child could be named "Boris," Greek priest Father Irineos Hatziefrimidis said:**

**No one has ever asked that. We have a list of saints, and we give the children names from that list, or sometimes historical names like Pericles.**

**The freedom to perform Macedonian songs and dances openly is a deeply-felt issue among Macedonians. Macedonians told the fact-finding mission that Greek authorities had in recent years forbade the performance at festivals of Macedonian songs and dances. In 1990, the organizers of a local festival were ordered to report ahead of time what dances would be performed; they later reported that one hundred Greek police officials were present at the time of the festival to make sure that no Macedonian dances were performed.**

**The July 1993 fact-finding mission was told by Macedonian rights activists that in 1992 the performance of Macedonian songs and dances during a festival had been stopped by Greek officials. However, the mission attended a folk festival in Meliti in July 1993 and found that Macedonian ethnic dances, as well as dances of other groups, were performed without problems.**

**The mission, however, also heard of cases in which Macedonian songs and dances are still reportedly forbidden. For example, a young Macedonian man who was married in early 1993 and did not want his name used told the mission:**

**My wife is from Bitola, in FYRM. At first the priest refused to marry us because she is from the republic, but finally, after conferring with the mayor, he said he would, but only on condition that we not sing or dance any Macedonian songs or dances. So we had a religious ceremony but no celebration.**

**Asked by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki whether ethnic Macedonians were allowed to sing Macedonian songs and dance Macedonian dances, the Greek Foreign Ministry replied:**



**Greek citizens all over Greece are allowed, and, indeed, assisted in preserving their own local cultural customs . . . . The performance of local dances and songs are [sic] very common in [Macedonia].<sup>41</sup>**

**Expanding on this statement, Greek Consul General Charalambos Rocanas told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki:**

**Everybody is free to sing and dance. But there is one popular song that says, "Go away Turks"—it was sung against the Ottoman Turks. Some locals have changed it and sung it as "Go away Greeks." This creates a problem: some citizen might sue, or the judiciary might find the singers guilty of some offense.<sup>42</sup>**

**As for place names, Greek authorities continue to change some, even today. The mission learned that the name of the Pozar baths in the Pella district had recently been changed to the Loutraki baths. In another instance, authorities were attempting in July 1993 to change the name of the Kopano village in the Katerini district.**

**ETHNIC MACEDONIANS WHOSE IDENTITY IS GREEK, RATHER THAN  
MACEDONIAN**

**The fact-finding mission interviewed a number of Greeks of Macedonian origin who identify themselves as Greek. One of them, Alexander Traikos, the thirty-five-year-old mayor (president of the township council) of the town of Kelli, said:**

**As to my own identity: I am a Greek. Of course I am a Macedonian, but a Greek Macedonian. Of course others may think differently, and maybe some believe there is**

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<sup>41</sup> Letter from Greek Foreign Ministry, December 1, 1993.

<sup>42</sup> Telephone conversation, December 1, 1993.

**discrimination against locals.**

**Theophilos Dafkos, an agronomist whose parents were born in Bitola in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, told the mission:**

**I speak Macedonian, but I am a Greek. The people who claim to be Macedonian are really Slavs. There is no such thing as a Macedonian nation. Ninety-seven percent of the people in northern Greece are purely Greek. A few people who try to make trouble work through the government of Skopje to bring in money from Australia and Canada (from Macedonian emigres). They spread propaganda to create unrest in the area and divide people. They try to take advantage of the people who speak two languages--they are about 40 percent of the population. But everyone is Greek.**

**Yiannis Belkas, a Vlach journalist with a Florina newspaper, said:**

**My parents came from Bitola. I speak and understand the idiom a little. But I spoke Greek as a child. Bilinguals have a Greek consciousness, not Macedonian. Above all, my heart is Greek. The history and archeological finds in the area are all Greek. No one's human rights are oppressed in our area.**

#### **REQUIREMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW**

**The Greek government's denial of the existence of the Macedonian minority violates international human rights agreements to which the government of Greece is a party. First, minority identity is a matter to be determined by an individual, and not by the state. The 1990 Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) stated:**

**To belong to a national minority is a matter of a person's individual choice and no disadvantage may arise from the exercise of such choice. Persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and**

**develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will. (Paragraph 32)**

**Moreover, the CSCE participating states have emphasized the importance of respecting minority rights:**

**The participating States ... reaffirm that respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities as part of universally recognized human rights is an essential factor for peace, justice, stability and democracy in the participating States. (Copenhagen Document, paragraph 30.)**

**The United Nations has recognized the responsibilities of states in relation to their minority populations:**

**States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity. (UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, Article 1(1), adopted December 18, 1992.)<sup>43</sup>**

**The heads of state of the member states of the Council of Europe stated in the Vienna Declaration of October 9, 1993:**

**States should create the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to develop their culture, while preserving their religion, traditions and customs. These persons must be able to use their language both in private and in public and should be able to use it, under certain conditions, in their relations with the public authorities. (Appendix II: National Minorities)**

**The Greek government has signed and agreed to these CSCE documents.**

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<sup>43</sup> See Appendix D for full text.

**The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) protects the rights of children belonging to minorities:**

**In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language (Article 30).<sup>44</sup>**

**Greece's denial of the existence of the Macedonian minority clearly contravenes its obligations under international law and agreements.**

#### **DENIAL OF PERMISSION TO ESTABLISH CENTER OF MACEDONIAN CULTURE**

**The Greek government's denial of the existence of a Macedonian minority has resulted in its outlawing the establishment of a Macedonian cultural association.**

**In 1990 several residents of Florina applied to a Greek court for permission to register a cultural association called the "Center for Macedonian Culture." In August 1990, the Multimember High Court in Florina denied the application. Its reasons included:**

**\* Articles in three Greek newspapers reported in June 1990 that two of the association's founding members, Christos Sideropoulos and Stavros Anastasiadis, had affirmed the existence of a "Macedonian minority in Greece;"**

**\* Both men had taken part in a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Copenhagen in June 1990 where they alleged the existence of a Macedonian minority in Greece and**

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<sup>44</sup> Greece ratified the Convention on May 11, 1993.

**congratulated a Turkish professor about statements detrimental to Greece;**

**\* A third founding member, Konstandinos Gotsis, had refused to state clearly in court in another proceeding that he is a Greek.**

**On the basis of the "above proven circumstances" the court "accepted the notion that the true goal of the abovementioned society is . . . to affirm the idea of the existence of a Macedonian minority in Greece, which contradicts its [Greece's] national interests and the law.<sup>45</sup> On June 20, 1991, the court's decision was affirmed by an appellate court in Thessaloniki; an appeal to the highest Greek court is pending.**

**The Greek government's action in this case violates international standards and agreements to which it is a party.**

**The rights of minorities to enjoy their own cultures and to establish their own associations were recognized by the United Nations in its Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (adopted by the General Assembly on February 3, 1993):**

**Persons belonging to . . . minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture . . . in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination (Article 2(1)).**

**Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own associations (Article 2(4)).**

**The Report on the CSCE Meeting of Experts on National Minorities (Geneva, 1991), in which Greece took part, contains similar protections:**

**[P]ersons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their . . . cultural . . . identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will (Section III,**

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<sup>45</sup> For the full text of the decision, see Appendix E.

paragraph 4).

