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# Rights of Minorities and Neglected Groups

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### Rights of Minorities and Neglected Groups

There are few, if any, nation-states in the world whose population reflects an entirely homogenous ethnic and cultural community. With the amount of inter-state wars and other forms of international involvement, the nation-state barriers have been broken and various ethnic and cultural groups can be found occupying land in the same state. The modern nation-state bears little resemblance to the traditional notion of the nation-state. The state remains the leading power, given its ability to negotiate treaties and engage in multi-lateral negotiations with other states, but there is a rising desire of autonomy within the minority populations of the state. A nation is a community of people whose members are bound together by a sense of solidarity, a common culture and a national consciousness( Joll, 1978). The division of the nation aspect reflects the needs of minorities and the viewpoints of all to be protected. Ethnic and cultural minorities have long been exploring their rights of autonomy, sovereignty and self-determination as interpreted through international law and treaties. Such exploration of rights can often times lead to conflicts between the minority group pursuing these rights and the ruling majority of the nation-state in which they reside. At the root cause of minority rights conflict is the concept of power, which the minority groups wish to capture and the ruling majority refuse to relinquish. Minority rights should receive great protection and are crucial to the well-being of a nation and

its citizens, a nation must handle their minorities with respect and care, to ensure the overall wellbeing of all citizens of the nation.

The issue of minority rights is multilayered and each specific case presents its own challenges. To further understand the conflict, the struggles of minority groups in the United States will be highlighted, as well as a group that has faced much prosecution and discrimination, the Roma population, specifically in Macedonia. The comparison of domestic minority treatment and how minorities are treated in other nations will help to paint a broader picture of the difficulties that minorities across the world experience. The Roma in Macedonia have faced a more traditional form of limitation of power, by not being given the same political, educational and welfare rights and opportunities that other members of the nation are. Minority groups in the United States however face different challenges, ones revolving around the concepts of institution and fear. The analysis of these distinct groups will be employed to show the contrasting ways that minority rights are obstructed. The Roma are not given the opportunity to expand and advance their culture, while the Arab and Islamic communities in the United States face the effects of a phobia that has been increased due to a catastrophic world event. The issues in the United States are deeply-rooted and complex which will require a great amount of historical context to fully understand the magnitude of the issues. While the Roma issues may be viewed as more traditional, their oppression comes in the form of governmental and educational interference.

### **What Constitutes a Minority**

The first step in understanding the minority rights issue is determining what constitutes as a minority. According to a definition offered in 1977 by the United Nations Sub-Commission

on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, a minority is: A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members - being nationals of the State - possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language (Declaration on the Rights). The definition used highlights a key aspect to being considered a minority, and that is the expression and desire of sovereignty and autonomy to some extent. These expressions often times take the form of nationalist movements, which are reactions to states and empires which were unresponsive to the needs of the many communities of which they were composed (Hannum, 2000). The nationalist movement is a demand for more political power by homogenous groups who feels their needs are not being met. Nationalist movements have various motives, and each can have a different outcome depending on the amount of discontent that the minority group wishes to have expressed.

In order for a nation with a large amount of diversity to succeed, there must be great levels of toleration. These levels of toleration include : religious, cultural, racial and ethnic. While the United States is known as a nation proud of its melting pot make-up with great levels of diversity and a country that tends to observe toleration, this has not always been the case. These roots can be traced back to the days of slavery and the mental make-up of a nation. When a nation of great power identifies a division amongst its own citizens, it can have a lasting effect and damage the levels of toleration that are observed.

## American Roots

John Locke established the narrative for what many viewed as toleration from a religious standpoint, developing a better understanding of the covenant and how that has been incorporated in governmental structures. Locke argues that civil issues that arise in nations are caused by governmental efforts to constrain religions from being practiced, instead of allowing the citizens to practice their religion, which would require toleration from the government. Locke's primary goal is to separate the religious aspect of life with the governmental aspect, stating that there is no reason for religion to be instilled into governmental matters. "He seeks to persuade the reader that government is instituted to promote external interests, relating to life, liberty, and the general welfare, while the church exists to promote internal interests, i.e., salvation. The two serve separate functions, and so, must be considered to be separate institutions"(Lucas, 1956). Frederick Douglass took the notion of toleration to another aspect of life and applied his ideologies by speaking out on the social covenant of slavery that had been applied in the United States. In order to guarantee the greatest amount of impact with his speech, Douglass delivered a speech on the day which the United States celebrates liberation, the Fourth of July was transformed into the center for the discussion and analysis of an oppressing covenant. Frederick Douglass dissects one of the world's greatest covenants, The Declaration of Independence, and exposes the hypocrisy of how much independence is truly granted and for whom the independence is bestowed upon(Douglass,1976). There is no viable reason as to why a nation that places great levels of pride in their independence and freedom should be enacting slavery while proudly displaying their liberal agenda. The amount of hypocrisy that was cultivated by such beliefs was incredible to Douglass, a nation founded by men who had escaped persecution in order to develop a nation whose blueprint relied on the values of freedom and

