

GREECE

ALLEGED ABUSES IN THE POLICING OF DEMONSTRATIONS

A long-standing history of human rights violations committed by police in Greece has been highlighted by the fatal shooting of 15-year-old Alexandros-Andreas (Alexis) Gregoropoulos by police on 6 December 2008. The police response to the protests which erupted in the wake of the shooting has also given rise to grave concern.

Amnesty International has received numerous reports of human rights violations by the police in the context of policing the protests, including excessive use of force and firearms, torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, and denial of prompt access to legal assistance. Complaints of such violations have also been received from children. The failure of the authorities to effectively address the range of abuses over the years is reflected in a growing lack of public confidence in policing.

This report highlights Amnesty International's concerns about the shooting of Alexis Gregoropoulos and reports concerning police conduct during protests, as well as the treatment of both peaceful demonstrators and those uninvolved in demonstrations after 6 December. These incidents could serve as a timely catalyst for the government to launch a wide-ranging commission of inquiry. Such a commission should investigate not only these incidents but also systemic issues, including training of police on the use of force and firearms, and the implementation of other safeguards against torture and other ill-treatment, such as access to lawyers and families for those detained or arrested.

In this report, Amnesty International presents specific recommendations directed at ensuring that the authorities live up to their obligations to respect and protect human rights during law enforcement.

Amnesty International
International Secretariat
Peter Benenson House
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom

www.amnesty.org

Index: EUR 25/001/2009
March 2009

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Amnesty International is a global movement of 2.2 million people in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights. Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion – funded mainly by our membership and public donations.

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Amnesty International Publications

First published in 2009 by
Amnesty International Publications
International Secretariat
Peter Benenson House
1 Easton Street
London WC1X 0DW
United Kingdom
www.amnesty.org

© Amnesty International Publications 2009

Index: EUR 25/001/2009
Original language: English
Printed by Amnesty International,
International Secretariat, United Kingdom

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Cover photo: Greek riot police threatening the use of firearms against demonstrators. Athens, Greece, 7 December 2008.

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