**Freedom of association is of course protected by international human right laws, including the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 11) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 20).**

## **RESTRICTIONS ON FREE EXPRESSION**

**The Constitution of Greece provides that: "The press is free. Censorship and all other preventive measures are prohibited" (Article 14.2). In spite of these guarantees, free speech is restricted by law and in practice. Article 141 of the Penal Code prohibits "exposing the friendly relations of the Greek State with foreign states to danger of disturbance." Article 191 of the Penal Code forbids**

**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.<sup>46</sup>**

**Article 192 of the Penal Code states:**

**One who publicly and by any means causes or incites citizens to commit acts of violence upon each other or to disturb the peace through disharmony among them shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than two years unless a greater punishment is imposed by another provision.**

**Until its repeal in December 1993, Article 181 of the Penal Code forbade "insulting authority."**

**These laws have been used to prosecute political dissenters. In a series of criminal cases in 1992 and 1993, the Greek government prosecuted Greek citizens who spoke openly of a Macedonian minority or of issues dealing with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.<sup>47</sup>**

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<sup>46</sup> U.S. Department of State Country Report on Greece, February 1994, p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> For full details, see Helsinki Watch/Fund for Free Expression newsletter, "Greece: Free Speech on Trial: Government Stifles Dissent on Macedonia," July 1993.

On May 7, 1993, a court in Athens acquitted five members of the Organosi Sosialistiki Epanatasi (OSE), a socialist group, who had been tried for producing a pamphlet of nine essays on "The Crisis in the Balkans: The Macedonian Question and the Working Class." The prosecutor's office announced a few days later that it would appeal the verdict. When the new government of Andreas Papandreu repealed Article 181 of the Penal Code in December 1993, it also proscribed prosecutions for crimes committed "through the press." As a result, the appeal was dropped and the acquittal stands.<sup>48</sup>

In June 1993, two Macedonian minority activists, Christos Sideropoulos and Tasos Boulis, were sentenced to five months in prison and a fine of 100,000 drachmas (about \$435) for stating in an interview with *Ena* magazine that they "feel Macedonian," and for claiming that there are one million Macedonians in Greece. The two men were convicted of "spreading false information about the

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<sup>48</sup> On January 20, 1994, in response to a question posed to the Greek Consul General in New York, the Greek Foreign Ministry stated:

Article 45 of Law 2172/16 Dec. 1993 provided that all crimes perpetrated through the Press or through radio and television media, as well as all unserved sentences for such crimes be cancelled.

The purpose of this provision of Law was to render less acute the atmosphere of recent years, with regard to the way the Press operated in freely expressing views and criticism. It is noteworthy that this particular provision of the Law was supported in Parliament by all Parties and was welcomed by the Press and other media.

It is through this provision of Law that the sentence which a court had earlier imposed on journalist Mr. Spyros Karatzaferis was abolished. Mr. Karatzaferis has already returned to Greece and is currently working as a news director at a T.V. channel.

The Greek government has stated its intention to review the existing Press legislation, which it considers obsolete and posing restrictions on Press Freedom. The Departments of Justice and Press and Information are already working in this direction, in cooperation with other interested parties.



**non-Greekness of Macedonia" and the existence of a Macedonian minority on Greek territory which is not officially recognized, and with instigating conflict among Greek citizens by differentiating between the speakers of a Slavic language and Greeks.<sup>49</sup> The charges against Sideropoulos and Boulis were dropped as a result of the government's recent proscription of prosecutions of crimes "committed through the press."**

**Four members of an anti-nationalist group, Stratis Bournazos, Christina Tsamoura, Vangelio Sotiropoulou and Maria Kalogeropoulou, were convicted in May 1992 and sentenced to nineteen months in prison for distributing a leaflet entitled, "Our neighbors are not our enemies. No to Nationalism and War." The leaflet called for peace in the Balkans and expressed opposition to the Greek government's foreign policy and domestic policy with regard to ethnic minorities in Greece. All four were charged with disseminating false information, attempting to incite citizen acts of violence or dissension, and disturbing friendly relations with another country. The case was on appeal until charges were dropped in January 1994 because of the new law.**

**Michail Papadakis, a seventeen-year-old high school student, was arrested during a demonstration on Macedonia in Athens on December 10, 1992, for distributing a leaflet that said, "Don't be consumed by nationalism. Alexander the Great: war criminal. Macedonia belongs to its people. There are no races; we are all of mixed descent." He was convicted on December 17, 1992, of attempting to incite divisions among citizens, disturbing the peace, and carrying a weapon. (Papadakis was said to have been carrying an iron bar, but it was not found, and no evidence was introduced to corroborate the charge.) He was sentenced to one year in prison but was freed pending his appeal, which is scheduled for November 1995.**

**In January 1992, six members of the Organization for the Reconstruction of the Communist Party, Theodoros Pagomenos, Dionysis Gournas, Roula Adamopoulou, Stergios Gioulakis, Anna Stai, and Kostas Koutelos, were convicted of defaming the authorities, inciting citizens to commit acts of violence and dividing the community, and illegally posting bills. The posters said: "No to Patriots. Recognize Slav-Macedonia." Each received a sentence of six-and-a-half months; all are free pending the appeal, which is scheduled for November 1995.**

**Human Rights Watch/Helsinki does not know of any ethnic Macedonian who is currently serving a prison sentence for the peaceful expression of his or**

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<sup>49</sup> See Appendix F for full text of the charges against Sidiropoulos and Boulis.

her views.

**Prosecuting people for the peaceful expression of their views, popular or unpopular, is forbidden under international human rights laws and agreements. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states:**

**Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.**

**This guarantee of the right to free expression is spelled out more fully in Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) (1953).**

## **DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE MACEDONIAN MINORITY**

**International human rights law forbids a state from discriminating against its people. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:**

**All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination (Article 7).**

**Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Greece is a state party, states:**

**The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.**

**Moreover, the Greek Constitution affirms protections for the rights of all Greeks:**

**Article 5 (2): This provision guarantees for all persons living within the Greek borders absolute protection of their rights and freedoms, regardless of their nationality, race, language or religious or political beliefs.**

**In spite of this avowal, as well as the international human rights laws forbidding discrimination, the Greek government has discriminated against and failed to protect the rights of its Macedonian minority.**

## **DEPRIVATION OF CITIZENSHIP AND DENIAL OF VISAS**

**As discussed earlier in the background section of this report, thousands of ethnic Macedonians--the number is in dispute--fled Greece after the Greek Civil War (1946-49). In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Greek government stripped**

these exiles of their Greek citizenship.<sup>50</sup> Then in 1982 the government enacted an amnesty law (Law No. 400/76) permitting repatriation and return of Greek citizenship to these political refugees. However, the ministerial decree ordering these actions stated that those free to return were "all Greeks by genus [origin] who during the Civil War of 1946-1949 and because of it have fled abroad as political refugees."<sup>51</sup> The phrase "by genus" is interpreted by the Greek government to mean all those who identify themselves primarily as Greeks, and not as Macedonians, regardless of their birthplace or heritage. Those who consider themselves Macedonians, although born in Greece or children of parents born in Greece, have been unable to avail themselves of the opportunity to return to Greece and resume their citizenship and, in many cases, property.

Refugees who identify themselves as "Greek," however, are permitted to return. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has not been able to determine the exact number of "Greek-identified" political refugees who returned under this law. Responding to questions from Human Rights Watch/Helsinki about the number of people who took advantage of the law, the Greek Foreign Ministry said:

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<sup>50</sup> Among those stripped of their citizenship were families—wives, children, other relatives—of Macedonians who had fought with the Partisans. No individual hearings were held as to the actions of family members or, in fact, of Partisans themselves. All were stripped of citizenship without the internationally-accepted rights to due process: the presumption of innocence; notice of the charges; a fair hearing before an independent and impartial tribunal; opportunity to defend oneself, including the right to confront witnesses and to present witnesses on one's own behalf, and legal representation.

<sup>51</sup> See Appendix B for full text of the decree.