independence had resulted to incorporating slaves into the foundation of their nation. Douglass addressed these issues in his speech, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July", a speech that resonates with the feelings of change, faith and an overall eye-opening address . Douglass displayed hope, hope that the United State's youthful age of seventy-six will allow the adjustments deemed as necessary to correct the imperfections in place and create a covenant that is welcoming for all, and in disbelief that a nation founded to allow freedom of expression and toleration has resorted to tactics of slavery, which is the essentially the exact repercussions they were fighting to escape. " They went so far in their excitement as to pronounce the measures of government unjust, unreasonable, and oppressive, and altogether such as ought not to be quietly submitted to. I scarcely need say, fellow-citizens, that my opinion of those measures fully accords with that of your fathers"(Douglass,1976). Douglass's main goal is for the audience to acknowledge the disparities that are in place, the same faults their fore fathers had faced with the British monarchy and that their method of dictation is being forced upon the slaves in the nation. Douglass continues his sentiments with this statement,

*"Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?". (Douglass, 1976)*

Douglass's use of rhetoric is important in the speech, he makes a distinction by using the words "You" and "Us", words such as that create the understanding that the citizens of the nation are not treated on an equal basis. Douglass strives to show that there are two separate covenants

which are being manifested in the United States, and the slaves are being oppressed because they are not viewed as deserving to be including into the covenant that many Americans at that time pertained to. Once Douglass included the Church in the speech, the attention was drawn to the viewpoint that religion is not all-inclusive, and the covenant in place has disregarded the rights of slaves.

*" The anti-slavery movement there was not an anti-church movement, for the reason that the church took its full share in prosecuting that movement: and the anti-slavery movement in this country will cease to be an anti-church movement, when the church of this country shall assume a favorable, instead of a hostile position towards that movement. Americans! your republican politics, not less than your republican religion, are flagrantly inconsistent. You boast of your love of liberty, your superior civilization, and your pure Christianity, while the whole political power of the nation (as embodied in the two great political parties), is solemnly pledged to support and perpetuate the enslavement of three millions of your countrymen." (Douglass, 1976)*

John Locke's religious toleration theory was not being practiced in the nation, and the undertones of change are strong in the speech. The slavery movement is viewed as hostile by the church, and they have made it apparent that the slaves will not be included in their covenant. The testaments that were exemplified in Frederick Douglass's "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" speech are comparable to the ones that can be found in the present day, there can be no true progress if the covenant is not altered and made to be more accepting to all, regardless of religious orientation or racial injustices.

## The Role of God

While the United States of America has long been proud of its status as a secular nation, the notion of an almighty god has never been too far away. Regardless of what partisanship the President displays, the one aspect that can not waver is the faith in God that the man in charge must project. Ranging from Barack Obama to Abraham Lincoln and everyone in between they have all spoken the words, " So help me God" at the end of their Presidential Oaths(Friedman, 2012). The notion of God is very important in a nation of such stature as America. It is an important aspect of the lives of many Americans and thus creates a level of unity and comfort in a nation. Regardless of what race, ethnic background or gender you are, the ideology of an American loving god is an easy idea to support(Friedman, 2012).

