

# Research Institute for European and American Studies

(RIEAS)

## Newsletter on Immigration to Greece

April 2009

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### **Battlefield Athens?**

One man was killed and seven were wounded in three different clashes between groups of immigrants in parts of Athens. And all these in just two days!

A relevant article (*Eleftherotypia* 28/3/2009) can be read here (in Greek only):

[http://archive.enet.gr/online/online\\_text/c=112,dt=28.03.2009,id=97918260](http://archive.enet.gr/online/online_text/c=112,dt=28.03.2009,id=97918260)

### **US Ambassador in Athens warns Greece on terrorism due to mass illegal immigration**

The US Ambassador in Athens Daniel Speckhard, in a speech delivered at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington DC on March 26, 2009, noted that *"If you're worried about the continuing threat of international terrorism, cooperation with Greece is key. It's a front line border country for the entry to European visa free Schengen zone and it had 140,000 known illegal immigrants just last year -- 50,000 alone from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Iraq"*.

The full text of the speech can be read here (in English):

[http://athens.usembassy.gov/wilson\\_center.html](http://athens.usembassy.gov/wilson_center.html)

### **Another "xenophobe"?**

Prominent and established journalist Alexis Papachelas, in an article in *Kathimerini* (April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009) warns of the emerging security issue due to uncontrolled illegal immigration and predicts that *"the next 'bomb' to go off in our country will probably have to do with uncontrolled illegal immigration and immigrant gangs"*.

The full text of the article can be read here (in Greek only):

[http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/ w\\_articles\\_columns 2\\_01/04/2009\\_309598](http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/ w_articles_columns 2_01/04/2009_309598)

### **Is the established press finally waking up to the reality of the connection between mass illegal immigration and serious crime?**

Prominent daily newspaper "To Vima" (April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009), in their editorial, emphasize that "The official data confirm that 80% of serious crime results from activities of immigrants. Like it or not, that's the reality".

The aforementioned editorial can be read here (in Greek only):

<http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=46&ct=57&artid=252929>

### **Socialist MP and ex-Minister Pangalos speaks in favor of the repatriation of illegal immigrants – and then backtracks**

Socialist MP and ex-Minister Theodore Pangalos argued that the only way to deal with illegal immigration is by repatriation, otherwise the country runs the risk of ending up with 5-10 million illegal immigrants within its borders. But then Mr Pangalos backtracked by pointing out that he does not support the mass repatriation of illegal immigrants, but the repatriation of some, as a symbolic gesture, in order to stem their flow.

Mr Pangalos' interview (*Kyriakatiki Eleftherotypia* 5/4/2009) can be read here (in Greek only):

<http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=32246>

### **Political leaders' Parliamentary debate on the issue of public order. Not surprisingly the "illegal immigration" strand kept emerging.**

Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis clearly linked the increased influx of illegal immigrants with the rise in criminality. Moreover, he admitted that during last December's riots about 360 people were arrested, 190 of whom were foreigners (53%). Finally, Deputy Minister of Interior Christos Markogiannakis pointed out that the effort to arrest "urban guerrillas" and to combat illegal immigration (guarding the borders, arresting illegal immigrants, transporting them, accommodating them and deporting them) takes up 50% of the country's police force.

The whole debate can be read here (in Greek only):

<http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/main.asp> [then click next to 8/4/2009(πρωί)]

### **More than 50,000 illegal firearms are in the hands of foreigners and criminal gangs in Athens**

According to police officials more than 50,000 illegal firearms are at the disposal of foreigners and of about 300 criminal gangs that are active in the country's capital. Most of these firearms are smuggled through the Greek-Albanian border.

The relevant article (*Eleftheros Typos*, 10/4/2009) can be read here (in Greek only):

<http://www.e-tipos.com/newsitem?id=84676>

### **Bangladeshi Muslims to fund the establishment of their own mosque in Athens city center**

Following the Arab Muslims' example, the Bangladeshi community in Athens managed to gather 400,000 euros of the 550,000 needed in order to buy a building in downtown Athens and turn it into their mosque. The remaining 150,000 euros were given to them by the Arab Muslim community in the form of small, interest-free loans. Other Muslim communities in Athens may try to acquire a mosque in the same way.

The relevant article (*Eleftherotypia*, 10/4/2009) can be read here (in Greek only):  
<http://www.enet.gr/?i=issue.el.home&id=34073>

### **Too little too late?**

Minister of Interior Prokopis Pavlopoulos and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dora Bakogianni met to discuss the issue of illegal immigration and find ways to increase the repatriation rate of illegal immigrants. Maybe they should have thought of that before offering two chances of ex-post facto regularization to illegal immigrants!

A brief statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be found here (in Greek):  
[http://www.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/Articles/el-GR/210409\\_P2130.htm](http://www.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/Articles/el-GR/210409_P2130.htm)

The same statement in English can be found here:  
[http://www.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/Articles/en-US/22042009\\_SB1115.htm](http://www.mfa.gr/www.mfa.gr/Articles/en-US/22042009_SB1115.htm)

### **The Ministry of Interior submitted its annual report to the National Commission for Human Rights: the main focus is on illegal immigration**

According to newspaper accounts of the report's content, the Ministry presents the parameters of the issue but falls short of offering any viable solution to it. Building detention centers which will just manage to accommodate only a small fragment of the tens of thousands of illegal immigrants arrested each year cannot be considered a solution.

The most wholesome article on the report (*To Vima* 23/4/2009) can be found here (in Greek only):  
<http://www.tovima.gr/default.asp?pid=46&ct=32&artId=255001&dt=23/04/2009>

### **Immigrant pupil population increases rapidly – Greek pupil population shrinks**

According to a study of pupil population data by ex-Minister and Athens University of Economics and Business Professor Manolis Drettakis, in the period from 1997 to 2007, the number of Greek pupils decreased by 214,640 – a decrease of 15.4%. At the same time the number of foreign pupils increased by 93,040 – an increase of 438%!

An article outlining the study (*Eleftherotypia* 23/4/2009) can be read here (in Greek only):  
<http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=37342>