In the period between 1974 and 1981 (before the law was passed), approximately 35,000 persons were repatriated, while in the period between 1981 and 1987 (partly before and partly after the passage of the law) the process was completed with the return to Greece of another 17,000 persons, approximately.<sup>52</sup>

Law no. 1540/85 of April 10, 1985, stated that political refugees could regain property taken by the Greek government as long as they were "Greeks by genus."<sup>53</sup> Here again the Greek government discriminated against ethnic Macedonians who, because they were not considered "of Greek genus," would be unable to reclaim their confiscated property.

The Greek government's actions in admitting "Greek Greeks" who fought against the government during the civil war, but not ethnic Macedonians or their descendants, is discriminatory. It violates international human rights law and agreements that prohibit discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin to which Greece is a party, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 7), the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Article 14), the Paris Charter of the CSCE (Section on Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law), and the 1993 Vienna Declaration of the heads of state of the Council of Europe.

In Bitola, in the southern region of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the fact-finding mission interviewed Macedonians who had not been permitted to return to Greece, either to reclaim their citizenship or simply to visit:

\* *Petra Shorev*, a seventy-five-year-old man born in Edessa who lives in Skopje (the capital of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), crying, told the mission in Bitola that he wants to visit his parents' graves, but is not allowed into Greece.

**My heart is suffering. I am a wounded man. I  
don't know if I will be alive tomorrow or next**

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<sup>52</sup> Letter from Consul General Charalambos Rocanas, New York, December 22, 1993.

The number of political refugees now living in FYRM is estimated to be between 30,000 and 40,000.

<sup>53</sup> See Appendix C for full text of the law.

year to see their graves. I go to the border and ask to visit, but the guards won't let me. My nephew used to visit, but now he is afraid to, since Macedonian independence. I have two sisters in Thessaloniki, but they're afraid to try to visit me, too. I left in 1944. I never got a notice that the Greeks had taken away my citizenship. I became a Yugoslav citizen in 1957. I have property in Greece, in Edessa. I can't go to claim it, and I was never paid for it.

\* *Mitsho Apostolov*, sixty-two, who lives in Skopje, told the mission in Bitola that he left Greece in 1949 as a Partisan, and has not been allowed back.

I want to go back and see my village, but I can't even visit it. I want to light candles on the graves of my parents. My children are not allowed to visit and neither are my grandchildren. I never got a notice that they had taken away my citizenship. I had fields in Greece; the government took them and never paid me for them. I have nephews who work in Florina. Occasionally they visit me here.

\* *Stepho Kostovsky*, born in 1925 in Itia in Aegean Macedonia, now living in Bitola, told the mission:

The Greeks don't let me go back to Itia. When my sister died, they let me go in for just that one day. I didn't fight with the Partisans, but I was sentenced to prison in Athens in 1949--they gave me a death sentence--for being a communist. But I was never a communist. I spent seven years in prison and got out in 1956. I ran away to Bitola at night through the fields.

\* ***Vangelia Gotshka***, a woman born in Meliti in 1923 and now living in the FYRM, told the mission in Bitola:

I came to Macedonia in 1948, during the Partisan War. I was a member of the Partisans; I did administrative jobs. The only time I've been back was in April of 1985, when Papandreou let me and others go back without a visa for three days at Easter. Two or three thousand people went back at that time for three days; others went to the border as soon as they heard about it, but weren't let in. Papandreou did it because an election was coming up. There were two weddings in my family last month and I wasn't allowed to see either of my nephews married.

\* ***Gotshkova Zakka*** a woman born in 1927 in Papadia, "the last village before the mountains" at the border, now living in Skopje, told the mission:

I worked for the Partisans during the war. My village was burned down, so those who could escape came to Yugoslavia. The only time I've been back was in 1982, when I went into Greece through Turkey. I had a transit visa that was good for two to three days. In 1985 I went to the border to try to get in during the three-day amnesty, but I was too late. I want desperately to visit, to light candles at my brother's grave. I've missed two family weddings recently.

\* ***Sacha Popdimitrova***, a sixty-three-year-old woman born in Kelli in Greek Macedonia, told the mission in Bitola:

I was a Partisan. I spent twelve years in prison in Athens, between 1948 and 1960. The

**Partisans wanted to give rights to Macedonians. I came to Yugoslavia in 1963. Now I can't go back to Greece to see my birthplace or visit my three brothers, my nephews and cousins.**

**In Meliti, in northern Greece, George Misalis, forty-one, an Australian citizen, told the mission that he had been informed by relatives living in northern Greece that he had lost his citizenship. Mr. Misalis told the mission that he thought his citizenship had been taken away pursuant to Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Law, No. 3370, enacted in 1955, but he wasn't sure.**

**Article 19 provides that:**

**A person of non-Greek ethnic origin leaving Greece without the intention of returning may be declared as having lost Greek nationality. This also applies to a person of non-Greek ethnic origin born and domiciled abroad. His minor children living abroad may be declared as having lost Greek nationality if both their parents or the surviving parent have lost the same. The Minister of the Interior decides in these matters with the concurring opinion of the National Council.**

**Under Article 19, ethnic Macedonians can be stripped of their citizenship by an administrative decree, without a hearing. According to the U.S. Department of State Country Report for Greece, issued in February 1994, 123 persons lost Greek citizenship under Article 19 in 1993.**

**Another article of the Greek Nationality Law, Article 20, provides that a person may be deprived of Greek citizenship for "committing acts contrary to the interests of Greece for the benefit of a foreign state."**

**George Misalis told the mission that he had left Greece for Australia in 1970, and had been living there since:**

**I found out a few months ago that my citizenship had been taken away in 1988 or 1989. My relatives called and told me. I was never notified by the government. Now I am trying to appeal the decision. First I have to appeal to the nomarch in Florina, and then to the Ministry of the Interior.**



**I'm a human rights activist for the rights of Macedonians. I've demonstrated in front of the Greek Embassy in Australia.**

**I was not stopped at the airport in Salonika when I arrived a few days ago, and was admitted into the country.**

**I want to find out why the government took my citizenship. I have property here, and I would lose it if I lose my citizenship. My father and mother and sister and brother are here. They are all very upset. They told me not to demonstrate. Now they are all being slandered because of what is happening to me. Because of me, no Misalis can work in the public sector now.**

**While the fact-finding mission was in Aegean Macedonia and southern FYRM, Mr. Misalis crossed the border into the FYRM to visit relatives in Bitola. When he attempted to return across the border to Greece, he was stopped and refused entry. Eventually he returned to Australia. He told the mission in Bitola that he believed that he had not been admitted back into Greece because of his participation in Australia in demonstrations for the rights of Macedonians.**

**In a letter sent on September 27, 1993, to mission participant Professor Erik Siesby, Minister Plenipotentiary Petros Anghelakis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs seems to support Mr. Misalis's contentions:**

**The person in question is Mr. George Misalis, an Australian citizen. At a time not specified, but certainly long ago, Greek security authorities had issued a circular to border immigration and passport control offices barring entrance of the said Australian citizen for reasons of security...**

**Mr. Misalis was indeed a former Greek citizen, prior to acquiring Australian citizenship, and has been deprived of his Greek citizenship on the basis of the Greek Law on Citizenship which, *inter alia*, provides that a person may be deprived of his Greek citizenship, if he/she acquired, without authorization, a foreign citizenship; or if he/she, while living abroad, has committed acts contrary to the interests of Greece for the benefit of a foreign state (Art. 20).**

**Kole Mangov, a Macedonian judge now living in FYRM who left Greece as a child in 1945, told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki in Skopje that he had tried many times to visit Greece, but had been denied permission:**

**My younger brother lives in Greece. I have claims to property there, in Vevi. My brother tried to get a lawyer in Greece to represent my interests, but three different lawyers refused the case. I took my case, that is the denial of a visa to allow me to enter Greece, to the European Commission of Human Rights in 1990. I lost the case.**

**First, the Commission said that the 1982 amnesty law says that political refugees can resettle in Greece. The decision said that the law did not apply to me, since I wanted to visit, and not to resettle.**

**Second, the Commission said that I had refused to answer all of the questions on the visa application, and that therefore Greece was entitled not to grant me a visa. The reason I did not answer all the questions was because I considered them an invasion of my privacy: the application asks a lot of questions about your family.<sup>54</sup> The Commission did not deal with the invasion of privacy question.**

**Third, the Commission said I had not exhausted all of my remedies in Greece. I told them that no lawyer would take my case. The Commission stated that there is a board in Greece that will assign a lawyer to you if no one will take your case. I didn't apply to such a board because I know that no Greek lawyer will take such a case.**

**There are now about 100,000 Macedonians in FYRM who came from Greece, or whose families came from Greece. It is a tragedy that these people cannot return to Greece, even to visit.**

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<sup>54</sup> See Appendix G for a copy of a visa application "meant only for the Yugoslav citizens who are born in Greece and of Macedonian origin."

