

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

1 May 2012  
AI Index: EUR 25/003/2012

## **GREECE: ATTACKS AGAINST JOURNALISTS DURING PROTESTS HAVE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

Amnesty International expresses its deepest concerns over further reports concerning attacks against journalists during the protests of 6 and 7 April 2012 in Athens.

Amnesty International believes that apart from the impact that such alleged incidents of arbitrary and abusive use of force against journalists and photographers have on their rights to physical integrity and to be free from ill-treatment, they further have a detrimental effect upon freedom of expression.

In the past years, the organization has been monitoring the cases of several journalists and photographers who have been ill-treated by police while trying to cover anti-austerity and other demonstrations in Greece. The attacked journalists and photographers were clearly identifiable as media staff. Some of the journalists and photographers said that they had been subjected to ill-treatment and abusive language by police more than once.

Aris Messinis, a press photographer told Amnesty International that he was assaulted on three occasions by police while covering a demonstration on 17 November 2010. Manolis Kypreos, a journalist, suffered a total loss of his hearing when a riot police officer reportedly threw a stun grenade at him while covering an anti-austerity demonstration on 15 June 2011. Dimitris Trimis, the Chairman of the Athens Daily Press Editors' Union suffered from a broken hand after he fell as a result of riot police officers allegedly pushing him and kicking him when he pleaded them to stop using force against protesters on the 29 June 2011 demonstration. Marios Lolos, the President of the Greek Photoreporters Union was hospitalized and underwent an operation after suffering from a skull fracture when a riot police officer reportedly beat him on the back of his head with a baton on 7 April 2012. This is not the first time that Marios Lolos has been ill-treated by police while doing his job as a photographer. He has been hit on the head twice more on previous occasions by police.

Marios Lolos was along with other reporters trying to cover a protest in Syndagma square held in memory of a 77-year old retired pharmacist, Dimitris Christoulas, who committed suicide. Several other journalists and photographers were reportedly ill-treated by riot police during the same demonstrations.

Amnesty International understands that a criminal investigation and a disciplinary inquiry have started into the case of Marios Lolos. However, the organization reiterates its call for prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations, which will lead to the perpetrators being brought to justice to all the cases concerning ill-treatment of journalists and photographers.

Public Document

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