The amount of unity that God can create is the main force driving the promises that most Presidents present. There a few times, if ever, that a President will deliver a speech and not include God, no matter the topic of the speech. Many Americans have deep rooted ties to the church and other religious sites, so the continuous mention of god creates a feeling they can associate with and feel more connected to the president(Friedman, 2012). As portrayed by the Lyndon B. Johnson address, the only way the nation can move forward is if they unite under the love and protection of god. Johnsons states, " Join faith and action and transform unity of interest into unity of purpose", the key part of that statement is that the initial part appeals to the spiritual belief of the citizens(Billington, 1987). Once that aspect is displayed, the attention of the nation has been captured and the rest of the address can be presented. Johnson directed much of his efforts to recreate or refine the covenant between the American people and God. Through years of civil turmoil and racial issues creating much separation between the citizens of the



United States, reintroducing god as a figure we can all relate with and create a form of continuity that was hard to find(Billington, 1987). Many issues are difficult to achieve harmony in, such as domestic policy, racial tensions, economic struggles, but the one topic that does not receive much argumentation is God(Friedman, 2012).

Furthermore, the usage of God also plays a large role while advancing the American Exceptionalism ideas that create great national pride. Johnson stated, " Under this covenant, God has blessed us" and follows that statement with, " Each one of us must find a way to advance the purpose of our nation"(Billington, 1987). Such statements are great for the public appeal and the overall confidence of the nation. When the President acknowledges the ideas that the United States is a special nation and favored by god, it creates an additional sense of belonging within the American people and additional incentive to work in unity and make America as prosperous as god has intended for it to be. The various mentions of God by the political figures in their speeches goes hand in hand with the political covenant that has been created, this however provides greater issues when the thought of an individual that places their belief in a different religion takes a position of importance (Billington, 1987).

The question arises however, which religion is viewed as the one that receives the protection of the President and the United States. After the attacks on September 11th, 2001, there was a fear of a clash of civilizations and clash of ideologies. The aftermath of such a fear brought upon a rise of surveillance and security, and more specifically to the followers of Islam and Arab-Americans(Bonet, 2011). The literature would suggest that life post 9/11 has been a difficult journey for Arabs, Arab-Americans, and Muslims, as they are often seen as a threat to the nation(Disha, 2011). These feelings of uneasiness are evident by the backlash that was received when an Islamic youth center was built near Ground Zero in New York City and the

increased levels of surveillance that the Arab community has received(Bonet, 2011). The largest manifestation of the increase of surveillance is present in the USA PATRIOT ACT, which stands for : "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism". The U.S. Patriot Act was passed on October 26st, 2001 and includes national security policies that some argue restricts citizens civil liberties and often violates the U.S. Constitution amendments such as Fourth Amendment, which protects people from "unreasonable search" and removable of personal belongings unless there is "probable cause"(Pitt, 2011) . Designed to fight domestic terrorism, the new law considerably broadened the search, seizure, and detention powers of the federal government. Its backers responded that a country at war needed to protect itself. Most notably, numerous incidents perpetrated by the U.S. Patriot Act have targeted Muslim Americans as profiled terrorists in airport security searches, banking, investments, and expressing freedom of religion as a means of providing national security(Pitt,2011). The government has repeatedly violated restrictions imposed by congress, including misusing the FISA Amendments Act to target groups of Americans and collect their purely domestic communications(Pitt,2011). The surveillance of Religious freedom is exemplified by the accusations that the New York Police Department has engaged in practices of audio-tapping into the Mosques of New York(Pitt, 2011).

There have been national efforts to protect groups from hate crimes, but they have not been as effective as one would imagine. Over the last few decades, an increasing number of politicians, interest groups, and social movement organizations in the United States have defined hate crimes as a social problem, one that must be addressed on a national level(Disha, 2011). Due to the increase of awareness and concern, and in conjunction with increased pressure from civil rights activists, many states have adopted hate crimes legislation. The federal government

