



## GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR (GHM)

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### Statement to the UPR Pre-Session

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**Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM)**, founded in 1993, monitors, publishes, lobbies, and litigates on human and minority rights and anti-discrimination issues in Greece. Also, often in cooperation with other NGOs as in the present case, it submits parallel reports and communications to **UN Bodies**; applications and third party interventions to the **ECtHR**; and communications on the execution of **ECtHR** judgments to the **Council of Europe Committee of Ministers**. **GHM's Spokesperson Panayote Dimitras** makes the following statement.

I will address discrimination and racist crimes, freedom of association, minority rights including Roma rights, and freedom of religion in Greece.

Perhaps the major human rights problem in Greece is the widespread presence of racist crimes coupled with an almost total absence of prosecution and punishment of such acts. Since 2015, some 1,000 complaints for racist crimes, including racist speech, have been filed but very few have led to the referral to trial of the alleged perpetrators and even fewer have led to convictions.

One major reason is the inadequacy of the related legislation. We are therefore pleased with the UN HRCttee's 2015 recommendation. Additionally, the provision for the investigation of the racist motivation of crimes and the ensuing aggravated penalties is rarely applied, even in very obvious cases and even in cases where we have asked the prosecutors to invoke it.

The second most important problem is the fact that Greece is the only European state that does not recognize any ethnic or national minority, but considers all those making such claims to be agents of foreign countries. Repeated ECtHR judgments finding Greece in violation of the freedom of association of the Turkish and Macedonian minorities have been defied by the Supreme Court which, in June 2021, ruled that persons with "*Greek citizenship are called Greeks and only Greeks, and the term "Turk" or "Turkish" does not refer to a Greek citizen but mainly to a Turkish citizen.*" Again, we are pleased with the related 2016 recommendations of UN CERD.

Roma rights violations include forced evictions or attempted evictions stopped by Greek or international court decisions, as well as racist police violence that has led to several judgments against Greece by the ECtHR, which currently examines a new case.

Muslim communities around the country operate private mosques, the large majority not licensed and therefore vulnerable to shutdowns by authorities. There are no cemeteries for Muslims outside Thrace.

The state continues to appoint muftis for the "Muslim" minority in Thrace who have very little following among the Muslims, as even Greek courts admit. This is why the state resumed prosecuting the elected muftis for usurping the functions of muftis, despite past ECtHR judgments finding Greece in violation of Article 9 of the ECHR.

In 2019-2020, the ECtHR ruled that Greece was violating freedom of religion because of the recording on birth certificates of the religion of parents and children, and because, in order for pupils to be exempted from religious education classes, parents had to sign solemn declarations that they and/or their children were not Orthodox Christians.

Finally, Greece is now recognizing civil partnerships for same-sex couples but has failed to extend recognition to same-sex marriages and to the possibility for same-sex couples to adopt children.

Thank you.