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PUBLIC STATEMENT

GREECE

Charges against members of the “Rainbow” party should be dropped

Amnesty International is calling on the Greek authorities to drop the charges against four members of the ethnic Macedonian minority party "Rainbow" at their trial in Florina on 15 September 1998.

"Rainbow" members Vasilis Romas, Costas Tasopoulos, Petros Vasiliadis and Pavlos Voskopoulos are charged with “causing and inciting mutual hatred among the citizens” under Article 192 of the Greek Penal Code.

These charges were 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 is nothing in the indictment which suggests that they advocated violence or incited hatred.

Amnesty International believes that their prosecution is a violation of Article 10 (1) of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), which Greece has ratified and is legally bound to observe.

Article 10 (1) states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.”

Should they be imprisoned after their trial, Amnesty International will adopt them as prisoners of conscience and will call for their immediate and unconditional release.

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