also responded to these requests by approving laws which request that law enforcement agencies collect data on hate crimes(Disha 2011) .These advancements in the recognition of hate crimes has placed the United States at the forefront of laws intended to track and counter act hate-based crimes, which the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990 defines as “offenses against a person or property motivated by bias toward race, religion, ethnicity/national origin, disability, or sexual orientation”(Disha 2011). However, there has been an alarming increase in anti-Muslim crimes in the United States following the attacks on September 11th. The magnitude of the increase is astonishing, anti-Muslim hate crime , according to the FBI has witnessed a 1,600 percent increase in such hate crimes between 2000 and 2001—from 28 hate incidents in 2000 to 481 in 2001(Disha 2011). According to New York City police, there were 117 reports of hate crimes against Muslims between September 11, 2001 and March of 2002(Disha, 2011) .The states of California, Colorado, and Illinois in conjunction with Arab advocacy groups, reported similar rises in anti-Arab hate crimes over the same period(Disha, 2011). The resulting increases in hate crimes can appropriately be associated to the concepts of fear. The immediate response to the 9/11 attacks was to engage in international warfare and provide a sense of false security for the nation through the Patriot Act. Such maneuvers provide a sense of comfort and security to the citizens of the United States, but are not necessarily the best course of action in the long term. The quick-trigger to engage in war further illustrates the divide that was occurring in the nation. The engagement of war shows that there is a prominent issue that must be handled, but engaging in wars against Islamic nations can lead to various consequences. There can be an increased anti-American sentiment being spread, and can make the United States take on the role of a nation that empowers terrorists even further by engaging in the wars which they initiate.

## Speaking to a Nation

An important aspect in attempting to fix any misguided perceptions is by the rhetoric that public figures use to address the issues. President George W. Bush was faced with a clash of civilizations, and made it a point to differentiate that after the September 11th attacks, the ensuing war was to be focused on issues of foreign terrorism and spreading the democratic ideology,

*"A truly strong nation will permit legal avenues of dissent for all groups that pursue their aspirations without violence. An advancing nation will pursue economic reform, to unleash the great entrepreneurial energy of its people. A thriving nation will respect the rights of women, because no society can prosper while denying opportunity to half its citizens. Mothers and fathers and children across the Islamic world, and all the world, share the same fears and aspirations. In poverty, they struggle. In tyranny, they suffer. And as we saw in Afghanistan, in liberation they celebrate "* (Bush, 2002)

President Bush delivered the quote during the commencement ceremony at West Point Military Academy, the academy which produces many of the United States top generals and ambassadors, which is crucial for the advancements of peace. President Bush attempted to instill the values of democracy during the speech and illuminate the issues that are to be dealt with. The war following the 9/11 attacks was not to be on Islam or any ethnic group, but against oppression and tainted civilizations that are founded on hateful ideologies. The rhetoric in such situations is of great importance because of the negative repercussions that could arise had he approached the situation in a different manner. If President Bush had singled out a specific religion or ethnic group as the sole perpetrators of such egregious acts, then the nation would have fallen into

shambles. While he approved and passed the Patriot Act and engaged in other actions which may not have directly lead to solutions, such as entering the nation into warfare, the manner in which he addressed the nation was designed to keep the peace. The manner in which the United States handled the aftermath of the attacks however played into the hands of the terrorists, and created an even greater divide domestically, " Yet in its approach to confronting terrorism, whether prosecuting wars abroad or pursuing security at home, America has conjured the very fear that is terrorism's principal weapon. Its leaders pursue a reckless militancy aimed at establishing an American empire of fear more awesome than any the terrorists can conceive(Barber, 2003). President Bush was faced with the challenge of securing his nation while also not causing an increased ideology of hatred towards the United States to build(Greenstein, 2002). Engaging in the wars in the middle-east was his method of accomplishing these feats, but the idea did not follow the intended route. In what was originally supposed to be a war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, simultaneously became a war against weapons of mass destruction in Iraq(Shamsi,2011). The United States had spread itself too thin, and had not accomplished the goal of extracting the Taliban given the fact that we are currently still stationed there(Shamsi, 2011). What the war had accomplished however was over 360,000 estimated deaths and an increased amount of Islamic phobia in the United States(Monahan, 2011).

President Obama also understood the importance of rhetoric and made sure to place that as one of his top priorities. President Obama was placed in the position to relieve tensions between the Western world and the Arab world. In his address to University of Cario, President Obama highlighted the relationship between the West and Islam.

*"We meet at a time of great tension between the United States and Muslims around the world -- tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate. The*

*relationship between Islam and the West includes centuries of coexistence and cooperation, but also conflict and religious wars. More recently, tension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims, and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations" (Obama, 2009)*

President Obama was aware of the damage that had been done following the post 9/11 wars, and was also conscious of the impact it had domestically in the United States as well.

