



**Human Rights Watch Statement
UPR outcome report of Greece
22 September 2011**

Human Rights Watch welcomes the UPR report on Greece, which includes important recommendations concerning implementing the National Action Plan on Migration Management and the asylum reform by ensuring that all migrants are treated according to Greece's human rights obligations; improving state response to racist and xenophobic violence; mitigating measures to protect its most vulnerable population, including persons with disabilities and unaccompanied migrant children; ensuring prompt and impartial investigations of cases of excessive use of force by police and law enforcement officials and improving detention conditions by ensuring that they are in conformity with regional and international human rights standards.

During Greece's review, numerous delegations noted the efforts of Greece to reform its asylum and migration management but expressed concern about detention conditions and especially the situation of unaccompanied migrant children. Human Rights Watch shares this concern. Despite the repeated commitments of Greece and the ongoing reform process, the government continues to keep migrants in appalling and inhuman conditions despite the availability of suitable alternatives. And it is simply not doing a minimum to protect unaccompanied children, who should be among the first to benefit from protection and care. Migrants are generally detained without regard to their vulnerability. Unaccompanied children, single women, or mothers with children are kept jointly with unrelated adult men in overcrowded conditions, putting their safety at risk. The vast majority of unaccompanied migrant children in Greece are homeless and are consequently at risk of being trafficked, subject to labor exploitation, prostitution or drawn into drug trafficking. The few special accommodation centers for migrant children lack support services, including access to education and Greek language training. Human Rights Watch welcomes that Greece accepted all related recommendations and urges the Government to take the necessary steps for their implementation without delay.

In the context of efforts to combat impunity for ill-treatment, we note that Greece continues to argue that instances of police misconduct are isolated cases, despite repeated and consistent reports of ill-treatment. Although the establishment of an office responsible for addressing misconduct within the Ministry of Citizen Protection is a positive measure we are concerned that its mandate is limited to ruling on the admissibility of complaints. Cases will then be transferred to the relevant disciplinary bodies of the security forces for further investigation. Human Rights Watch urges the Government of Greece to comply fully with the relevant recommendations it has accepted and create an independent complaints mechanism in conformity with international standards.

Greece's acceptance of the recommendation to take steps to prevent attacks against migrants should also lead to concrete measures. To date, the government has shown little willingness to instigate an exhaustive investigation of incidents of racist violence, to bring perpetrators to justice and try to prevent such incidents from happening in the future. Racist and xenophobic violence is a serious problem in Greece, particularly in neighbourhoods of Athens with high concentration of foreigners. The targeted attacks on migrants in the center of Athens, in May 2011, which left at least 25 people hospitalized with stab wounds or severe beatings provide a dramatic demonstration of the phenomenon.