

AI Index: PRE 01/532/2012
01 November 2012

Greek journalist acquitted

The acquittal of Greek journalist Costas Vaxevanis is a victory for freedom of expression, Amnesty International said today.

"Costas Vaxevanis should not have been put on trial in the first place. He was he was acting in the public interest and doing his job as a journalist," said Marek Marczyński, Europe and Central Asia Deputy Programme Director at Amnesty International.

"The right to privacy should not be used to silence criticism of the government."

"The acquittal of Vaxevanis confirms that journalists can raise issues of public interest without fear of prosecution.

Costas Vaxevanis went to trial in Athens for breach of privacy after publishing the names of some 2,000 Greeks alleged to have HSBC bank accounts in Switzerland and calling for investigations into possible tax evasion.

The investigative journalist and editor was arrested last Sunday after he published the list, which includes the names of Greek public political and business figures, in the magazine Hot Doc, where he is an editor.

The list, which allegedly contains the names of prominent people in Greece who are suspected of using the accounts to evade taxes, has sparked fierce political debate in the country as it struggles with the imposition of severe austerity measures.

Vaxevanis was charged with a misdemeanour for breach of the law on the protection of personal data.