

HRC33 – Item6: Greece UPR Adoption

Greece should implement UPR recommendations and counter xenophobic violence

Human Rights Watch welcomes the UPR report on Greece, which includes important recommendations concerning the protection of the rights of migrants and asylum seekers; the adoption and effective implementation of a National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child; improving state response to racist and xenophobic violence; ensuring prompt and impartial investigations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officials; implementing measures to protect vulnerable groups; and improving detention conditions.

During Greece’s review, numerous delegations acknowledged Greece’s efforts given the challenges posed by significant arrivals of asylum seekers and migrants, while also expressing concerns about detention and reception conditions and the particular situation of unaccompanied migrant children. Human Rights Watch shares these concerns. Since the implementation of the EU-Turkey migration agreement, the majority of asylum seekers and migrants that arrive on Greek islands have been restricted to the islands, often held in overcrowded, unsafe “hotspots,” where women and children are at risk of sexual harassment, abuse and trafficking.

Unaccompanied children face routine detention while they await placement in the overburdened shelter system. Human Rights Watch urges Greece to fulfil, without delay, its pledge to establish a well-functioning guardianship and care system for unaccompanied children. We also urge the Government to accept the recommendation of Belgium to prohibit the detention of unaccompanied children in law and end it in practice, and increase shelter capacity for unaccompanied children seeking asylum.

Human Rights Watch urges the Government to comply fully with the recommendations it has accepted on tackling law enforcement abuse, including creating an independent complaints mechanism and effectively investigate allegations. In addition, we call on the Greek government to ensure all measures to identify irregular migrants during police operations are conducted in full compliance with national and international law, including the prohibition of ethnic profiling.

We are encouraged that the Government has pledged to take further steps to counter racist and xenophobic violence, and urge the authorities to ensure prompt condemnation, investigation, and effective prosecution of such crimes.