

***amnesty international***

**GREECE**

**Torture and ill-treatment:**

Summary of Amnesty International's  
principal concerns



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INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED KINGDOM

Amnesty International  
International Secretariat  
1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 8DJ  
United Kingdom

For a summary of Amnesty International's outstanding concerns on torture in Greece together with the relevant Greek legislation relating to treatment of detainees and investigation of ill-treatment allegations, please refer to the attached report Amnesty International: Greece/Torture and ill-treatment published in June 1992 (AI Index: EUR 25/06/92).

**Amnesty International remains concerned about the situation in Greece:**

- ◆ continuing allegations of ill-treatment in police custody;
- ◆ activities of riot police;
- ◆ failure to investigate previous allegations including a case of death in custody;
- ◆ alleged ill-treatment of Albanian nationals;
- ◆ alleged ill-treatment of conscientious objectors.

**1) Torture and ill-treatment in police custody:**

Since the publication of its June 1992 report on torture and ill-treatment of detainees in Greece (see enclosure), Amnesty International has continued to receive allegations of ill-treatment of detainees in Greek police stations and prisons in 1992 and 1993.

An article which appeared in Eleftherotypia on 11 December 1993 claimed to describe the leaked findings of a delegation of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (ECPT). Their findings appear to corroborate the information published in Amnesty International's report on torture in Greece. According to the Eleftherotypia article, the ECPT talked to prisoners who reported having been subjected to beatings with fists and wooden sticks, kicking, and *falanga*, as well as the use of electric shocks. In particular the ECPT is reported to have discovered wooden sticks and a mechanism for administering electric shocks in the Thessaloniki Security Police building. In 1990 Amnesty International wrote to the Greek authorities raising allegations made by Kostas Andreadis that he had been subjected to *falanga*, electric shocks and threats of defenestration in Thessaloniki Security Police Headquarters on 23 March 1990. Amnesty International raised the case with the Minister for Public Order the same year and received a simple denial that he had been tortured. After publication of his case in our report of June 1992, Amnesty International received a reply from the Minister of Public Order stating that Kostas Andreadis had made no allegation of torture when brought before the press the day after his arrest (Kostas Andreadis and his co-detainee Dimitris Voglis made a complaint soon after being remanded in custody). Although this was one of the cases described in the statement issued by the Greek Embassy in Tokyo on 10 October 1992 as being "unfounded or aimed at discrediting the police", the medical evidence supporting Kostas Andreadis's allegation was ignored, and Amnesty International was given no information on the nature of the investigation which reached these conclusions.

John Verbelen, a Belgian citizen, was arrested in Crete on 3 June 1992 for possession of marijuana. He was taken to a large holding cell in Heraklion police station. In his account of the holding cell he describes degrading and dangerously unhygienic conditions: the toilet area was 5cm deep in excrement, and food was delivered to the 60 or 70 prisoners in a plastic bucket, the food being thrown onto the floor. After nine days in these conditions John Verbelen escaped, but was recaptured after less than an hour and taken back to the police station. He alleges that he was then placed on a chair, in front of the other prisoners, with his trouser belt placed round his neck. While one police officer held the belt the other officers beat him severely, one using a stick. He was then taken to an interrogation room where he alleges that police officers attempted, using death threats, to force him to make statements about another prisoner - whom John Verbelen claims not to know. He was taken back to the holding cell where he was beaten again, and then put in a semi-conscious state in a cell measuring approximately five metres by four metres with more than 30 other prisoners. The cell floor was deep in water. The following day he was put in another cell with a mentally disturbed French-speaking prisoner who was bound and completely naked. John Verbelen was made to sign a number of statements in Greek, the contents of which he never discovered. After three weeks in Heraklion police station, he was moved to Neapoli prison. Here he was held in a dirty cell measuring approximately seven metres square, which he shared with 20 other prisoners. Although John Verbelen had various medical complaints, including toothache, he was not able to see a doctor until October - but even then the consultation was carried out in the presence of prison guards.

