

GREECE

1. Changes (positive and negative) in legislation affecting the interests of minorities in the period under review:

- discriminatory legislation affecting minorities;**
- improvement of anti-discrimination legislation;**
- migration legislation;**
- legislation aimed at combating hate crimes**

In 2019, two elections were held: the election of the European Parliament, which confirmed the leading position of Kyriakos Mitsotakis' New Democracy party, followed by a legislative election, in which Alexis Tsipras' government was defeated. This cycle of elections continued on 23 January 2020 with the highly consensual election of Ms Ekaterini Sakellariopoulou as President of Greece (indirectly elected by MPs).

On September 2019, The Greek cabinet decided on Monday to go ahead with two ambitious programs which aim to ease the burden on the Eastern Aegean islands due to the increased influx of refugees and migrants who are coming to Greece through Turkey.

In a meeting held in Athens on Monday afternoon, the Greek government made a decision to implement two different relocation programs.

The first, which is funded completely by the European Commission, involves the transfer of 40,000 refugees and immigrants either to the mainland of Greece or elsewhere.

A total of 16,000 additional refugees and migrants are expected to be transported across the country under the auspices of the Greek program "Helios," to specially-designed camps or hotels and motels.

The Greek government also decided to go ahead with the construction of enclosed centers for those who have entered the country illegally and are not entitled to asylum, or who have had their applications rejected.

Greece also aims to increase the repatriation of those who are not granted asylum status by 10,000 until December of 2020.

The Greek government will bring forward a bill very soon which aims to speed up procedures in order to more expeditiously determine whether migrants should be granted asylum status or if they should be deported.

The legislation will also seek to establish a "safe country" scheme, via an international agreement, by which those who must be deported can go to another country safely.

Greece will make a joint presentation to the EU, along with Cyprus and Bulgaria, the other EU member states close to Turkey, on a proposal to reduce the number of migrants arriving on the shores of EU lands from Turkey.

Concurrent with the meeting, Greece's Deputy Citizen Protection Minister Eleftherios Economou publicly admitted on Monday that Greece is going through a national crisis regarding the number of migrants arriving on its shores.

"winter is on the way and all Greeks, throughout the country, must help in the work that is starting to be carried out to relieve the islands," Economou asserted.¹

2020 marked a new page in refugee / immigration. A new controversial bill (**law 4686**)² was passed in parliament with the support of social democratic party KINAL, virtually without consultation, by the new government of conservative party New Democracy that was confirmed in the parliamentary elections of June 2019 and promised to solve the refugee issue in Greece thus introducing its different approach to the migration issue (from terminology to the temporary abolition of the Ministry of Immigration Policy). One of the many critics to the government of ND is that it aspires, with the assistance of a friendly media, to highlight the (for her) "immigrant" as the "biggest social problem". Before talking about "uncontrollable situation on the islands", the competent minister referred to the number of 115,000 people, who are supposed to "wander" in the country. A number that does not appear from any data according to the Legal Service of the Hellenic Refugee Council. The data of which say that from 2016 to 2019 there were 50,000 rejections of asylum applications. There are 20,000 refugees on Greek soil and 10-15,000 waiting for the rejections to pass the second grade. The government sought not to deliberate the law and to justify the austerity character of it. It has incorporated the EU directive to a minimum, although it cites it to form the framework. Specifically, it tries in a coordinated way to "reduce" the "refugee" to an "immigrant", demonizing people who come from really difficult corners of the planet. The intention, after all, was clear with the abolition, immediately after the elections, of the Ministry of Immigration Policy and the subordination of its responsibilities to the Ministry of Citizen Protection. This was followed by the exclusion from public health with the non-granting of AMKA special number for entering public services, to third-country nationals residing illegally in the country, and therefore to their children.³ «Toxicity is cultivated in public speech and a climate of xenophobia that likens people who come to our country as "invaders". Instead of speeding up asylum procedures, the bill will end up adding additional administrative and bureaucratic burden to services. In the name of the alleged "acceleration", fundamental principles of the right to asylum are being curtailed » said Gabriel Sakellaridis, Director of the Greek Section of Amnesty International.⁴

The new law proposed from the Ministry of Citizen Protection on October 2019 and adopted in March 2020 introduces significant changes in the asylum procedures, the rights and obligations of asylum seekers, reception and detention, as well as in economic, social and cultural rights.⁵ The

¹ <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2019/09/30/greek-cabinet-adopts-emergency-measures-for-islands-awash-in-migrants/>

² <https://www.taxheaven.gr/law/4686/2020>

³ <https://popaganda.gr/postscripts/la-greca-bellezza-prosfygiko-nomosxedio/>

⁴ <https://popaganda.gr/postscripts/la-greca-bellezza-prosfygiko-nomosxedio/>

⁵ <https://www.amnesty.gr/news/press/article/22623/proteinomeno-shedio-nomoy-gia-asylo-ypovathmizei-tin-prostasia-kai-ta>

amendments affect, inter alia, the rules governing asylum procedures, the rights and obligations of asylum seekers, reception and detention, access to integration activities and economic, social and cultural rights.

