

PRESS RELEASE

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The Greek government should immediately implement the recommendations adopted by the UN Committee Against Torture

The Committee Against Torture (CAT) has adopted its conclusions and recommendations on Greece and recalls the Greek government to address the issue of “*continued overcrowding and poor conditions prevailing in prisons and other detention facilities*”¹ and recommends to take “*urgent measures to address the situation*”².

In this context, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) together with a Greek coalition composed of five important NGOs, including the Centre for Research and Action on Peace (KEDE), Coordinated Organizations and Communities for Roma Human Rights in Greece (SOKADRE), Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), Minority Rights Group – Greece (MRG – G), Support Center for Children and Family – Social & Education Action, submitted an alternative report and briefed the Committee on prisons and centres of detention. OMCT and the Greek coalition referred to the detention centre of Mytilini that was qualified as “*a shame to civilization*”.

They also expressed their concerns to the Committee on “the situation of children, especially Roma and migrants from Albania, who are amongst the most vulnerable persons in Greece and frequently subject to different forms of exploitation and / or trafficking” which is illustrated by the incredible story of 500 street children who went missing while at the hands of the state in the shelter “Aghia Varvara” in Athens. OMCT and the coalition warmly welcome the recommendation of the Committee which urges Greece to *take measures to prevent the recurrence of such events. [...] also ensure that a judicial investigation is carried out and provide the Committee with information on its outcome*³.

Moreover, the Committee noted that many of the concerns expressed in the previous session had not been adequately addressed and expressed its concerns on :⁴

- “*procedures related to the expulsion of foreigners*” and “*the low percentage of persons that were granted refugee status in 2003*”;
- “*the slow progress in adopting a code of ethics and other measures for the conduct for police interrogations*”;
- “*the lack of an effective independent system to investigate complaints and reports that allegations of torture and ill-treatment were not investigated promptly and impartially*”;
- “*the alleged reluctance of prosecutors to institute criminal proceedings*”;
- “*the deficiencies in according protection to victims*”;
- “*continuing allegations of excessive use of force and firearms by the police and in particular border guards*”;
- “*occurrences of ill-treatment of the Roma by public officials in situations of forced evictions or relocation*”;
- “*reported prevalence of violence against women and girls and the reluctance on the part of the authorities to introduce legislative measures to counter this phenomena*”;
- “*the absence of appropriate efforts to prevent and prohibit the production, trade, export and use of equipment specifically designed to inflict torture or other ill-treatment*”.

¹ CAT/C/CR/33/2, 26 November 2004, Conclusions and Recommendations of the Committee against Torture, C. Subjects of Concern, 5i.

² Ibid., D. Recommendations, 6j.

³ Ibid., D. Recommendations, 6m.

⁴ Ibid., C. Subjects of Concern.

“OMCT and the Greek coalition urge the Greek government to rapidly implement the recommendation and to ensure a formal follow-up which implicates civil society” Panayote Dimitras from the Greek Helsinki Monitor said. *“OMCT and the Greek coalition will comprehensively monitor the implementation of the recommendations and update the Committee on a regular basis”* concluded Patrick Mutzenberg from OMCT.

The alternative report on state violence in Greece is available on the OMCT website:

www.omct.org

http://www.omct.org/pdf/procedures/2004/joint/s_violence_greece_10_2004.pdf

and on the GHM website:

<http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/bhr/english/index.html>

http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/bhr/english/articles/omct-greek_ngo_report_final_without_signs.doc

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Background Information

The Committee Against Torture (CAT) is the body of 10 independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention Against Torture by its State parties, whose Chairperson is Fernando Mariño Menendez.

All States parties to the Convention are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how rights are being implemented. The Committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of “Conclusions and Recommendations”. As of 24th November 2004, there were 139 States parties and 161 overdue reports.

During its 33rd session held in Geneva from November 15th to 26th 2004, the Committee examined the periodic reports of Greece, Argentina and the United Kingdom.

For more information on:

the Committee Against Torture

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/index.htm>

the Committee 33rd session

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/cats33.htm>