*" The attacks of September 11, 2001 and the continued efforts of these extremists to engage in violence against civilians has led some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights. All this has bred more fear and more mistrust. So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, those who promote conflict rather than the cooperation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity. And this cycle of suspicion and discord must end."(Obama, 2009)*

President Obama understands the work that has to be done within the borders of the United States, but also internationally. Such bridges have to be rebuilt and there must be a sense of continual advocating for the nation to remain together and work towards a common goal, peace and equality for all. While his rhetoric is aligned with the ideologies used to repair relations, he is also ordering military drone strikes on middle-eastern countries. These tactics have come under great deals of scrutiny and continue to fuel anti-American ideologies, there are estimates that 700 civilians in Pakistan were killed in 2009 due to the drone strikes, while the U.S Government has set that number at under 30(Bergen, 2011). The most prominent instance of this

can be found in the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Afghanistan that was subjected to unintentional drone strikes. On October 3rd, 2015, 30 people -- including 13 staff -- died during the early-morning strike. Gen. John Campbell, commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, has said the hospital was hit accidentally during an American airstrike(O'Connell 2015). Mishaps such as this continue to tarnish the American reputation abroad and increase the fear that is associated.

Obama's efforts to remove the Islamic phobia seem to be coming up short however, given the current state of the 2016 presidential election. Frontrunner Donald Trump is employing many of the same fear mongering tactics that President Obama is trying to eradicate. "Donald J. Trump has called for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on," a campaign press release stated(Obeidallah, 2016). Statements such as the previous one have very little positive impact in unifying the nation, instead they are used as ammunition in the current divide of the nation. Donald Trump also suggested that if he were to win the Presidential election, he would consider requiring Muslim-Americans to register with a government database, or even mandate that they carry special identification cards that note their faith(Obeidallah, 2016). Such rhetoric is the exact opposite of the message that President Bush and Obama have attempted to fuel. In order for the United States to be a successful nation, toleration and equality must be preached and practiced. An ethnic, religious, or cultural group should not be punished because of the actions of those who have a radicalized interpretation of their ideologies. Republican Presidential candidate Dr. Benjamin Carson was also quoted as saying the following, " I would not advocate that we put a Muslim in charge of this nation. I absolutely would not agree with that"(Epstein, 2016). The quote is especially troubling considering that Article 11 of the United States

Constitution states that "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States". The contrast between Dr. Carson's quote and the law of the land exemplifies the mistrust and issues that have been created socially by the fear of Islam and Arab-Americans.

The usage of "God's Promise" and the concept of American Exceptionalism are two driving factors in creating an image of a superior America, and the chase for a better America. When the comforting presence of god is displayed to the American people, a calming effect takes over and the citizens are more compelled to support the action of the nation, and part take in movements that are liberating and required for the advancement of justice and American Exceptionalism. American Exceptionalism, however, must be applicable to everyone and anyone who is a citizen of this nation. There must be no prejudice in this regard and the betterment of the nation as a whole must be the overall sentiment. The battle against Islamic phobia is nowhere near an end, but the effort must continue to allow all citizens equal rights and equal treatment in a nation they call their own.

While the Arab community in the United States is still allowed the rights to representation and education, the Roma community has not been allowed those rights. The United States form of inequality regarding minorities is essentially rooted in fear, but bureaucratic procedure is still somewhat intact. The Roma however are not allowed the same representation and voice that other minorities across the world have the benefit of possessing.



## **Roma in Macedonia**

The struggle for self-determination is often times a difficult road traveled, but can yield an outcome that is desirable. Government organizations can facilitate social inclusion of marginalized voices by providing symbolic public recognition of cultural differences (Staniševski, 2008). Differences between cultures in a state exist, but if the proper steps are followed and the embracement of differences can be utilized, there can be a positive outcome in many situations. Stereotypes of different cultures can also have a negative outcome if they are not properly addressed and given a platform in which they can be respected by the other citizens of a nation-state. In the case of the Roma people, the stereotypical image that follows them often inhibits their advancement as recognized citizens. The Roma, also known as Gypsies, have developed a stigma of being second-class citizens and are viewed as nomads that engage in non-traditional career paths such as fortune tellers and street performers. The Roma have faced nearly 600 years of persecution since their arrival in Europe in the 1400's. The Roma have been persecuted for being Gypsies, enslaved in the Balkans beginning in the 16th century, and countless amounts have been murdered during the holocaust (Staniševski, 2008). The Roma have experienced very little autonomy and rights, and are experiencing greater levels of freedoms and treatment in Macedonia than they have in any other nation, but only because they play an important role in the Macedonian political system.

