

AI INDEX: EUR 25/10/97
10 OCTOBER 1997

Greece: Amnesty International will adopt members of “Rainbow” party as prisoners of conscience in case of imprisonment

Amnesty International will adopt four members of the ethnic Macedonian minority party “Rainbow” as prisoners of conscience and will call for their immediate and unconditional release should they be imprisoned after their trial, the human rights organization said in a letter to the Greek government today.

According to the indictment the four “Rainbow” members Vasilis Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasiliadis and Pavlos Voskopoulos -- whose trial will begin in Florina on 14 October -- are accused of “causing and inciting mutual hatred among the citizens” and thus violating Article 192 of the Greek Penal Code by displaying a sign, with the words “Florina Committee” in both Greek and Macedonian, outside the Florina office of the Rainbow Party in September 1995.

The indictment further states that the use of the Macedonian words “*Lerinski Komitet*” “provoked and incited discord among the area’s citizens [who] justifiably...identify these words with an old terrorist organization of Slavic-speaking alien nationals which was active in the area.”

According to Amnesty International’s information, the sign was removed by order of the local authorities and shortly afterwards the office was attacked by a mob. Reportedly no charges have been brought in connection with the attack.

Amnesty International believes that the prosecution of Vasilis Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasiliadis and Pavlos Voskopoulos represents a violation of Article 10 (1) of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), which Greece has ratified and is legally bound to observe. Article 10 (1) states that : “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.”

ENDS.../