**They can't go to funerals or weddings, or visit the graves of their parents.**

**Human rights activist Kosta Gotsis told the mission:**

**In July 1993 there was a wedding in my family. Ten family members are in Aegean Macedonia, and seventy across the border. We invited all seventy to come. None of them was allowed to come, not even the young children. The Greek consulate in Skopje would not give them visas.**

**Thousands of people from across the border have been refused permission to come to funerals here. Four months ago Kazia Katina died. Her brother in Skopje was not allowed to come in for her funeral. The former mayor of Meliti, Yannis Sovitzlis, died a few years ago. His cousin in the republic was not allowed in.**

**Dr. Pandelis Kligatsis told the mission in Florina:**

**If you die in the republic, your coffin is not allowed in for burial. A few years ago my great-uncle died in Bitola. My uncle, Charalambos Anastasiadis, went to Skopje to get permission to bring the body in for burial. The Greek consul would not give him permission.**

**Dimitris Papadimitriou, a member of the Movement for Balkan Progress, told the mission in Aridea:**

**There are many stories of people who can't return. My brother, George Papadimitriou, who lives in Czechoslovakia, left Greece 47 years ago; he's 67 now. He left during the civil war; he thinks he still has Greek citizenship, but he doesn't really know. In June 1992 he tried to visit. He arrived at the Macedonian-Greek border and was turned away. His wife was also a political refugee, but was not a Macedonian. They wouldn't let her in either, or their children. Our mother died in 1987; my brother was not allowed to come to the funeral.**

**Kelli Mayor Alexandros Traikos, who describes himself as having primarily Greek consciousness, told the mission:**

**Some people are forbidden to come into the country from across the border, but not all. If you have the right connections you may be able to come in.**

**The Greek Foreign Ministry told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that "Petitions for visits or even repatriation are examined and granted on an individual basis."<sup>55</sup>**

**The Greek government's pattern of denying entry into Greece of people who identify themselves as Macedonians or, reportedly, those who participate in demonstrations against the Greek government, violates the Concluding Document of the Vienna Follow-up Meeting to the CSCE signed in January 1989, which provides that states will respect the right of everyone to leave his own country and return to it. It also, as stated above, discriminates against Greeks not of "Greek origin" in violation of international human rights laws and agreements.**

#### **LANGUAGE**

**Macedonian, a South Slavic language spoken by Macedonians living in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was formally recognized as a language by Marshall Tito in former Yugoslavia in August 1944, when he recognized Macedonia as a separate republic of Yugoslavia. According to Aegean Macedonians, the language has existed for more than one thousand years, going back to the ninth century Old Church Slavonic used by Saints Cyril and Methodius. It is widely recognized as a Slavonic language by linguists, except in Bulgaria and in Greece.<sup>56</sup>**

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<sup>55</sup> Letter to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki from Foreign Ministry, December 1, 1993.

<sup>56</sup> See Jorn Ivar Qvonje, "The Macedonian Language," a paper by a professor of Balkan linguistics at the University of Copenhagen that was prepared for and included in Professor Erik Siesby's report, *The Slav Macedonians in Greece*, Danish Helsinki Committee in Copenhagen, December 1993, pp. 5, 7. According to Professor Qvonje:

**The Greek Government's View**

**The Greek government denies that the language spoken by the Macedonian minority in Greece is the language spoken in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, or is, in fact, a language at all; rather it is referred to as an "idiom" that has elements of Bulgarian and other languages. According to the Greek Foreign Ministry:**

**In certain border regions with Macedonia a local idiom is still spoken alongside the Greek. This idiom is a mixture of Slavonic (mainly Bulgarian), Greek, Vlach, Albanian and Turkish. Linguists before the war tended to consider Slavonic-oriented idioms in Greek Macedonia and southern Yugoslavia--now the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)--as "western**

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**The South Slav language group is divided into West-South Slav (Slovene, Croat, and Serbian) and East-South Slav languages (Macedonian and Bulgarian). The West group and the East group differ widely with respect to syntax as well as morphology.**

**Macedonian is the newest written Slav language. Codified in 1945, it was based on the central Macedonian dialects, and is written in the cyrillic alphabet like the other Slav languages in the Greek orthodox countries. A few letters differ from the neighbouring languages, Serbian and Bulgarian...**

**Because of the absence of a written language the Macedonian spoken in northern Greece is without a proper form, but it does not lack a syntax. Otherwise it could not serve as a means of communication. It is correct that the Macedonian spoken in northern Greece contains "a mixture of words from Slavic, Turkish, Greek and other languages." This reflects the common Balkan culture of the area. The vast majority of the vocabulary is, however, Slavonic.**

**Victor A. Friedman, a linguist of Slavic languages, holds that Macedonian is a recognized Balkan language containing many dialects transitional between Serbian and Bulgarian.**

**Bulgarian dialects." Since 1944, however, the idioms spoken in regions of FYROM were transformed, by government decree, into a literary language named Makedonski. Political considerations in Yugoslavia at the time sought to weaken the ties with the Bulgarian language and instead to strengthen the linguistic links with Serbo-Croatian and other Slavonic languages. As a result, this new written language became one of the official languages in former Yugoslavia. It is now the official language in FYROM.**

**On the other hand, the idiom spoken in Greek Macedonia is identified by local peoples as "dopia" (i.e. "local"), "nashi" ("our own") and/or "stariski" ("old"). It remains an oral idiom, with no written form, grammar or syntax. As a vehicle of communication still used, along with the Greek, by certain older bilingual people—numbered in the hundreds or a few thousands—it should not be confused or identified with the "Makedonski" of FYROM. The latter was developed in the context of the educational process of the former communist regime in that country. Consequently, FYROM's "Makedonski," though related, should be considered, in fact, as an alien language and should not be identified with the oral linguistic expression in certain localities in Greek Macedonia.<sup>57</sup>**

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<sup>57</sup> Letter transmitted to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki by New York Consul General Charalambos Rocanas, December 1, 1993.

