

Greek police 'violating rights'

Amnesty International has accused Greek police of serious rights violations and called on the government to set up an inquiry into "systemic problems".

The rights group said the response to December's riots in Athens was the culmination of an "entrenched pattern of serious human rights violations".

The anti-government protests erupted after police shot dead a teenaged boy. In the following weeks police faced almost daily demonstrations and riots, and have come under armed attack. The Greek government has not responded to the Amnesty report, but diplomats said the police have shown considerable restraint in the circumstances. In January, a policeman was shot and seriously wounded in central Athens in an attack claimed by the left-wing militant group, Revolutionary Struggle. It was one of several such armed attacks.

'Excessive force'

In a report published on Monday, Amnesty said that since the end of the anti-government demonstrations in January it had received mounting allegations of human rights violations by police.

The group said it had brought a number of cases to

the attention of Interior Minister Prokipsis Pavlopoulos, in which police officers were said to have arbitrarily arrested, ill-treated and detained peaceful demonstrators and prevented detainees, including minors, from promptly contacting their lawyers.

During one incident on 9 January, several lawyers were reportedly arrested and mistreated after a violent demonstration on Asklipiou Street in Athens, Amnesty said. Video footage showed police refusing to answer any questions and later dragging an elderly woman along the pavement, it added.

"Time and again police officers in Greece have been accused of using excessive force against demonstrators or denying them their rights when in detention," said Nicola Duckworth, director of Amnesty's Europe and Central Asia programme.

"The police response to the recent unrest is the culmination of an entrenched pattern of serious human rights violations by law enforcement officials." Ms Duckworth said such

incidents "should be used as a catalyst by the government to launch a wide-ranging commission of inquiry that would investigate not only recent events but also systemic issues, including training of police on the use of firearms and of force".

"The people of Greece have the right to proper policing in accordance with the government's national and international obligations," she added. Union officials representing the police say morale in the force is at an all-time low, because of poor pay, insufficient training, and most important of all, the pledge by left-wing militants to kill an officer in retaliation for the shooting of teenager Alexis Grigoropoulos in December.



Grigoropoulos in December.

The BBC's Malcolm Brabant says foreign diplomats based in Athens believe that some criticism of police tactics is justified, but say few other European police forces would be as tolerant as the Greeks when facing such violence.

Major Exhibition of Greek Masterpieces Casts New Light on the Lives of Women in Ancient Athens

The galleries of the Onassis Cultural Center in New York have been transformed into evocations of ancient Greek sanctuaries, each filled with artistic masterpieces assembled from international collections, for the major exhibition *Worshipping Women: Ritual and Reality in Classical Athens*. On view through May 9, 2009, the exhibition brings together 155 rare and extraordinary archaeological objects in order to re-examine preconceptions about the exclusion of women from public life in ancient Athens. The story told by these objects, and experienced in the galleries, presents a more nuanced picture than is often seen, showing how women's participation in cults and festivals contributed not only to personal fulfillment in Classical Greece but also to civic identity.

Worshipping Women is organized by the Onassis Foundation (USA) in collaboration with the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, Greece. The exhibition is curated by Dr. Nikolaos Kaltsas, Director of the National Archaeological Museum of Greece, and by Dr. Alan Shapiro, the W.H. Collins Vickers Professor of Archaeology at Johns Hopkins University. *Worshipping Women* is the tenth anniversary season of the Onassis Foundation (USA) and the Onassis Cultural Center.

Among the treasures brought to New York for the exhibition are marble statues of the goddesses Artemis and Athena (National Archaeological Museum, Athens); a white-

ground vase with an image of Artemis, by the Pan Painter (State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg); a red-figure vase with an image of Iphigenia, the legendary heroine worshiped as a cult figure and seen as a model for priestesses (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Ferrara); a vase showing the Trojan priestess Theano, another model for priestesses, receiving the Greek warriors who had come to recover Helen from Troy (Vatican Museums); and a limestone grave marker (conserved with support from the Onassis Foundation) carved with the image of a young woman in bridal costume, holding a votive offering (State Museums of Berlin).

Interspersed with these and other exquisite artworks are archaeological objects that document the religious practices of Classical Athens and tell the complex story of women's roles in that society.

"If all Greek religion was about creating and maintaining a state of harmony between mortals and gods," the curators state, "then the role of Athenian women was an integral part of that process. It was women's essential contribution to share equally in securing and maintaining the divine favor that made Athens great."

Worshipping Women tells this story in three main chapters. "Goddesses and Heroines"

introduces the principal female deities of Athens and Attica, in whose cults and festivals women were most actively engaged: Athena, Artemis, Aphrodite, and Demeter and her daughter Persephone. This first section also investigates the role of heroines, a special group of women believed to have lived in the distant past, who like Iphigenia became important figures of cult worship after their deaths.

The second chapter, "Women and Ritual," explores the practice of ritual acts such as dances, libations, sacrifices, processions and festivals in which women were active in classical antiquity. Here the critical role of the priestess comes to light, specifically in her function as key-bearer for the temples of the gods.

In the final chapter, "Women and the Cycle of Life," the exhibition explores how religious rituals defined moments of transition. Because the most important transition in a girl's life was understood to be marriage, the wedding took on great significance, with its rituals depicted on a variety of vases associated with nuptial rites and wedding banquets. Death was another occasion on which Athenian women took on major responsibilities, such as preparing the deceased for burial and tending the graves of family members.

By presenting this story in the only way it can be properly told—through artworks and the material culture of the time—this important exhibition corrects the common, bleak picture of the lives of Athenian women.

Although their participation in the political process was indeed severely restricted, the exhibition demonstrates that religious ritual allowed them to define themselves not only as women but as Athenians and as Greeks. Their involvement in cults, festivals and life-cycle observances, whether alongside men or separate from them, was essential for the successful functioning of the city—and was understood as such.

The Curators

Dr. Nikolaos Kaltsas is the director of the National Archaeological Museum of Greece and the author of a prize-winning book, *Sculpture in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens* (2002), as well as many other widely published archaeological studies. Dr. Kaltsas is a member of the Central Council of Museums, the Central Council of Modern and Contemporary Monuments, and the Committee for the Conservation of the Temple of Apollo Epikourios.

Dr. Alan Shapiro, the W.H. Collins Vickers Professor of Archaeology at Johns Hopkins University, has a particular interest in Greek art, myth, and religion in the Archaic and Classical periods, especially in the interrelationships among art, religion, and politics. He is an authority on vase iconography and has written numerous studies, including *Personifications in Greek Art* (1993) and *Myth into Art: Poet and Painter in Classical Greece* (1994). In addition, he is the co-author of *Women in the Classical World* (1994).



Black-Figure Column-Krater, Ca. 560 B.C. (Late Corinthian I) Corinthian workshop, Astarita Painter (name-vase) Clay. H. 0.473 m; diam. rim 0.374 m. Formerly Astarita Collection, Naples (A 565) Vatican City, Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, 35525. Images © Vatican Museums. Cat. No. 79.