Some of the amendments are as following:

Vulnerable groups

The law does no longer include people with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as "vulnerable" asylum seekers. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a pervasive condition in many who escape traumatic experiences or survive difficult migratory journeys. It run the risk of excluding a significant group of asylum seekers from the most protective standards provided to them by European law. Similar concerns apply to the proposal to require torture survivors to certify their status by public health providers, excluding private certification by NGOs or other bodies.

This requirement has no basis in European law and runs the risk of creating significant barriers for asylum seekers in this category, especially as there are no public health structures to recognize torture survivors in mainland Greece from 2018, and the relevant functions are carried out essentially by NGOs.

Accelerated and border procedures and "safe third country" lists: The Law aims to reduce the time limit for asylum and appeal requests, and increase the use of admissibility procedures to avoid substantive requests. To this end, the law develops the rules for accelerated and border procedures, also for vulnerable cases, and the lists of "safe third countries". The use of safe third country rules is not guaranteed, and is widely disputed by the immigrant rights community, as it is based on the often inaccurate assumption that a country is safe enough for an asylum seeker to seek refuge there protection, largely ignoring personal factors or objective changes in the conditions of the country itself.

In general, these changes risk exposing asylum seekers to serious violations of their rights, both in terms of their effective access to asylum procedures and their protection against return to hazardous conditions.

Procedural rights in first instance proceedings and appeals: The Law introduces changes that affect various stages of the proceedings. Among other things, it allows access to information on the reasons for negative first instance decisions, and the possibility of recourse, only at the request of the applicant, to a violation of international standards for effective remedies. In addition, the obligation to cooperate with the authorities during the proceedings increases, and failure to comply is unjustifiably considered as a reason to consider the request to be manifestly unfounded, which is of particular concern and jeopardizes the applicants' right to a fair trial asylum procedure. The changes also risk exposing applicants to repatriation, as the automatic suspensive effects of appeals are ruled out when applications are rejected as manifestly unfounded or not considered on the merits. While applicants may submit a separate application to stay in the country, the provision fails to explicitly take into account the standards of European case law when the decision exposes a person to a serious risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Access to health, the labor market and education: The amendments pose serious obstacles to the full enjoyment of the economic, social and cultural rights of asylum seekers in Greece. The Law proposes the restriction of material reception conditions, i.e. economic assistance, for asylum-seeking children who do not enroll in public schools, as well as for adult members of their families, in violation of the spirit and purpose of the children's right to education, such as provided for in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and their independent right to an adequate standard of living. Access to work for registered asylum seekers is no longer granted immediately, but only after 6 months, undermining the already precarious economic conditions of

the refugee population in Greece. The law reduces the grace period for recognized refugees from six months to 30 days to make a transition from organized accommodation and basic support to an independent living. Refugees will have to transit from assistance for asylum seekers to general social welfare, once recognized as refugees by Greece's asylum authorities. The objective to make more resources and space available for asylum-seekers is well-understood, Greece's reception system is facing a shortage of places. Recognized refugees need to vacate much needed accommodation for asylum seekers waiting in crowded reception facilities on the Greek Aegean islands. Over 31,000 women, men, and children live in five island reception centres with capacity for fewer than 6,000. There are about 6,500 places in the Reception Centers, but almost 32,000 people live / only 1 in 5 asylum seekers has legal assistance / 4,700 are unaccompanied without appointed commissioners / 3 are dead in Moria since last August 2019.⁶

However, concerns have been expressed that assistance for many recognized refugees is ending prematurely, before they have an effective access to employment and social welfare schemes, foreseen by Greek law.

Forcing people to leave their accommodation without a safety net and measures to ensure their self-reliance may push many into poverty and homelessness. Most of the affected refugees do not have regular income, many are families with school-aged children, single parents, survivors of violence, and others with specific needs. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and measures to reduce its spread create additional challenges by limiting people's ability to move and find work or accommodation.

Shifting a problem from the islands to the mainland is not a solution. Organizations such as UNHCR have been urging authorities to apply a phased approach, a higher threshold to extend assistance to vulnerable people who cannot leave at this stage.

Refugee integration is a process which requires sincere efforts from refugees to become self-sufficient and give back to their host society. At the same time effective access to national schemes and integration programmes which offer language classes, vocational training, and access to gainful employment are key.

Refugees are eligible for several national schemes providing minimum guaranteed income, housing support and other benefits to the most vulnerable. In practice, however, refugees face barriers in accessing support.

Among those scheduled to leave their accommodation now are 4,000 refugees staying in the UNHCR-managed ESTIA accommodation scheme, funded by the European Commission. The programme's rules and eligibility are determined by the Greek government. UNHCR runs ESTIA across Greece in partnership with municipalities and NGOs, and significant joint efforts have been made to foster inclusion and empower refugees to participate in the social life of their host communities. ESTIA provides safe and dignified housing in apartments to 22,700 vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees.