**The government's refusal to acknowledge the Macedonian language has reached rather extreme limits. A Macedonian who did not want his name used told the fact-finding mission:**

**To show you how ridiculous things are: in 1988, a Macedonian businessman from across the border was in a car accident with a man from Salonika. The case went to court and documents from the Macedonian's insurance company were produced. They said "official translation from Macedonian into Greek." The judge would not accept them, as he said Macedonian was a "nonexistent language." At the appeals hearing, the documents were admitted into evidence, because the lawyer had had them translated from Macedonian into Serbo-Croatian and then from Serbo-Croatian into Greek. The documents**

**The government's viewpoint was expressed strongly to the fact-finding mission by local officials in northern Greece in July 1993. Florina Nomarch Nikolas Koukoulas told us:**

**We don't admit that there is a Slavo-Macedonian language here. The language used here is an idiomatic language with words from several languages. Most have roots in the Homeric period of Greece. The idiom is broadly spoken in the area—I don't know how many people speak it.**

**Florina Mayor Anastasios K. Kotsopoulos told the mission:**

**A small percentage of the population of Florina speaks the idiom. It has mixed linguistic elements, from Turkish, Greek, Slavic and Vlach languages. I speak it myself when necessary. There are villages where most of the elderly speak the idiom, and some of the young people.**

**Human Rights Watch/Helsinki takes no position on whether the language spoken by ethnic Macedonians in northern Greece is the same as the language spoken in FYRM or whether it is a version of that language. What is clear is that many members of the ethnic Macedonian minority speak a language different from the Greek language; they refer to that language as "the Macedonian language" or "the local language." For purposes of simplification, this report will refer to that language as "the Macedonian language."**

### **Restrictions on the Use of the Macedonian Language**

**Over the years the use of the Macedonian language has been sharply restricted in northern Greece.<sup>58</sup> According to the president of one township council who did not want his name used:**

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**therefore said "official translation from Serbo-Croatian into Greek."**

<sup>58</sup> See background section, above.

**Until 1923, no one spoke Greek here. In the villages, almost no one spoke Greek. Macedonian was the dominant language. Then there was the population exchange. Before the exchange, priests taught children the Macedonian language. After the exchange, that stopped, and all the services were in Greek as well. Everybody—Bulgarians, Turks, Greeks—has tried to impose their language on the locals.**

**In 1936 the language was banned by the Metaxas dictatorship and locals were persecuted for using it. If you said so much as stop or go in the local language, you were fined and made to drink Castor oil.**

**Two elderly villagers told the mission of the 1959 sessions in three villages in which all villagers were taken to a central square and forced to swear en masse that they would not speak "the Slavic idiom."<sup>59</sup>**

**The Macedonian language is spoken by many people (more often in the older generation) in northern Greece today. The mission heard of no prohibitions on the use of the language in ordinary discourse, with the exception of cases in which children have reportedly been punished for speaking Macedonian:**

**In one example, a teacher in Xyno Nero village ordered children in her class to spit at a child who had spoken Macedonian. The child's father is Chioumtakos Vasilis. It happened two or three years ago.<sup>60</sup>**

**A high school teacher currently teaching in northern Greece, told the mission:**

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<sup>59</sup> The Minority Rights Group reports: "In 1959 in the villages around Lerin, Kostur and Kajlari the inhabitants were asked to confirm publicly in front of officials that they did not speak Macedonian. Such measures led to many emigrating to Australia or Canada." Minority Rights Group, *Minorities in the Balkans*, Page 31.

<sup>60</sup> Related to the mission by Kosta Gotsis in Florina.



**During breaks in high school, kids speak Macedonian to each other. They speak Macedonian with me, too, because they know I'm Macedonian. Whether a kid gets in trouble for speaking Macedonian depends on the teacher—if the teacher decides to report it, the kid's parents may be called in. Other teachers are open-minded, and don't report such things. In the old days, when I was a child (I'm thirty-eight now), teachers would hit kids with sticks if they spoke Macedonian, and would say things like, "You dirty Bulgarians, you'll never learn Greek."**

### **Views of Ethnic Macedonians**

**Greek citizens of Macedonian origin are divided on the importance of preserving, speaking and being educated in the Macedonian language.**

**Activist members of the Macedonian minority told the mission that the language they speak is Macedonian, and that it is important to them to preserve the language. They want their children to be taught Macedonian in school, or, failing that, they want the right to establish classes outside of the public schools in which their children can learn Macedonian.**

**Kosta Gotsis, a member of the Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity, which is concerned with the rights of the Macedonian minority, told the fact-finding mission:**

**We want all the rights of people who have their own identity and culture; according to CSCE declarations, we are entitled to these rights. One of the most important of these is the right to have our children educated in their mother language. It's very important to save the language. We don't care whether all the subjects are taught in Macedonian or there is just one hour a day of instruction in Macedonian—we don't want a utopia. If we are allowed to establish private schools that teach in Macedonian, that's okay. If the Greek government provides one or two hours of instruction in Macedonian, that's okay.**

**Right now we can't get permission to teach a class in Macedonian, because, according to the Greek government, the language doesn't exist. To set up a school teaching a foreign language, you need a license and a certificate. But since the**

**government says the Macedonian language doesn't exist, they won't give anyone a license to teach it.**

**In 1925 the Greek government actually printed a primer for children to learn the Macedonian alphabet—it was called the "ABECEDAR," but it was never used. Last month we asked a printer to print 1,000 copies of this book. He asked the authorities, who he said told him that if he printed it he would go to prison.**

**Other Greeks of Macedonian origin have taken an opposite position, deliberately avoiding using the Macedonian language with their children. An elderly woman in the village of Akritas in the mountains north of Florina, near the FYRM border, told the mission:**

**I always spoke to my own children in Greek—it made it much easier for them when they went to school. Only the old people in this village speak Macedonian.**

**Alexander Traikos, the thirty-five-year-old president of the Kelli township council (the mayor), told the fact-finding mission that everyone in his town of 1,000 speaks "the idiom," but that he does not favor education in the Macedonian language:**

**We speak the idiom with each other, and sometimes Greek. The young people speak mostly Greek, and the grandfathers mostly the idiom. I learned the idiom from my grandmother, but I don't speak it with my children because it would make it much more difficult for them to progress in Greek. I don't believe the idiom should be taught in school. Anyway, it's not written down, it has no alphabet, so it couldn't be taught. If the language was written down by linguists, then it could be taught. We don't understand the language spoken in the republic of Macedonia, so the Skopjan language should not be taught here.**

**Because of the government's history of restricting the use of the Macedonian language, the mission was told that it would be difficult to find people who could teach the language at present. A member of the Macedonian Movement**

**for Balkan Progress (MMBP), Traianos Pasois, told the mission:**

**There are no teachers who can teach the Macedonian language now. There are very few people in the Pella district who can read and write in Macedonian. My parents learned the language under the communists. In the communist days Macedonian was sometimes taught; there were six-month seminars for teachers. I can read a little Macedonian. I can read Nova Makedonija [the chief newspaper in FYRMI, but only very slowly. And there are terms in the paper that I don't know.**

**Another Macedonian activist told the mission:**

**It's very rare for people to read and write in Macedonian, although everybody speaks it in Florina. Some of the people who can read and write it are very old—they were taught the language by Bulgarian priests during the Exarchate period.<sup>61</sup> The priests used it in church services. And later some people were taught the language by the communists during the Civil War—they taught them the Cyrillic alphabet.**

**Father Irineos Hatzefframidis, a priest in Florina, expressed a contrary view, telling the mission that Macedonian had not been spoken in church services in earlier years:**

**I speak the idiom, but I don't know how to use it in the church liturgy. During the Exarchate, the Bulgarians pressured the priests to use the language in church, but they said they**

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<sup>61</sup> According to the Minority Rights Group, "Up until the Balkan Wars there were in Aegean Macedonia under the control of the Exarchate Church nineteen primary schools in towns and 186 in villages with 320 teachers catering for 12,895 pupils in Bulgarian. In addition there were four Serbian schools and some 200 or so other Slav primary schools supported by village communities. All these Slavonic schools were closed and the inventories destroyed while in the Slavonic churches the icons were repainted with Greek names." *Minorities in the Balkans*, p. 30.

couldn't use it. The Greek language has always dominated here, in church as well as outside the church.

