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## Press Release

**“Moral Panic, Society and Rights”:** From the fear of rockers in Britain of the '60's to the demonization of immigrants in Greece of 2013.

***Why a society suddenly demonizes behaviors and social groups? How are victims and perpetrators being constructed? How responsible are the media in creating scapegoats? What is the impact to human rights and the Rule of Law? These are the questions to be posed and addressed in the conference organized by the Greek Ombudsman, the University of Athens and the University of Peloponnese on December the 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, at the auditorium “Athens 9,84” in Technopolis, Athens. The conference under the title “Moral Panic, Society and Rights” is dedicated to the memory of Professor Stanley Cohen, who coined the term and passed away this year.***

The concept and content of the social moral panic was introduced by Professor Stanley Cohen, in his seminal text “Folk Devils and Moral Panics” (1972), studying the excessive phobic reaction of British society against the activities of the youth groups Mods and Rockers and their rivalry expressed in allegedly violent clashes. The role of mass media in the making of that social construction and the phobic social overreaction is thoroughly analyzed in an exquisitely eloquent manner by Cohen.

The theory and models of moral panics will be the subject of the first conference session, whereas discussions and analysis will focus on the rich by now Greek social experience in the field, related mainly to the presence of immigrants in the country.

The issue of human rights, in its international dimension, after the attack of September 11, 2001, on the Twin Towers, will be the subject of the second conference session. Starting from another seminal Cohen's book, titled “States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering” (2001), the conference will address the ways in which states deny, underestimate or even indirectly justify serious infringements of human rights, especially the use of torture against their opponents, a practice often tolerated by a large part of the public opinion.

In the third session, analysis will focus on the role of mass media in creating stereotypes, their impact on the way public opinion perceives human rights and discrimination, as well as their function in the present era of economic and social crisis.

The conference is part of the scheduled activities for the international Human Rights Day, December 10.