Changes to detention rules are also of particular concern. Asylum seekers risk being detained in Greece for extended periods of time, and with more limited legal remedies, in clear violation of international standards, according to which asylum seekers should not, as a rule, be detained.⁷

⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2020/6/5ed603924/greece-must-ensure-safety-net-integration-opportunities-refugees-unhcr.html>

⁷ <https://www.amnesty.gr/news/press/article/22623/proteinomeno-shedio-nomoy-gia-asylo-ypovathmizei-tin-prostasia-kai-ta>

2) The Greek Constitution prohibits the use of torture and other ill-treatment in Article 7(2). Torture and other ill-treatment are also explicitly proscribed in the Greek Criminal Code in Articles 137A-137D, which define torture as the "planned" (μεθοδευμένη) infliction by a state official on a person of severe physical, and other similar forms, of pain (Article 137A(2)). Such a definition, which conditions torture upon the existence of a "planned" infliction of severe pain, provides for a scope of definition of torture considerably narrower than in the CAT. The non-compliance of the definition of torture in the Greek criminal law with the international human rights law standards and, in particular, with Article 1(1) CAT is an issue which has been raised by a number of international human rights bodies⁹ and other actors. However, in the reformed Criminal Code, as it was finally voted by the Greek parliament in June 6, 2019, the definition of torture remains intact. In fact, Articles 137A-137D were merged into one article (Article 137A), remaining under the initial Chapter of the Criminal Code, entitled "Violations of the democratic system". At the same time, in the explanatory report to the draft Criminal Code, there's absolutely no reference to the reasons that lead the competent law drafting Committee to maintain this narrower view of the definition of torture.⁸

3) In June, in a historic victory for women's rights, Greece became the ninth country in Europe to introduce a consent-based rape law meaning that sex without consent is rape.⁹ In its Concluding Observations to Greece after the review in 2012, the Committee expressed concern about the persistence of sexual violence and at the limited number of prosecutions and convictions of the perpetrators. The Committee also expressed concern that the State party's Penal Code does not explicitly include rape and other forms of sexual violence as forms of torture 26, and 25 UN. Doc CAT/C/GRC/CO/5-6, para 23. 26 Ibid. 17 recommended Greece to explicitly include rape and other forms of sexual violence as a form of torture in the amendment of Article 137A of the Criminal Code instead of "a serious breach of sexual dignity". The Greek National Commission for Human Rights included the same recommendation in its observations on the draft government report to CAT. While the Greek government did not include rape and other forms of sexual violence in the amendment of article 137 A of the Penal Code on torture, it did amend the Penal Code on 6 June 2019 to recognize that sex without consent is rape. It makes clear that for the crime to be considered rape physical violence is not required and that the focus is not on resistance. Yet these changes still fall short of the Committee's and the NCHR's recommendations that rape and other forms of sexual violence are treated as forms of torture.

While the constitution and law prohibit discrimination against members of minorities, Roma and members of other minority groups continued to face discrimination.

Although the government recognized an individual's right to self-identification, many individuals who defined themselves as members of a minority group found it difficult to express their identity freely and to maintain their culture. Citizens identified themselves as Turks, Pomaks, Vlachs, Roma, Arvanites, or Macedonians. Some unsuccessfully sought official government identification as ethnic or linguistic minorities. Courts routinely rejected registration claims filed by associations in Thrace with titles including the terms Turk and Turkish when based on ethnic grounds, although individuals may legally call themselves Turks, and associations using those terms were able to function regularly without legal status. Government officials and courts denied requests by Slavic groups to use the term

⁸ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/GRC/INT_CAT_NHS_GRC_35432_E.pdf

⁹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/greece-newly-amended-rape-law-is-a-historic-victory-for-women/>

Macedonian to identify themselves on the grounds that more than two million ethnically (and linguistically) Greek citizens also used the term Macedonian for self-identification.¹⁰

The government officially recognizes a Muslim minority, as defined by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which consists of persons descended from Muslims residing in Thrace at the time of the treaty's signature. They include ethnic Turkish, Pomak, and Romani communities. Some Pomaks and Roma claimed that ethnically Turkish members of the Muslim minority provided monetary incentives to encourage them to say they were ethnically Turkish.

During the 2018-19 school year, the government operated 128 primary schools and two secondary schools in the Thrace region that provided secondary bilingual education for minority children in Greek and Turkish. The government also operated two Islamic religious schools in Thrace. Some representatives of the Muslim minority said the facilities were inadequate to cover their needs, claiming the government ignored their request to privately establish an additional minority secondary school.¹¹ The same representatives noted a decreasing trend in the number of primary minority schools, which the government attributed to the decreasing number of students. Per the law, any facility with less than five students must temporarily suspend operations, with students referred to neighboring schools. For the 2019-20 school year, authorities announced that of the 20 schools that suspended operation in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, five were minority schools.

