

OSCE IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON THE HUMAN DIMENSION ISSUES

***9 October 2006, Working Session 10, 10:00-13:00
Democracy at the national, regional and local levels***

Presentation of Rainbow, the organization of the Macedonian minority of Greece

Thank you Mr. Moderator.

As we all know, one of the most basic tenants of democracy is dialogue. Dialogue between citizens and the state, dialogue between NGOs and the state are most fundamental in this regard.

Today I would like to talk about Greece's exclusion of the European Free Alliance - Rainbow, the political party of the ethnic Macedonian minority of Greece.

I shall now just briefly outline some specific cases. In May 2004, EFA Rainbow wrote to the Greek Ministry of Internal Affairs requesting a meeting regarding the return of Macedonian political refugees to Greece who are prevented from reclaiming their Greek citizenship by the discriminatory laws enacted by Greece. There was no response to Rainbow's letter.

In the same year, the Macedonian political party wrote to the Greek Ministry of Education requesting a meeting to discuss the introduction of the Macedonian language to the Greek education system. Again, there was no reply to this letter.

In 2005, Rainbow wrote to the Ministry of Communications and to Greek state television and radio requesting a meeting to discuss introducing broadcasts in the Macedonian language on Greek state television and radio. Once again, there was no reply to Rainbow's letter.

This pattern continued this year on two occasions when EFA-Rainbow sought the assistance of its European partner organizations, namely FUEN, the Federal Union of European Nationalities and the European Free Alliance – European Political Party who both requested meetings with the Greek government.

The Greek government agreed to meet with them but indicated that at the same meetings, members of EFA Rainbow would not be accepted. Full written documentation of these incidents exists.

Therefore, I ask, since we are talking about democracy here today, how is it is democratic for a legally registered political party to be refused meetings with the central government?

Fortunately today at this OSCE meeting, we are able to at least to sit at the same table with representatives of our government. Mr. Moderator I know that what I am about to do now, is not common in this meeting, but this is the only place that we are able to have a dialogue with our government, the Greek government. Let me once again personally invite the Greek government to begin a dialogue....

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Thank you for your attention.