While the Roma are a socially, culturally, educationally, and particularly an economically deeply marginalized cultural group in Macedonia, they are given political rights that they have not received in any other nation. Macedonia is the only nation in the Balkan region that recognizes the Roma as a constitutive nation (Staniševski, 2008). But even these freedoms come within a hidden agenda, while they receive some political protection, the reasoning for this

protection is ill-rooted. Policy decisions beneficial to the Roma have had more to do with a calculated effort by leaders of Macedonia's majority to hinder the will of leaders of other minorities in the region who have more of a voice and stronger threats of succession (Roma in Political Life). The Roma have been rendered as nothing more than a political pawn, the limited amount of political power they are given is not given without stipulations, they are deprived of any autonomy in regards to political matter. Their vote is controlled directly by the state and only used to suppress the succession efforts of other ill-treated minorities. Due to this threat, Macedonian political leaders have managed to co-opt much of the country's Roma population and a significant array of Roma leaders (Roma in Political Life). As a result, Macedonia's Roma political parties have consistently stressed the loyalty of the Roma people to the Republic of Macedonia and its territorial integrity, even though they have not received many policies changes from the government that will directly benefit their own advancement. Even after the Ohrid Agreement, the Roma people gained very little representation (Roma in Political Life). As a result of the agreement, from 2000 to 2010, there was an increase in the percentage of public administration positions filled by Roma, from about 0.1 percent to about 0.6 percent. The Roma, however, officially account for 2.66 percent of Macedonia's population, which means that, despite the increase, they are still vastly underrepresented (Roma in Political Life). The Roma also face issues regarding their documentation, many Roma do not have any personal documentation, which often prevents them from access to social benefits, education and employment (Roma in Political Life). This absence of identification papers can be attributed to the indirect discrimination stemming from the criteria for obtaining these documents due to the fact the citizenship law requires the uninterrupted residence in the country and they have not always been viewed as citizens (Roma in Political Life). Moreover, registering children at birth

has been a long stemming problem for the Roma because of complex administrative procedures which require the submission of additional documents such as certificates of marriage and medical certificates. These governmental rules and regulations have contributed to the vicious cycle the Roma are currently entangled in, of not having the proper health care and representation which correlates to long term set-backs and a failure of advancement generation after generation(Roma In Political Life).

The Roma also are subjected to harsh living conditions. The world's largest concentration of Roma, the Šuto Orizari municipality in Macedonia, emerged to provide shelter to the displaced Roma. The Macedonian government chose an empty pasture for the construction of a cluster of barracks which would house the Roma. Over the years, Šuto Orizari grew into a mealy of brick and stucco houses: few of them the homes of successful Roma who migrated abroad, found jobs, and saved their money, many the dwellings of Roma who barely make ends meet(Roma in Political Life). Today, the enclave's residential neighborhoods surround a few government buildings, shops and restaurants, a mosque, a football field, a sprawling dump, and a health clinic lacking a gynecologist(Roma in Political Life). Nearly 90 percent of the residents are receiving a 30-euro monthly welfare payment, which they supplement by selling goods at the market; collecting and selling scrap glass, metal, and paper; begging; or engaging in unlawful acts such as selling drugs and prostitution. In some Roma settlements, inhabitants face the most fundamentally lacking living conditions, such as in-proper roofing, lack of electricity and running water, poor sewage treatment or non-existent roads(Staniševski, 2008). In Romani households, the average number of square meters of living space per household member is 14.14m<sup>2</sup>, twice as low than in non-Romani households. 10% of Roma do not have a toilet or bathroom inside their dwelling compared to 2% of non-Roma who do not have access to

improved sanitation(Delegate Directory). Šuto Orizari is essentially a ghetto ,the land being designated to the Roma in 1996 was not undertaken to provide benefits to the Roma or satisfy their needs as a community. It was, however, part of an effort by Macedonia's leaders to gerrymander municipalities with significant numbers of other ethnic groups in order to dilute their political power and ensure the Macedonian majority's continued political control(Roma in Political Life).