Roma continued to face widespread governmental and societal discrimination, social exclusion, and harassment, including ethnic profiling by police, alleged abuse while in police custody, discrimination in employment, limited access to education, and segregated schooling.

Poor school attendance, illiteracy, and high dropout rates among Romani children remained problems. Authorities did not enforce the mandatory education law for Romani children, and local officials often excluded Romani pupils from schools or sent them to Roma-only segregated schools. In his 2018 annual report, the Greek ombudsman noted that even when Romani children were enrolled in schools, authorities often failed to provide transportation.¹²

On August 26, 2016, the UN Commission on the Elimination of All Forms of Racist Discrimination (CERD) called on Greece to “repeal Articles 198 and 199 on blasphemy from the Penal Code” and at the same time to take measures to prevent, combat and punish it. Racist hate speech and racist hate crimes (...): (a) Take appropriate action to prosecute individuals, including politicians, and provide information in its next report on police investigations, criminal proceedings, and penalties. "The Commission wishes to emphasize that the fundamental right to freedom of expression must not undermine the principles of dignity, tolerance, equality and non-discrimination, as the exercise of the right to freedom of expression carries with it special responsibilities. among which is the obligation not to spread ideas based on racial superiority or racial hatred. The efforts lead to the removal in 2019 of articles on blasphemy. Greece's compliance with the recommendation for the tightening of the anti-racism law is pending. Similar remarks were made in 2015 by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) at the

¹⁰ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/greece/>

¹¹ <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/greece-minorities/greece.php>

¹² file:///C:/Users/OWNER/Downloads/EL_second_network_report_11.pdf

Council of Europe, that the anti-racism law "does not deal with ú insults and defamation or public dissemination, public distribution or production or storage of racist material... The relevant criminal law is not always enforced and the situation is exacerbated by the non-condemnation of hate speech EC ECRI recommends that Law 927/1979 always apply in cases of hate speech to the media. ¹³

On December 2020, Human rights groups say that a new law approved in December by the Greek Parliament imposes a general news blackout on the dozens of migrant and refugee facilities dotted around the country. The new law comes just after Human Rights Watch, on December 2020 released a report¹⁴ suggesting that the new camp on Lesbos could be contaminated with dangerous levels of lead, from its use as a military firing range.

“Firing ranges are commonly contaminated with lead from munitions; nevertheless the authorities did not conduct comprehensive lead testing or soil remediation before moving migrants to the site in September 2020,” the report said.



A girl from Syria living in Mavrovouni camp watches the Greek military search for unexploded munitions after she and thousands of other migrants had already moved to the site. © 2020

Private

¹³

<https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com/tag/%ce%b9%cf%83%ce%bb%ce%b1%ce%bc%ce%bf%cf%86%ce%bf%ce%b2%ce%af%ce%b1-islamophobia/>

¹⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/08/greece-lead-poisoning-concerns-new-migrant-camp>

Under the new law, workers operating within a refugee camp, including volunteers and government civil servants, are not to publicly share any information related to the operations or residents of the camp, and this applies even after they stop working there.

The phrasing of the law also means that should a government employee witness any criminal acts they should report it to their superior and nobody else.

In a statement NGO Choose Love/Help Refugees says that “we cannot allow the truth about conditions in Greek camps to be hidden. This censorship will make it harder than ever to show the terrible conditions people face.”

An NGO worker, speaking on condition of anonymity to *Forbes*, said that the new law will not stop information getting out. “The residents will get the word out, but it just highlights how draconian the new regime is. It’s an easy way to remove or prosecute NGOs and volunteers.”¹⁵

2. Law enforcement practices affecting minorities - examples from the period under review:

- Discriminatory practices:

Allegations of excessive use for force, torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement officials persisted. In the last quarter of 2019, there was a spike in reports of such incidents against individuals during arrest and detention, journalists and students protesting against the repeal of a long-standing law banning police from entering university campuses. In a number of cases, arbitrary strip-searches were reported as part of the ill-treatment. Serious concerns arose that these repeated incidents were not isolated and at the pervasive culture of impunity for such actions.

There were continuing delays in the criminal and disciplinary investigations into the death of queer activist and human rights defender Zak Kostopoulos in September 2018 following a violent attack. The initial criminal investigation resulted in six people, including four police officers, being charged with grievous bodily harm resulting in death, but no trial had commenced by the end of the year.¹⁶

The Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) remains concerned about the dire state of the Greek prison system and the insufficient steps taken to tackle the prison crisis. It considers that the recovery of the Greek prison system must be a priority of the Greek Government. Further, it is deeply concerned that the infliction of ill treatment by the police remains a frequent practice throughout

¹⁵ <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2020/12/10/greece-accused-of-imposing-news-blackout-from-migrant-camps/>