According to Wolf-Peter Syré, he was taken for interrogation at the harbour police station in Piraeus on 29 August 1993, where he was kicked, slapped, beaten with fists and rubber truncheons on his legs, head, and hands, by a group of about six officers, who told him that he would be raped by fellow detainees. He asked for access to a lawyer, but this was denied and he claims that he was beaten again for having made the request. As a result of the beatings he suffered a number of injuries (cuts on his right hand and right leg, a bruised eye, bruises on his right leg and his back), but he was denied medical examination. Fellow detainee Bruce Ian Collinge describes Wolf-Peter Syré being taken away and beaten, and reported that he himself was beaten on Monday 30 August. Under such duress, both signed statements in Greek which they did not understand. No interpreter was arranged. When the two later appeared before the interrogating magistrate, their lawyer pointed out that his clients' statements had been extracted after duress and offered to show the injuries to the court. Bruce Ian Collinge reported that the judges showed no interest in the account of ill-treatment or the injuries in spite of the seriousness of the allegation, and its implications for the evidence being brought before the court. Although Wolf-Peter Syré is a citizen of Germany, he was not allowed to contact the consular representative of his country, even after the court ordered on 30 August 1993 that he should be permitted such contact. The charges against the two detainees included stealing a yacht, possession of unlicensed firearms and carrying a false passport. On 3 September 1993 they were sentenced to seven years and six months' imprisonment.

## 2) The riot police:

There have been a number of allegations of ill-treatment by police involved in anti-riot duties - particularly those of the MAT units. Eleftherotypia of 4 February 1993 described how MAT officers had attacked demonstrators, reporters and photographers with fists and truncheons during a demonstration by members of Greenpeace on Vassilis Sophias Boulevard in Athens the preceding day. Nikitas Papanastassatos, photographer for Eleftherotypia, was reportedly chased and captured by MAT officers after he had taken photographs of them beating Sotiris Kadinopoulos, a reporter for Ta Nea. He alleges that he was held handcuffed in a police van where he was beaten by 15 police officers and that his face was slapped while the MAT officers attempted to force him to hand over his film. A government spokesman was reported as saying that the incident would be investigated. According to newspaper reports, an estimated 100 officers of the MAT unit attempting to disperse strikers from the national electricity company DEI on 25 May 1993, resorted to indiscriminate beating of those present, injuring Christos Polyzogopoulos, president of the Athens branch of the EKA trade union, and three other trade unionists: Konstantinos Koutsodimas, Andreas Korekos and Themistokles Kangelis. Also beaten were plainclothes policemen and two members of parliament who were present. Reportedly, formal complaints were lodged against three MAT officers.

According to Eleftherotypia of 2 July 1993, Giorgos Tagkoulis and Giannis Hatzis were taken into custody by members of the MAT unit while demonstrating outside Korydalos prison on 1 July. Reportedly, they were taken to a police van on the pretext that they would be searched for molotov cocktails, and were insulted and beaten with truncheons.

The most recent incident involving MAT units occurred on 20 December when Konstantinos Kourtesis, a bus-driver, was killed and four others severely injured when riot police forcibly entered municipal bus depots which had been occupied by striking transport workers. Witnesses claim that he was struck on the head by police. According to a report which appeared in the British newspaper The Guardian of 21 December, the Public Order Ministry promised that an inquiry would be held into the circumstances of the death.

## 3) Failure to investigate previous allegations:

Amnesty International has not received satisfactory responses to many of the cases raised in its report of June 1992. It views with special concern the lack of progress in the case of Süleyman Akyar, who died in custody in Athens on 23 January 1991, allegedly as a result of torture in police custody (page 49 of the report). On 26 March 1993 the organization received a reply from the Greek Embassy in Oslo, stating that the investigation which had been initiated on the instructions of the Minister of Public Order, remained "inconclusive". In the context of continuing allegations of ill-treatment and torture, particularly of foreigners, Amnesty International is concerned at the excessive delays which have occurred in this investigation.

With regard to the other cases raised by Amnesty International in its 1992 report on torture in Greece, a press statement issued by the Ministry of Public Order in July 1992 stated that Greek administrative and judicial authorities had carried out "exhaustive" investigations into the cases and had found that only the deaths in custody of Süleyman Akyar and Georges Stamatopoulos (in April 1991) were of a serious nature. However, Amnesty International has received no information as to how or by whom the investigations were carried out, or any detailed record of the findings.

#### **4. Alleged ill-treatment of Albanian nationals:**

Amnesty International also received a large number of allegations of ill-treatment during the course of the expulsion of tens of thousands of Albanian nationals in mid-1993. In most cases the allegations were that soldiers, police and border guards beat, kicked or punched those being expelled. According to the Albanian authorities, 478 of those expelled in the period from 27 June to 4 July had been ill-treated by Greek security forces. Twelve of these were described as having been so severely injured that they required treatment in hospital in Bilishti. There were also complaints that Greek police had in some cases torn up passports and visas, or had confiscated money from Albanians they deported, telling them that money was being taken to cover the costs of their transport to the border. A border officer at Saranda port in Albania reportedly stated that five out of 20 Albanian immigrants expelled from Kerkyra (Corfu) on 28 October 1993 alleged that they had been ill-treated by police and displayed bruises supporting their allegations.