The poor living conditions and lack of education have hindered the Roma's growth and foreshadows a cycle of bleak future representation and growth . A regional Roma survey confirms disproportionate literacy levels between Romani communities and the general population, with around 17% of adult Roma being illiterate. The literacy gap among adult Roma and non-Roma is 13 percentage points, while this gap is even bigger among Romani and non-Romani women ,20 percentage points(Delegate Directory). The lack of education and attendance in schools, only one out of ten Roma children complete the primary school cycle, is a crucial factor because it will continue to keep the literacy numbers low for the foreseeable future. The completion rates in primary education are approximately half as high among Roma as among Macedonians and only a fifth of Roma children attend the secondary cycle. The lack of higher education and literacy leads to high levels of unemployment, with the unemployment of the Roma lingering around 70% (Delegate Directory) . In 2011, the Roma had the highest rate of unemployment: 73% as compared with 31% amongst Macedonians and 27% amongst Albanians in Macedonia(Delegate Directory). The inability to receive social benefits due to documentation issues in conjunction with low levels of employment, schooling and literacy rates spells a recipe for disaster. While the Roma are not being persecuted in Macedonia like they have been in other areas of the world, they are in no condition to thrive(Roma in Political Life). Their current

situation is that of a stand-still, they are not given the proper tools in hopes of benefiting themselves and cannot create a prosperous environment because their needs are not being attended to. The Roma in Macedonia are nothing more than a political chess piece, their main function is to maintain the status quo and remain controlled by the Macedonian government. Elvis Bajram, son of one of Macedonia's strongest Roma political leaders, Amdi Bajram, is Šuto Orizari's present mayor. He entered office without having completed secondary school (Roma in Political Life). The political leaders that are elected to speak on the behalf of the Roma are not nearly educated enough to hold such a position and continue to play into the hands of the ruling government.

*"An illiterate person in politics cannot do anything for his people," said a Roma activist who asked to remain unnamed. "An illiterate person in politics is there to do one thing: steal. Do you believe in a person who has been in political life for sixteen years and who has done nothing? You're going to vote for him again?" (Roma in Political Life)"*

The Roma community is aware of the injustices they are experiencing, but the political machine that is currently in place does not allow for the Roma to have any advanced success. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities attempts to place minority rights at the forefront, but is structured in many vague statements that inhibit the growth of such groups. Article 2 section 3 of the declaration states, "Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation" (Declaration on the Rights). It is difficult to uphold such a statement when the political prowess of a minority group is being compromised by the ruling majority.

The examples of ethnic division and clash in Macedonia speak directly to the free will and autonomy that minorities strive for. There are articles and treaties in which the minorities are given basic human rights, but the implementation of such articles is interpreted by the ruling majority government. As is evident by the circumstances present in the Roma case in Macedonia, the autonomy and self-determination of such minority groups is not given the proper precedence in political and social happenings in the nation-state. The rights of the Roma are often suppressed and their growth is inhibited because of the fear that an advanced Roma state can bring about. The rights of minorities are an essential component of international law and must be valued with the same degree of merit as other international statutes that are seen as concrete aspects of the international community. Once the rights of minorities are fully recognized and the betterment of their group is placed at the forefront of political and social action, the advancement of such groups will follow as will the benefit of humanity as a whole.

### **Importance of Minority Rights**

As displayed in the previous cases, minority rights are crucial aspects of the law that must be followed. While the Arab-American case in the United States and the Roma case differentiate on the details of the issues, the same fundamental issues are being affected, the freedom to enjoy one's life without any resistance. The Roma face a more traditional method of inequality, they are being marginalized and none of their needs are being met. The educational, economic and structural aspects of their representation are not being recognized, and are forced to settle with the status-quo. In the case of the Arab-Americans, their inequality is a result of the fundamental nature of the United States, and has been further exploited due to the events of September 11th. Unlike the Roma, the Arab-Americans have more of a voice and a greater opportunity to face these inequalities. Their issues stem from the Arab community being large enough to cause

issues, which is the root fear mongering tactics that are used to paint the picture that many Arab-American and Muslims have the potential to cause harm. There does not seem to be a solution to either of these cases, but education has to be at the forefront. There needs to be ways to integrate the minority community with the ruling majority. Instead of the outlook being "we" and "them", the rhetoric must change to include the word "us". If the effort is made to better understand the issues at hand, then the overall quality of both situations will improve and there will be a net positive reaction to each situation.

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