

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: EUR 25/007/2007 (Public)
News Service No: 112
18 June 2007

Greece: Impunity for ill-treatment by police must stop now!

Amnesty International is deeply concerned by a video clip that has appeared on the Internet showing two migrants -- one of whom is known to be Albanian -- detained at Omonia police station in central Athens being beaten by police officers and being forced to slap each other repeatedly. The incident took place in June 2006 but the video was only circulated on 16 June 2007. The senior officer involved reportedly stated to journalists, "I did it for a laugh. I wasn't beating them for any particular reason but because I wanted us to have a bit of fun". He, along with three other officers, has now been suspended from duty and an investigation is underway.

Amnesty International condemns the incident and welcomes the swift action taken by the authorities following the publication of the video. Nevertheless, Amnesty International is concerned that the video emerged amid rumours that other such videos exist, and at a time when lawyers and human rights groups have reported to the organization that allegations of ill-treatment in Greece are on the increase.

In a recent case reported to Amnesty International, a young Moldovan woman was allegedly ill-treated by officers at the General Police Headquarters of Attica in central Athens on 8 June 2007. The woman, who has been residing legally in Greece for four years with her family, was taken to the police station in an unmarked car by three plain-clothed police officers after they searched her home and demanded to see her residence permit and that of her father. Upon arrival at the police station they told her that they were looking for her ex-partner, and wanted her to tell them his address. She stated that she did not know it, whereupon they searched her handbag and examined her mobile telephone record.

She stated that subsequently she was taken into a different office of the police station by three non-uniformed female officers, one of whom repeatedly beat her around the head, causing her great pain. She said that the officers then told her to strip to her underwear and face the wall whereupon one of them hit her again and pulled out clumps of her hair.

She said that she was then taken back to the first office where one of the three male officers again asked the whereabouts of her ex-partner. She said that they threatened to destroy her residence permit and that one officer told her, "we'll bring your parents here too and they will go through what you have. You will appear before a court as a defendant and we will send you back to your country along with your parents." One of the officers allegedly gripped her by the arm and threatened to hit her, while another kicked her.

After around three hours, they released her, telling her to "disappear", but to inform them if she had news of her ex-partner. She went to hospital with pains in her head, dizziness and nausea. She was examined by x-ray and given a neck brace to wear.

Despite the fact that the woman has stated that she would be able to identify the officers involved, the fact that they gave her the telephone number of their office in order for her to pass on information to them about her ex-partner, and the fact that the following day she lodged a complaint of bodily harm, threats and blackmail, no steps have yet been taken to investigate the incident and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Amnesty International calls on the Greek authorities to uphold their international legal obligations under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment. They should initiate prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all individual allegations of torture or other ill-treatment, bring perpetrators to justice and ensure reparations for victims. They should also ensure that police officers are thoroughly trained in order to reverse the pattern of human rights violations allegedly perpetrated by the police.

