

## Public Statement

### GREECE

#### **Amnesty International welcomes the acquittal of four members of ethnic Macedonian minority Party.**

Amnesty International welcomes the acquittal of four members of the ethnic Macedonian minority "Rainbow" Party at their trial in Florina, Greece, on 15 September 1998.

The four men, Vasilis Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasiliadis and Pavlos Voskopoulos, were charged with "causing and inciting mutual hatred among the citizens" under Article 192 of the Greek Penal Code, an offence punishable with up to two years' imprisonment.

These charges had been brought against them after they displayed a sign bearing the words "Florina Committee" in both Greek and Macedonian outside the Florina office of the Rainbow Party in September 1995. There was nothing in the indictment which suggested that they advocated violence or incited hatred.

Amnesty International is now calling on the Greek authorities to drop the charges against Traianos Pasois, another member of the "Rainbow" Party, whose trial is scheduled for 19 November 1998.

Traianos Pasois was charged after crossing the border between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, at the border post of Niki, Florina on 17 February 1996. According to an indictment later issued against him, he was carrying "two wall calendars which he intended to circulate" and which "featured photographs of pure Greek towns and areas, under or next to which were captions written in a foreign idiom".

The indictment further states that the captions "praised clearly controversial and provocative actions and decisions by political parties, groups and organizations which took part in the civil war. [These] actions and decisions disputed the Greek character of [the province of] Macedonia, aiming at its dismemberment, secession and annexation by a neighbouring state then enemy of Greece". There is no evidence in the indictment to suggest that the calendars contained any advocacy of violence.

Amnesty International believes that the charge brought against Traianos Pasois is motivated by his campaign for the recognition of a Macedonian minority in Greece and the right to use, without restriction, the Macedonian language.

The organization considers that by bringing Traianos Pasois to trial simply for expressing his opinion, the Greek authorities are violating Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), both of which Greece has ratified and is therefore bound to observe.

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