Gëzim Cani and his brother, Fiqret Cani, from Çërme, Lushnjë in Albania, crossed the border into Greece illegally on 25 May at about 4.30am and were arrested by Greek border guards. According to his written statement Gëzim Cani was severely beaten with truncheons by the soldiers who arrested him. He claims that he was loaded into a military vehicle to be taken away, but that after the vehicle had begun to move, he was pushed out and made to run alongside while soldiers held him by the hair. Gëzim Cani also states that at the border his hair was roughly cut by the soldiers in such a way that his scalp was lacerated. Fiqret Cani also alleged that he had been beaten and forcibly "shaved".

Artan Bushi, from Vajkani, Fier district of Albania, who at the time of his arrest and expulsion had been working in a village in the area of Katerini of Greece, stated in a written declaration that on 2 July he was arrested by police who would not let him collect his money from the house where he had been staying. He claims that when he protested the police beat him from behind with their fists. When he arrived at the local police station he was put in a cell where he was beaten once again. When he protested further, a policeman beat him with a stick an estimated 20 blows, mainly on the back. According to Artan Bushi, when guards saw how badly he had been beaten they put him in a cell with beds and a blanket, but he was given no food to eat for two days. On the third day he and others were taken to the border-crossing at Kapshtice and expelled from Greece.

Dritan Spahia from Patos, Fier in Albania was expelled from Greece shortly after his arrest on 2 July on the road in a village near Amidias. According to his account, he was taken by police to the local police station where they took his money, beat his back with a wooden truncheon, took his trousers away and put him in a cell prior to his expulsion. A month later he reported that his leg still hurt where the police officers had kicked him.

Afrim Neziri, from Maqellare, Peshkopi district in Albania, in a statement written on the day of his expulsion, declared: "Today, on 3 July 1993 plainclothes police in the town of Veria arrested us and beat us with wooden truncheons as they marched us through the streets, with our hands up, to the police station. Afterwards, when they put us in the bus they beat us all over our bodies. This happened to nearly all my companions. I declare that I have black bruises on my body from the police truncheons."

## **5. Alleged ill-treatment of conscientious objectors:**

Amnesty International received reports that some conscientious objectors had been subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in the period between their arrest at military camps and their transfer to prison.

The reports described the extremely poor conditions in the disciplinary cells attached to some camps or military police posts. When they are called up, Jehovah's Witnesses report to the military camp where they have been ordered to enlist. On being told to put on a uniform and take up arms they inform the officer-in-charge that they cannot do so as they are conscientious objectors. They are then ordered to perform unarmed military service. When they refuse, they are imprisoned in the disciplinary cell of the camp or in a cell at a nearby military police post. Some conscientious objectors have been subjected to physical and psychological abuse by military personnel or military police officers while they are kept in prison in the camp. This ill-treatment appears to be aimed at forcing them to change their minds about their conscientious objection. In addition, many have reported they were denied access to washing facilities, denied food for periods of up to several days, forbidden to write letters or telephone home and held in unheated leaking cells without adequate bedclothes in mid-winter. Reportedly some have been subjected to humiliating punishments such as being woken up and forced to clean the lavatories at 2.00 in the morning every day or being made to standing remain for many hours.

The conditions under which conscientious objectors were kept while in initial detention in these camps and police posts often fell short of the provisions of international standards regarding personal hygiene, clothing and bedding, contact with family, food and accommodation. On 7 February 1993 two conscientious objectors, Pavlos Kyriakou and Petros Manthou, who had been held in Kozani Military Camp for about a month, had to be transferred to hospital in Kozani because they were suffering from severe pneumonia. Despite sub-zero temperatures, these two conscientious objectors had been held in a disciplinary cell with a corrugated iron roof without any blankets or heating. A doctor at the

hospital in Kozani said that their state of health was so serious that he declared them unfit to perform military service. Conditions in this cell are said to be worse in the summer months when the heat is extreme and the cell is infested with mosquitoes.

The detention units in question are: in the Argos Oretikos Army Camp in Kastoria; in the 969 Military Police Command in Kozani; at the Military Camp in Nigrita, Serres; the Disciplinary Guard House in Tripoli; the holding cell attached to 10th Infantry Battalion in Tripoli; the Guard House of the Army Camp in Rethymnon, Crete; in the Military Camp in Kozani; the disciplinary cell of the Military Police post in Kastoria and in the Army Camp at Tripoli.