#### **Requirements of International Human Rights Law**

The Greek government's position on the Macedonian language—denying that it is a language, and thus not permitting it to be taught in private language schools—contravenes international human rights law, declarations and agreements on minority rights.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states in Article 27:

**In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.**

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, adopted by the General Assembly on December 18, 1992,<sup>62</sup> states:

**Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities . . . have the right . . . to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination (Article 2(1)).**

The declaration also places affirmative obligations on states with regard to minority languages:

**States should take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue (Article 4(3)).**

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<sup>62</sup> See Appendix D for full text.

**EMPLOYMENT**

**The fact-finding mission received conflicting information on whether members of the Macedonian minority are currently discriminated against in employment, although it appears clear that such discrimination existed routinely in the past.**

**Since the Greek government does not classify public sector employees by ethnicity, it is not possible to determine statistically the extent of job discrimination.**

**According to a human rights activist,**

**Until 1974 every Greek needed a "Certificate of Social Beliefs" in order to be hired in the public sector; the purpose was to determine whether you were clean, politically and ideologically—in other words, were you a communist? The practice was theoretically ended in 1974, but unofficially the files continue to exist. Each person with leftist leanings in Greece had a file in police custody called a fakellos. But now the file focuses more on the Macedonian issue.**

**The public sector in Greece employs a great many people in education, communications, police, military, university, electrical and water services, etc. It is generally agreed by human rights activists and anthropologists who are students of the area that job discrimination was common until recent years.<sup>63</sup> The Macedonian minority claims that its members are still denied jobs in the public sector, or are given inferior jobs below their qualifications. This view has sometimes been confirmed by officials. A Macedonian rights activist told Human**

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<sup>63</sup> A 1982 National Security Service memorandum, No. 16/2/1982 (reg. no. 6502/7-50428) recommends the hiring of non-Macedonian-speaking people in civil service and "especially" in the schools. (Document in Helsinki Watch files.)

The Minority Rights Group reports that in 1954 the Greek government "removed all Macedonians from official positions in Aegean Macedonia," and that a "lack of jobs for those who declared themselves to be Macedonian" continued in the 1970s. *Minorities in the Balkans*, p. 31.

Rights Watch/Helsinki that in February 1992, for example, the mayor of the township of Kelli wrote to Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis analyzing the unemployment of youth in his village. He reported that "locals" were not hired by the local power company, and that there was not even one local civil servant in his village of 1,000, although all were "loyal Greeks." He asked the prime minister to order ten people hired in the local mine, and another twenty hired when the new power station opened.

On the other hand, Florina Nomarch Nikolas Koukoulas told the July fact-finding mission that the claim that most civil service jobs were held by "refugees" (Greeks settled in the area during the populations exchanges of the 1920s) was not true. He declared at first that the majority of civil servants in the district are "locals," but then changed his mind and said that he didn't know the proportion of employees in each category, as "no distinctions are made between locals and refugees."

Many members of the Macedonian minority told the mission that the state discriminates against them in employment. A local from the Pella district who did not want his name used told the mission:

**If you want to be a civil servant, you can't say you're Macedonian, you have to say you are Greek. You have to say "Greek" to promote yourself in the bureaucracy, and also to help your children succeed.**

The Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity has as one of its goals the ending of employment discrimination. One of its leaders, Kosta Gotsis, told the fact-finding mission:

**Seventy percent of the people in the district of Florina are Macedonian, but less than 40 percent of public sector employees are Macedonian. This is not for lack of education; many Macedonians are qualified for these jobs. The people who do have the public jobs are mostly at the lower level, not at the middle or higher level. Only fifteen of the sixty teachers in the high school are locals; the rest are refugees or are from southern Greece.**

**When a new power plant was built, most of the workers were brought in from other parts of Greece. In the last few years, more than 3,000 locals have gone to Germany for work.**

**Some activists allege that people lose public sector jobs or are transferred as a result of their activism. Christos Sideropoulos, for example, who was prosecuted for saying that he felt Macedonian and that there are one million Macedonians in northern Greece (see free expression section, above), told the mission that he had been a forestry employee in the public sector and had been punitively transferred because he spoke out.**

**After I was charged I was transferred to another area. Then after I went to the CSCE meeting in Copenhagen they wanted to transfer me again. I eventually refused the transfer and was fired.**

**Others told the mission that there was no job discrimination, and that acquiring a job in the public sector was related to political connections. The mayor of one town, an official with the socialist party PASOK (now in power) who did not want his name used, told the mission:**

**Here in our town, locals control the civil service. Locals make up only twenty to thirty percent of public sector workers, although they are seventy percent of the population. But that is because they have only recently entered the civil service. Because party people are in positions of leadership, we've been able to get the key managerial positions for locals. The New Democracy party wants its people in key jobs, and so does PASOK. That's why we've been able to get so many locals into good jobs.**

**Mayor Traikos of Kelli told the mission:**

**I don't know the percentage of locals who are in the public sector. After a very long fight, we were able to get seven civil service jobs for our people in 1993. One is a police officer, one a day care teacher, one a teacher in a secondary school, two in the public power factory (one blue collar and one white collar), one in the public power company in Florina—an assistant engineer, and one in the school of education. Basically, civil service jobs depend on your political connections. I've heard**

**complaints about discrimination, but I don't think there is any discrimination against people because they are locals.**

**Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has concluded that ethnic Macedonians have been discriminated against in public employment in the past, and that some job discrimination may continue against them in violation of international laws and agreements that forbid discrimination against individuals on the basis of their ethnic origin. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki recommends to the Greek government that it undertake an investigation to determine whether ethnic Macedonians are currently discriminated against in employment in the public sector and, if so, to take steps to end that discrimination.**



## **HARASSMENT**

### **HARASSMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORS**

Two human rights groups concerned with the rights of the Macedonian minority are currently active in northern Greece. The first group is the Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity (MMBP), established in 1989 in Aridea and run by a five-member secretariat: Pavlos Voskopoulos, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Traianos Pasaos, Petros Dimtsis and Kostas Tasopoulos. Members of the secretariat told the mission that the group advocates:

- \* freedom of movement across the border, so that families can be reunited;
- \* a change in the Greek law of return for political refugees, which now provides that only those "of Greek origin" can return;
- \* ethnic equality, including the right to education in the Macedonian language;
- \* an end to employment discrimination;
- \* freedom of association;
- \* land for landless peasants; and
- \* cross-frontier cooperation.

The MMBP reports that it has committees in cities throughout the area. The secretariat told the mission that although the MMBP is not a large membership organization, it distributes throughout northern Greece 3,000 copies of a monthly newspaper called *Ta Moglena* (the Byzantine name of the area).<sup>64</sup> Of these 3,000, the secretariat reports that about 150 people are willing to sign protests, but that most of MMBP's supporters are afraid to challenge the government.

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<sup>64</sup> The name of the newspaper has since been changed to *Zora*, a Macedonian word meaning "dawn."