¹⁶ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/greece/report-greece/>

Greece and that the current system of investigations into allegations of ill-treatment cannot be considered effective. The urges the Greek authorities to take concrete action to address the situation in prisons and the issue of ill treatment by the police. Specifically, it focuses on the following issues.¹⁷

The findings of the 2019 visit demonstrate once again that the two overarching problems of overcrowding and chronic shortage of staff continue to compound the many additional shortcomings in the prisons. Currently, the Greek authorities are unable to fulfil their minimum obligation to keep both prisoners and staff safe. Prisoners, not staff, control the wings and increasingly **high levels of inter-prisoner violence and intimidation**¹⁸ are evident in the prisons. Cases of hospitalization of inmates due to severe (and sometimes fatal) injuries inflicted by other inmates are a feature in every establishment visited. The situation at Korydallos Men's Prison remains the most volatile and alarming. The four large wings, each holding between 230 and 431 prisoners, were often staffed by a single prison officer who clearly was not in a position to exert any authority or control over prisoners. A sense of lawlessness pervaded the prison and many prisoners met possessed make-shift knives for self-protection, knowing that staff would not be able to help them. Many violent incidents remain unreported or even unnoticed.

At Nigrita Prison, a number of credible allegations were received of physical ill-treatment of foreign national prisoners by prison officers, supported by external perimeter guards. Staff must be told that such behaviour is unacceptable. Further, perimeter guards should be trained in the proportionate use of force and there must be stringent recording of all instances of use of force.

The findings of the 2019 visit indicate once again that the infliction of ill-treatment by the police, especially against foreign nationals and persons from the Roma community, remains a frequent practice throughout Greece. The CPT's delegation received a high number of credible allegations of excessive use of force and unduly tight handcuffing upon apprehension and of physical and psychological ill-treatment of criminal suspects during or in the context of police interviews. Alleged ill-treatment mainly consisted of slaps, punches and kicks as well as blows with truncheons and metal objects to the body and head. It also received some allegations involving blows with a stick to the soles of the feet (falagka) and the application of a plastic bag over the head during police interviews, reportedly with the aim of obtaining a confession and a signed statement. None of the persons who alleged ill-treatment had been allowed to make a phone call or to contact a lawyer during their initial questioning by the police. Further, a great number of allegations of verbal abuse of detained persons was received, including of racist/xenophobic remarks by police officers.¹⁹

In February 2019, in its judgment on H.A. and others v. Greece, the ECtHR "was of the view that "protective custody" in police stations could last for long periods during which the minors concerned could not be identified by lawyers working for NGOs. Soon after, in April 2019, Human Rights Watch reported that "Despite that ruling, as of March 30, 82 unaccompanied children were still detained in so-called "protective custody," held in police station cells or immigrant detention centers across the country. Human Rights Watch has found that detained children are forced to live in unsanitary conditions, often alongside adults they do not know" . On 13 June 2019, the ECtHR held once again that Greece and six other countries had violated article 3 and article 5§1

¹⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/16809e2058>

¹⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/16809e2058>, pg 4

¹⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/16809e2059>

of the European Convention as a result of the conditions of detentions of unaccompanied migrants in Greece. This last judgment concerned five Afghans who entered Greece as unaccompanied minors. The ECtHR highlighted that the States' authorities' deficiencies were particularly serious considering unaccompanied minors as "persons who were particularly vulnerable because of their age". This is the second judgment on this issue in four months, showing that the situation is worsening. According to Human Rights Watch, "as of May 31, 123 unaccompanied children were still detained in police station cells or immigrant detention centers across the country. Thus 43 more children are being detained than at the end of March, just as the court first ruled against the practice"²⁰

On 28 February 2020, the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a statement declaring that the borders to the EU were open and that Turkish forces would no longer prevent people from trying to access Greece. As from 29 February, thousands of migrants started to converge on the Turkish side of the north-west land border to Greece in the region of Edirne. Crossings by boat also increased for a few days, for example, on 1 and 2 March, 1,200 persons arrived on the Greek islands.²¹ In reaction to these developments, the Greek authorities reinforced the numbers of police and military personnel guarding the Evros border and increased its patrols of the shipping lanes between Turkey and the Aegean islands, notably, Chios, Kos, Lesbos and Samos. Further, on Sunday, On March 1, 2020, Greece's Governmental National Security Council decided to effectively suspend access to the asylum system for a month for people who crossed the border irregularly, a measure for which there is no legal basis or justification.²² In the first few days of March, confrontations occurred at the Kastanies border crossing, which included reports of live ammunition being fired and the death of one migrant and injuries to several others on 4 March 2020.

*On March 2020 the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) found that the conditions of detention in which migrants were held in certain facilities in the Evros region and on the island of Samos could amount to inhuman and degrading treatment.*²³ Their report again underlines the structural deficiencies in Greece's immigration detention policy. Migrants continue to be held in detention centres composed of large barred cells crammed with beds, with poor lighting and ventilation, dilapidated and broken toilets and washrooms, insufficient personal hygiene products and cleaning materials, inadequate food and no access to outdoor daily exercise. The situation was further aggravated by extreme overcrowding in several of the facilities. In addition, migrants were not provided with clear information about their situation.

