



## NEWS REPORT

**Date:** 4 June 2010  
**Expert:** Theodoridis, Athanasios  
**Title:** Condemnation of Greece for violation of the obligation to provide adequate housing for Roma as laid down in Article 16 of the European Social Charter  
**Country:** **Greece**  
**Context**  
**Issue at stake:** Discrimination against Roma in respect of housing rights (living conditions and forced evictions)  
**Ground of discrimination:** Race/ ethnic origin  
**Source:** European Committee of Social Rights (Collective Complaint No. 49/2008)  
**Field:** Housing  
**Legislative provisions:** Article 16 of the European Social Charter

### Content

**Case:** On 25 May 2010, the European Committee of Social Rights has condemned Greece for the second time in five years for continued serious and widespread discrimination against Roma in respect of housing rights. On the basis of a large amount of material presented by the complainants (INTERIGHTS and Greek Helsinki Monitor), and findings of a number of national, Council of Europe and UN experts, the Committee found significant evidence that many Roma in Greece continue to live in housing which fails to meet minimum standards of habitability and infrastructure. Many settlements consist solely of prefabricated housing with no electricity, running water or waste collection.

**Decision of the Committee:** The Committee concluded unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 16 of the European Social Charter on the grounds that the situation of Roma families is not sufficiently taken into account. As a result, a significant number of them continue to live in conditions that fail to meet minimum standards. Article 16 of the Charter

had also been violated as Roma families continue to be forcibly evicted and that the legal remedies generally available are not sufficiently accessible to them. In an unprecedented re-examination under the collective complaints system, the Committee unanimously upheld all of the main substantive allegations invoked by INTERIGHTS, in partnership with Greek Helsinki Monitor. The complaint detailed Greek government's continuing failure to provide adequate housing and related infrastructure to Roma as well as its involvement in over 20 forced evictions since 2004. It also highlighted the systematic discrimination experienced by Roma and the failure of the Government to provide adequate safeguards and remedies to this vulnerable community.

More specifically, the Committee dismissed the government's arguments that Greek legislation provides adequate safeguards for the prevention of discrimination merely ensuring identical treatment as a means of protection against any discrimination is not sufficient. Instead, real and effective equality requires the different situations encountered by Roma to be taken into account. The Committee also concluded that the Government failed to demonstrate that either in law or practice there was sufficient guarantees to consult those affected by eviction, including reasonable notice and information on the provision of alternative accommodation.

**Internet link source and additional information:**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/NewsCOEPortal/CC49Merits25052010\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/NewsCOEPortal/CC49Merits25052010_en.asp)

<http://cm.greekhelsinki.gr/index.php?sec=192&cid=3647>