The second is the Macedonian Movement for Human Rights (MMHR), headed by Christos Sideropoulos, the Macedonian who was convicted for a newspaper interview in which he said that he felt Macedonian and there were one million ethnic Macedonians in northern Greece (see free expression section). Its overall aim, Sideropoulos told the mission, is equality for Macedonians before the law and the state. Neither group supports separatism or autonomy for ethnic Macedonians.<sup>65</sup>

The Macedonian rights activists are intensely disliked by Greek officials and are routinely referred to as "agents of Skopje." Florina Nomarch Nikolas Koukoulas told the mission:

**They are a very small group of people who do not serve Greek national interests. They are directed from abroad.**

Asked on what evidence this serious allegation was based, Nomarch Koukoulas said:

**We can tell by their behavior, by what they say—when they say they cannot act freely in Greece.**

Macedonian rights activists have been subjected to a good deal of harassment, including threats, strip searches, and confiscation of documents; they report that they are routinely followed, as was the July fact-finding mission (see below). One activist told the mission:

**Until six months ago, activists were strip-searched every time we crossed the border. About six months ago it stopped; we think it was because their policy became known internationally, since we had crossed the border with some foreign journalists.**

Indirect pressure has reportedly been exerted to try to prevent the publication of the MMBP's newspaper. One member of the MMBP secretariat told

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<sup>65</sup> For example, in a July 29, 1993, letter to the Greek prime minister, MMHR President Christos Sideropoulos stated that Macedonians are "an inseparable part of Greece . . . an ethnic Macedonian minority that is a constituent element of the Greek state." (Greek branch of the Minority Rights Group, December 1993.)

**the mission:**

**the printer who had been printing the newspaper told us late last year that he could not print the journal any longer; he said had been pressured to stop printing it. He would not tell us who had pressured him. Two months ago (in May 1993) we went to a printer in Florina. He told us he would print it every month. Then later he said he couldn't, that "many idiots came here and told me I was an agent of Skopje, and why did I support you. I'm afraid I'll lose other printing jobs."**

**Expressing human rights views openly can have serious consequences. As discussed earlier, Macedonian activists have been prosecuted and convicted for the peaceful expression of their views. Other kinds of consequences can result: in one case, a member of the Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity who did not want his name used told the fact-finding mission in Aridea:**

**In October 1992 I signed a document with several others asking for equal rights for Macedonians in Greece, and an end to discrimination, the right to free visits to and return from FYRM, and full relations with the independent republic of Macedonia. It was printed in the newspaper. Ten days later I had to take back my signature.**

**What happened was that the Sunday after the newspaper article, the priest in my village spoke about me by name in his sermon. And he said, "Here in our village we have the birth of a Saddam Hussein (me) who will create a new war in our area. We will collect signatures to send him to Skopje, and if he doesn't have the money to go, I'll give it to him." My twelve-year-old daughter was in church, and when she heard my name, she fainted. Then there was lots of psychological pressure from other villagers—my village is half Macedonian and half Greek. Things happened like one day when my wife and I were in Edessa, a man came to my wife and said, "Where is your husband? The police have condemned him and we'll execute him." My wife was so upset when she heard about it that she had a nervous breakdown and went to the hospital; she stayed**

there for a week or ten days. So for the safety of my family I wrote a letter to the newspaper saying I was taking back my signature.

Later on I signed a letter to some deputies about the Macedonians, and people in the village stopped talking to me again. [The activist gave the fact-finding mission copies of photos of graffiti on walls that appeared in his neighborhood--"Anti-Greeks should go to Skopje," "Death to the agents of Skopje," etc.]

Another MMBP member who had signed the 1992 document, Dimitris Papadimitriou, told the mission:

Everybody called us traitors after the letter was printed. The newspapers never printed the letter itself, but just called us traitors. *Stolhos* called us "agents of Skopje," and said we were paid spokesmen and agents of Gligorov (the president of FYROM).

In August 1992 we met with Mr. Blandford from the American Embassy. Later the Foreign Ministry called in U.S. Ambassador Sotirhos and said it was unacceptable for Blandford to have met with the MMPB. *Avriani* newspaper said, "U.S. recognizes agents of Skopje; American consul went to pro-Skopje Aridea group."

I had been the president of my farm coop. A few days after the newspaper item about our document was published, there was a special meeting of the board of our coop--the only item was "redistribution of offices on the board following the actions of the president that had hurt the organization." I was stripped of the presidency.

Human rights activism can have economic consequences as well. An MPB member, Traianos Pasaos, told the fact-finding mission:

I opened a dry cleaning store in 1992 in Aridea. Locals told me they were afraid to come to my store because of MMPB's activities. As a result, I didn't do enough business to keep the store open. The same thing happened to a baker friend of ours.

**On the street in front of his bakery, someone put up a sign saying, "Don't buy the bread of Skopje." He had to shut down his own business and work in his father's bakery.**

**Pavlos Vaskopoulos told the mission:**

**For the last year or two I've been more active on human rights for Macedonians. I'm an architect, and my business has suffered. In several instances this year my clients have told me that they will not be able to hire me as they had planned, as a "friend" had come to them and told them not to hire me, because I was "an agent of Skopje." So my clients have been frightened away.**

**Father Nikodimos Tsarknias is a fifty-one-year-old Macedonian human rights activist who has spoken widely, in Greece and abroad, for the rights of ethnic Macedonians. He told the fact-finding mission in detail of his problems, including dismissal by the bishop of Florina in 1981 for his advocacy, reinstatement by the bishop of Kilkis in 1982, followed by dismissal in early 1993. Father Tsarknias told the mission that he had been followed, threatened and his phone tapped.**

**Criminal charges have been brought against Father Tsarknias in connection with a reportedly peaceful demonstration. Father Tsarknias told the fact-finding mission:**

**Following an incident on New Year's Day, January 1, 1992, in which the bishop of the area was booed by the local congregation, the public prosecutor brought criminal charges against me, claiming that I was "morally responsible for the events of January 1, 1992," and that I had "incited violence." The case is due to be heard in April 1994. Meanwhile an ecclesiastical court consisting of five bishops has stripped me of my priesthood for having "incited the events of January 1, 1992," and "organized with other priests to overthrow the bishop."**

**Border crossings into the FYRM are fraught with difficulties, particularly for Macedonian activists. Several reported to the fact-finding mission that they**

are regularly searched and their publications confiscated when they attempt to cross into the FYRM. In addition, their names have reportedly been recorded and sent to security files, which may result in career problems for the individuals listed.

In late 1992, *Stohos*, a right-wing Greek newspaper, published the names of all who had recently crossed into the FYRM. Since the names apparently came from government officials, human rights activists told the fact-finding mission that they believed that the release of the list was an effort by the government to discourage Macedonians from visiting FYRM. In the present climate of extreme tension between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, an allegation that one is sympathetic to the FYRM (which is, rightly or wrongly, suggested by a visit to that country) may have unpleasant repercussions in the community.

A member of the Macedonian Movement for Balkan Progress told the mission in Aridea:

Until six months ago, the border guards kept all the documents in Macedonian that anyone had. Then we started saying, "Give us a receipt," and now we can bring them in. Two days ago, the day of the festival in Meliti, I crossed the border with a copy of "Nova Makedonija" (the chief newspaper in FYRM), and I brought it in all right. If you assert your right to bring in material, they will let you, but you have to have a lot of courage. Really, only members of our movement are brave enough to bring publications in.

Outside human rights monitors can be harassed as well as local monitors. The fact-finding mission that went to northern Greece in July 1993, made up of representatives of three groups, one Greek and two foreign--the Danish Helsinki Committee, the Minority Rights Group-Greece, and Human Rights Watch/Helsinki--was kept under surveillance. During the first two days of the mission, a white unmarked four-door Renault, with the license plate PAB 2162, followed us wherever we went. When the mission was at its hotel, the two plain-clothes officers left the car and sat in the hotel lobby.

After two days of surveillance, one mission member asked the officers directly why they were following us. The police replied that they were simply doing their job. The mission member told the officers that our movements were not secret, and told the police where we would be on the following days. We did

not see the police car for two days; it reappeared the following day and resumed following us.