The CPT once again found that families with children, unaccompanied and separated children and other vulnerable persons (with a physical or mental health illness, or pregnant women) were being detained in such appalling conditions with no appropriate support. The CPT calls upon the Greek authorities to end the detention of unaccompanied children and of children with their parents in

²⁰ <https://rm.coe.int/16809e2058>

²¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/29/erdogan-says-border-will-stay-open-as-greece-tries-to-repel-influx>

²² <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/04/greece/eu-respect-rights-ease-suffering-borders>

²³ <https://refugeeobservatory.aegean.gr/en/council-europe%E2%80%99s-anti-torture-committee-calls-greece-reform-its-immigration-detention-system-and>

police establishments. Instead, they should be transferred to suitable reception facilities catering to their specific needs.

The report also highlights that the CPT again received consistent and credible allegations of migrants being pushed back across the Evros River border to Turkey. A telling manifestation of the pushback practice is represented by a girl of two and a half years old who, along with her older brother of 21 years, that was separated from her mother and father and five other siblings. The whole family had crossed into Greece on 29 February 2020 and had been apprehended in a field and taken to the quasi-official Poros centre.²⁴ There were so many migrants present that some of them had had to remain in the courtyard sitting on the concrete floor in the rain. The officers, dressed in camouflage uniforms and with balaclavas over their faces, allegedly confiscated the mobile phones of the migrants as well as their personal bags and kicked anyone who did not obey their orders to remain seated. After around six or seven hours, the camouflaged officers are said to have loaded most of the migrants, including the mother and four of her children, onto about six vehicles and transported them to the Evros River, where they were put into wooden boats and taken across to the Turkish side. A day later, the father and another brother were pushed back across the river in a similar manner. All the belongings of this family, including a backpack with clothes and identity and property documents as well as money, were allegedly taken by the officers. The brother and his little sister were taken to Feres Police and Border Guard Station and two days later to the Filakio RIC. They were served with deportation papers to Afghanistan.²⁵ 29 human rights and humanitarian aid organizations (Human Rights Watch, ActionAid Hellas, Amnesty International, ARSIS – Association for the Social Support of Youth, Danish Refugee Council, Equal Rights Beyond Borders, Fenix – Humanitarian Legal Aid, Greek Council for Refugees, Greek Forum of Refugees, Greek Helsinki Monitor, Hellenic League for Human Rights, Help Refugees, HIAS Greece, HumanRights360, International Rescue Committee, INTERSOS Hellas, Josoor, Legal Centre Lesvos, Lesvos Solidarity, Medecins Du Monde – Greece, Mobile Info Team, Network for Children’s Rights, PRAKSIS, Refugee Legal Support, Refugee Rights Europe, Refugees International, Refugee Support Aegean, SolidarityNow, Terre des hommes Hellas) in an open letter, released on October 2020 expressed the opinion that Members of Greece’s parliament should urgently establish an inquiry into all allegations of unlawful returns of migrants to Turkey by law enforcement officers and others. Parliament should exercise its oversight authority to investigate the allegations of these illegal acts by state agents and proxies on Greece’s sea and land borders with Turkey. The parliament’s inquiry should examine whether any illegal acts identified are part of a *de facto* government policy at odds with international, European, and Greek law.²⁶

Over the years, nongovernmental groups and media outlets have consistently reported the unlawful return, including through pushbacks, of groups and individuals from Greece to Turkey by Greek law enforcement officers or unidentified masked men, who appear to be working in tandem with border enforcement officials. Reports from 2020 recorded multiple incidents in which Greek Coast Guard personnel, sometimes accompanied by armed masked men in dark clothing, and unlawfully abandoned migrants – including those who had reached Greek territory.²⁷ They abandoned the migrants at sea, on inflatable vessels without motors; towed migrant boats to Turkish waters; or intercepted, attacked, and disabled boats carrying migrants. Nongovernmental organizations and the media have also reported persistent allegations that Greek border guards have engaged in

²⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cpt/-/council-of-europe-s-anti-torture-committee-calls-on-greece-to-reform-its-immigration-detention-system-and-stop-pushbacks>

²⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/1680a06a86>

²⁶ https://www.gcr.gr/media/k2/attachments/20201006_letter_en.pdf

²⁷ <https://www.humanrights360.org/greece-investigate-pushbacks-violence-at-borders/>

collective expulsions and pushbacks of asylum seekers through the Evros land border with Turkey. On June 10, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said it was “closely monitoring” the situation at the Greek border and reported receiving “persistent reports” of migrants being arbitrarily arrested in Greece and pushed back to Turkey.²⁸ The IOM said that Greece should investigate. On August 21, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said it was “deeply concerned by an increasing number of credible reports indicating that men, women, and children may have been informally returned to Turkey immediately after reaching Greek soil or territorial waters in recent months,” and urged Greece to refrain from such practices and to seriously investigate these reports. The agency had released a statement making similar calls on June 12. On July 6, during a debate at the European Parliament’s Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) on fundamental rights at the Greek border, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, said those incidents should be investigated.²⁹ In its new Pact on Migration and Asylum, presented on September 23, the European Commission recommended to member states to set up an independent monitoring mechanism, amid increased allegations of abuse at the EU’s external borders. But no such system has been instituted. Confronted during a CNN interview with an August 14 *New York Times* article documenting pushbacks, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said: “It has not happened. We’ve been the victims of a significant misinformation campaign,” suggesting instead that Turkey was responsible.³⁰ Greek lawmakers should conduct a prompt, effective, transparent, and impartial investigation into allegations that Greek Coast Guard, Greek police, and Greek army personnel, sometimes in close coordination with uniformed masked men, have been involved in acts that not only violate the law but put the lives and safety of displaced people at risk. Any officer found to have engaged in such illegal acts, as well as their commanding officers and officials who have command responsibility over such forces, should be subject to disciplinary and criminal sanctions, as applicable. The investigation should seek to establish the identity and relationship of the masked men and other unidentified officers to law enforcement and take steps to hold them to account. The investigation should cover events surfaced in 2019 and 2020, the groups said.

“Despite government denials, over the years many witnesses and victims have told us about pushbacks from land and sea that put migrants’ lives at risk,” said Eva Cossé, Greece researcher at Human Rights Watch. “Parliament should step up now and do all it can to put an end to this life-threatening practice.” “The continued failure to address the serious allegations of pushbacks and violence against people on the move at Greece’s borders can no longer be tolerated,” said Adriana Tidona, migration researcher at Amnesty International. “We call on the Greek parliament to exercise its powers in the interest of all those who have been harmed by these actions and to ensure that there is no repetition.”³¹ “Over the years, we have filed a score of complaints about or related to pushbacks at Greece’s borders, including deaths, that Greek prosecutors seem to ignore,” said Panayote Dimitras, spokesperson for the Greek Helsinki Monitor. “Greece needs to act quickly to set up an independent border monitoring mechanism to investigate violations, as proposed by the European Commission, and end these abuses once and for all.” “The right to seek asylum must be upheld at all times,” said Josie Naughton, chief executive officer of Help Refugees. “The Greek parliament should urgently conduct an inquiry to examine the well-documented and illegal practices of pushbacks and mass expulsion, which endanger the lives of men, women, and children seeking asylum in Greece.” “We have documented the pushback of more than 1,150

²⁸ <https://tdh-europe.org/news/greece-investigate-pushbacks-violence-at-borders/7491>

²⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/06/greece-investigate-pushbacks-violence-borders>

³⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/greece-still-denying-migrant-pushbacks>

³¹ <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/27804/greece-ngos-call-for-investigation-into-migrant-pushbacks>

asylum seekers from Greek territory in the past three months alone,” said Natalie Gruber, spokesperson for Josoor. “These are not isolated incidents but systematic violations of national, EU, and international law that the parliament cannot shrug off as fake news anymore.”³²

“Greek authorities are systematically expelling migrants, including those who have reached Greek territory, and abandoning them in open water,” said Amelia Cooper from Legal Centre Lesvos. “The Greek parliament should not only open an investigation of these events, but must also decree and enforce – immediately – the cessation of illegal collective expulsions at all Greek borders.” “In order to break with the current failures to hold member states like Greece accountable for their pushbacks and rights violations at borders, the European Commission must step up its efforts and quickly put in place an appropriate monitoring mechanism,” said Marta Welander, executive director at Refugee Rights Europe. “Such efforts must also involve civil society, NGOs, and national human rights institutions to ensure that available evidence is taken seriously and leads to timely investigation and redress.” “The protection of the borders, of vital importance in itself, can be in compliance with international law and human rights standards,” said Antigone Lyberaki, SolidarityNow’s general manager. “The Greek parliament has both the means and a constitutional obligation to oversee and investigate the alleged infringement of international human rights obligations by the Greek state.” “As a child protection organization, Tdh Hellas is particularly worried about the fact that among those reported to have been violently expelled across EU borders are children, including babies,” said Melina Spathari of Terre des hommes Hellas. “The Greek government should stop such acts and try instead to address the chronic gaps in the reception and protection system for families and unaccompanied children.”³³

===A further consequence of the events that unfolded after 28 February 2020, was the decision by certain prosecutors to criminally charge migrants with illegal entry into the country. Law 3386/2005 on the “Entry, residence and social inclusion of third country nationals in the Greek Territory” states under Article 83, paragraph 1, that “Third-country nationals who enter or attempt to enter Greece without legal formalities shall be punished by imprisonment of at least three months and a fine of at least one thousand five hundred EUR (1,500€)”. In the past, in practice, prosecutors have used their discretionary powers under Article 83, paragraph 2, of the Law not to pursue criminal charges against irregular migrants.

