

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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EXTRA 03/92

Health Concern/Prisoner of Conscience

6 January 1993

GREECE:

Nikos MAZIOTIS

Amnesty International is concerned for the health of imprisoned conscientious objector Nikos Maziotis who has been on hunger-strike since 30 November 1992 in protest against his imprisonment. Nikos Maziotis was arrested on 16 October 1992 charged with desertion and insulting the Greek Armed Forces. Nikos Maziotis will be tried on 12 January 1993 at Thessaloniki Military Court on charges of desertion and defaming the Greek armed forces. He is currently held in the hospital wing of Pavlos Melas Military Prison, Thessaloniki.

Amnesty International considers Nikos Maziotis to be a prisoner of conscience and appeals for his immediate release. Nikos Maziotis considers himself to be a total objector, that is, he would refuse to perform an alternative civilian service even if one were available. Amnesty International takes no position on conscription as such and does not oppose the right of a state to request a citizen to undertake alternative civilian service; however, in the absence of any provision for such alternative service Amnesty International considers all imprisoned conscientious objectors to be prisoners of conscience.

The charge of insulting the Greek Armed Forces relates to a comment that the Greek Armed Forces are a "constituent of violence" made by Nikos Maziotis in a public statement in which he explained the reasons for his objection.

In 1991 Nikos Maziotis was held for three months by the military authorities for refusing to perform military service but was released after being given a one year suspended prison sentence. He was called up immediately on release to perform military service but he did not comply. A warrant for his arrest was issued almost immediately.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are some 380 conscientious objectors imprisoned in Greece, almost all of them Jehovah's Witnesses who spend around three years in prison for their conscientious objections. There is no provision for alternative civilian service for conscientious objectors in Greece although the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe have all appealed to member states to recognize the right to have conscientious objections to military service and introduce alternative civilian service.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Greek or English or in your own language:

- expressing concern that Nikos Maziotis, a conscientious objector, has been on hunger

strike since 30 November 1992 in protest against his imprisonment;

- seeking assurances that he is being provided with all necessary medical care;
- calling for his immediate release as a prisoner of conscience and for the release of the other 380 conscientious objectors imprisoned in Greece;
- urging the Greek Government to comply with international recommendations and introduce civilian alternative service of non-punitive length for conscientious objectors.

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APPEALS TO

1) Mr Ioannis Varvitsiotis
Minister of National Defence
Ministry of National Defence
Holargos (Pentagono)
Athens, Greece

Telegrams: Minister of National Defence Varvitsiotis, Athens, Greece

Faxes: + 30 1 646 55 84

Salutation: Dear Minister

2) Mr Michalis Papakonstandinou
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
1 Akadimias Street
106 71 Athens, Greece

Telegrams: Minister for Foreign Affairs Papakonstandinou, Athens, Greece

Faxes: + 30 1 36 09 716

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Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO: diplomatic representatives of Greece accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 January 1993.