On September 15, 1993, the weekly *Stohos* published what it called a "top secret report" of the Greek Secret Service on the doings of the July fact-finding mission. It included the names of people interviewed by the mission, the times of the meetings, car license numbers, passport numbers and passport data of the mission members and of the scholars who met with them. It even included the name of one person telephoned by a mission participant.<sup>66</sup>

The fact that police openly followed us may have exerted a chilling effect on some ethnic Macedonians. In the climate of fear in which Macedonians live in northern Greece, police surveillance discourages full cooperation with human rights monitoring groups.<sup>67</sup>

When the fact-finding mission crossed the border into FYRM, our car was searched and a publication was removed by a border guard. After protests, the book—a Danish university student's master's thesis on Macedonia—was returned.

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<sup>66</sup> See Appendix H for full text.

<sup>67</sup> In November 1990, Professor Erik Siesby, the head of the Danish Helsinki Committee, and one of the participants in the July 1993 mission, went to Florina to try to assess the situation of the ethnic Macedonians. His first attempt at a meeting was with a school teacher. Professor Siesby told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki: "I told him that I was trying to study the situation of the Slavophone Macedonians in the area. He was shocked. He said, 'This is very dangerous. You are being followed by police, there are police outside the school.' He refused even to talk with me."

"I returned to my hotel. Two local men came to see me, as arranged, but spoke no English; they said they would return at 10:00 p.m. with an interpreter. At 10:15 I received a phone call from the interpreter, saying, 'The hotel is surrounded by police. They won't let us in.' I said I would come down to them. They told me not to, that the police wouldn't let me."

"In Athens a week later I took this up with the Foreign Ministry. I was assured that I could speak with people in the Macedonian region without difficulty. I then went to Florina; police did not interfere with my interviews, but I was told later that some of the people I interviewed were called in and interrogated by the police—and some had their tires slashed."

**The guard reported that part of the thesis had been xeroxed.**

**Human rights and minority activists are frequently and without substantiation accused of being foreign agents ("agents of Skopje") even by members of the government. Academics writing about human rights and minority questions are also at risk. The U.S. Department of State's Country Report for 1993 stated:**

**It is widely believed that those who engage in public dissent, even in scholarly publications, on sensitive issues like Macedonia and minorities, will find it very difficult to pursue an academic career since all universities are state institutions.**

#### **HARASSMENT OF ETHNIC MACEDONIANS**

**Members of the Macedonian minority told the July fact-finding mission of routine harassment by the state--at the border with FYRM, on the job, in the military, in school.**

**George Natsulis, thirty-nine, a worker in the fur business in Kastoria, told the fact-finding mission in Meliti:**

**Recently I brought a video cassette back across the border from the FYRM. The border guards made me wait for four hours until they could watch the cassette, which contained Macedonian songs and dances. The guards threatened me that I would be prosecuted for possessing the cassette, but nothing happened. They also seized my telephone book, but returned it after several hours.**

**A twenty-eight-year-old baker told the mission:**

**In the spring of 1992 I came back from a trip to Bulgaria visiting relatives. I crossed at the Serres area, at Promahonas. The customs people found a cassette with Macedonian songs. They made me and the person with me get out of the car and turn over all of our papers. I had a date book with me, and I refused to give it to them, as it was private, confidential. They strip-searched us, even took down our underpants. We returned to**



**the car and found that all our papers were gone. They kept us there for two hours; apparently they xeroxed all of our papers. We protested, and the guards said, "Protest all you want." They threatened to arrest us. Eventually they returned all our papers. Nothing was missing. Later the names from my datebook were printed in *Stohos*, where all were labeled "agents of Skopje."**

**The fact-finding mission was told of incidents in which children had been harassed in school.<sup>68</sup> A teacher reported:**

**In late 1992, shortly after the republic of Macedonia became independent, when emotions were running very high, a history teacher told a sophomore class that Macedonians were "gypsies, with no culture." One boy asked why the teacher had said that; "aren't they human beings like us?" The student was sent to the superintendent's office; later his parents were called in and warned to prevent the child from making such remarks.**

**The July fact-finding mission heard stories of reported harassment in the military. In one instance, the mission was told by a Macedonian villager of the experiences of a draftee, currently in military service:**

**When he was asked where he was born, the soldier gave the name of a village in the Macedonian region. Then he was referred to as "an agent of Skopje." The other soldiers were ordered not to talk to him; by July 1993 he had been ostracized--isolated and excluded--for six months.**

**The mission was given the young man's name, but was asked not to reveal it.**

**The mission heard of other kinds of harassment. One businessman reported:**

**I got a three-month visa to go to FYRM for business. The local police called me in to ask me why I needed such a long visa;**

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<sup>68</sup> See additional examples in section on language discrimination.

**why I needed to make so many trips to the FYRM.**

**Another businessman told the mission:**

**Recently I went into a store that I deal with to buy supplies. The clerk told me that I had to sign a statement saying that I was Greek. I guess he did it because the local newspaper had printed an article saying I was "an agent of Skopje." I refused to sign the statement, so they wouldn't sell me the goods. Finally I was able to persuade the boss to allow the sale.**

#### **FEAR**

**Harassment of the Macedonian minority has led to a widespread climate of fear. A large number of people interviewed by the mission stated specifically that they did not want their names used, for fear of losing jobs or suffering from the kind of harassment experienced by human rights activists—being followed, threatened and harassed.**

**A human rights activist told the mission:**

**Most people here are afraid to express themselves openly, to say that they are Macedonian. This has been particularly true since Christos Sideropoulos was convicted in court just for saying "I feel Macedonian." And lots of people are afraid to travel across the border to visit their relatives since *Stohos* printed the names of people who had crossed from the republic.**

**George Natsulis, a worker in the fur business, told the mission:**

**People are more afraid now, since the troubles with the independence of the republic. Now many people are afraid to sing Macedonian songs and dance Macedonian dances. Parents are afraid that their children will suffer in school, that they will be stigmatized as "agents of Skopje." The older people are afraid to phone their relatives in the republic; they'll only call once a year.**

**An activist told the mission:**

**There's a lot of pressure on Macedonians, particularly on the human rights activists, so lots of people are even afraid to say they're Macedonian.**

**Sam Novatsco, a Macedonian visiting in northern Greece who went to Australia thirty-eight years ago, told the mission:**

**People here want their own schools, their own education. But fear prevents them from expressing it.**

**An MMBP leader told the mission:**

**Although you are not permitted to get a license to teach Macedonian in a school, it would be possible to tutor children individually, but the problem is psychological. People are afraid to do it.**

**An American visitor told the mission:**

**Last year I went with a friend to a cafe where a man with a guitar and a small orchestra were playing. They played two Macedonian songs. When I asked them to repeat them, the guitarist told me he couldn't. The owner heard the conversation, and asked us to leave.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Human Rights Watch/Helsinki recommends to the government of Greece that it:**

- \* acknowledge the existence in Greece of an ethnic Macedonian minority with its own culture and language;**
- \* end free expression restrictions on ethnic Macedonians;**
- \* permit ethnic Macedonian political refugees to return to Greece to regain their citizenship, to resettle and visit on the same basis as political refugees who identify themselves as Greek;**
- \* end the practice of prohibiting the teaching of the Macedonian language;**
- \* permit ethnic Macedonians to establish cultural and other associations;**
- \* carry out an impartial investigation into whether ethnic Macedonians are currently discriminated against in employment in the public sector; if that discrimination is found to exist, end it;**
- \* end harassment of ethnic Macedonians in general, and of Macedonian rights monitors in particular.**

**Human Rights Watch/Helsinki recommends to the United States government that it acknowledge the Greek government's human rights violations as presented in this report, and use its best efforts to persuade the Greek government to follow Human Rights Watch/Helsinki's recommendations.**

**Human Rights Watch/Helsinki recommends to the international community that it acknowledge and take steps to end human rights abuses by the Greek government. In particular, it urges the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to investigate the situation of the ethnic Macedonians and to take steps to end discrimination against them.**