

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on 119/92 (EUR 25/05/92, 9 April 1992) - and follow-up:  
EUR 25/07/92, 27 May 1992 - Legal Concern

GREECE:Anastasios (Tasos) Georgiades

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Anastasios (Tasos) Georgiades, a Jehovah's Witness minister, who was jailed three times for refusing to perform military service despite the fact that religious ministers of recognized religions are exempt from military service under Greek law, was released from prison on 27 July 1992. Amnesty International considered him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Tasos Georgiades' case was examined by the Council of State (the highest administrative court in Greece) on 16 June 1992. On 17 July 1992 the Council of State ruled that Tasos Georgiades was a religious minister of a recognized religion and as such should be exempted from military service in accordance with Greek law. After the decision was delivered, his lawyers were unsuccessful in their efforts to arrange for his trial to take place before the Greek courts close for the summer recess. They managed, however, to have Tasos Georgiades released from pre-trial detention. The day of Tasos Georgiades' release, he was called up a fourth time to appear at Nafplion Base on 30 July 1992 to perform military service. On 30 July 1992 his lawyer visited the Ministry of Defence and spoke to an officer who agreed that in the light of the Council of State's decision Tasos Georgiades should be exempted from military service and arranged for him to be issued with the necessary discharge papers. Later on the same day, Tasos Georgiades went to Nafplion and was allowed to leave. The following day, 31 July 1992, he was finally issued with discharge papers.

Tasos Georgiades' third trial is expected to take place in September. In the light of the fact that he has now obtained formal discharge papers from the armed forces it is hoped that the trial will only be a formality.

Many thanks to everyone who sent appeals on behalf of Tasos Georgiades.