Public Prosecutors in Alexandroupolis District and on the island of Lesbos have filed criminal charges against some migrants but that these cases have yet to come to court. Likewise, 12 minors from Afghanistan have also been charged but their cases were postponed by the Court of Minors on 5 March 2020 due to a lack of interpretation services. However, the Public Prosecutor in the district of Orestiada (north Evros) was the most systematic in criminally charging and seeking punitive sentences for migrants who entered the country in an irregular manner. Between 28 February and 14 March 2020, the single-member Misdemeanours Court in Orestiada sentenced 103 persons to imprisonment under the above-mentioned regulation. In 19 cases which concerned

³² <https://www.humanrights360.org/greece-investigate-pushbacks-violence-at-borders/>

³³ <https://www.humanrights360.org/greece-investigate-pushbacks-violence-at-borders/>

women, the sentences were suspended and the administrative procedure for deportation was applied (the delegation met many of them at Filakio). In the remaining 84 cases, 79 men were sentenced to periods of up to four years of imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 Euros and five women were sentenced to three or three and a half years of imprisonment and a fine of 5,000 Euros.³⁴ The cases were all referred to the Court under the procedure of ‘flagrante delicto’ and hence dealt with within 24 hours of the person’s apprehension. 18. The CPT has serious misgivings about the way in which these cases were conducted. For example, two Turkish men had entered Greece at 6 a.m. on 14 March (a Saturday), were apprehended near to Neo Cheimonio and brought to Orestiada police station at 9:40 a.m. on that day. In the early afternoon of the same day, they had a hearing (at which they claimed they could not understand the proceedings and that they did not have a chance to speak to their lawyer), at the end of which both were sentenced to four years of imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 Euros. In another case, a family from Afghanistan was arrested on 29 February and, on the same day, the husband was sentenced to three years and six months and a fine of 4,000 Euros and the wife received a suspended three-year sentence and fine of 5,000 Euros, which at least enabled her to remain with her two children (aged 11 months and 2 years) albeit within an immigration detention facility. At no stage were any of these persons, or others whom the delegation met, allowed to make a phone call to inform someone of their situation while held in police custody. States must not impose penalties on persons who directly come from a territory where they might face persecution in accordance with the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Article 31). According to this article, they must be provided with the opportunity to “show good cause” for their illegal entry. Moreover, “imprisonment of a migrant in an irregular situation for the offence of having unlawfully entered [...] must not take precedence over applying the [EU] Return Directive, including its fundamental rights safeguards”. Finally, also in light of the state of Greek prisons, this new practice is highly questionable.³⁵

A systematic deficiency of fundamental importance concerns an almost total lack of available interpretation services in all the establishments. Consequently, police officers and other staff faced significant difficulties in communicating with detainees and understanding their requests and needs. They usually had to rely on fellow detainees who spoke English or Greek. The CPT has long stressed that the use of fellow detainees as interpreters should, in principle, be avoided. Further, most foreign nationals claimed that they had signed documents in the Greek language without knowing their content and without having benefited from the assistance of a qualified interpreter. Indeed, nearly all official documents, including detention and deportation orders, were only available in the Greek language and were not translated. In Samos, migrants held in the two cells in the Coastguard premises were not even provided with the notification on detainees’ rights in a language they could understand. Where there are insufficient interpreters available to cover the required languages, the Greek authorities should explore alternative means such as the use of telephone interpretation services which have proved effective in other countries.

Access to a medical examination by an independent doctor Detainees in Greece do not have effective access to the necessary medical treatment while in prison or in police custody.³⁶

³⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/1680a06a86>

³⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/1680a06a86>

³⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/1680a06a86>

There is grave concern about the widespread practice of police officers and prosecutors turning away women who seek to report alleged domestic violence. On 14 January 2019, GHM submitted to the Supreme Court Prosecutor a related complaint with evidence from three widely publicized cases in the preceding two months asking to get information about the disciplinary and criminal prosecution of the perpetrators from the police officers and local prosecutor, mentioning that the outcome will be included in the present report.

On 28 February 2019, the Supreme Court Prosecutor sent the complaint to the competent regional prosecutors who are not known to have acted on these cases described hereunder.

1. On 28 November 2018, a 21-year old woman was raped and killed in Rhodes. According to reports, a few weeks earlier she had reported to the police that she had been raped and threatened by the perpetrator to refrain from filing a complaint as he would then make a video of the act public. The police officers not only declined to investigate the allegation but even discourage the woman from filing an official complaint.

2. On 2 January 2019, a 28-year old Greek woman was killed in Corfu by her father because he objected to her relationship with an Afghan. It was subsequently reported that she had previously asked the local prosecutor to provide her with protection, as her father had for quite some time threatened to kill her as he did not like her relationship with an Afghan. She was offered no protection.

3. On 1 January 2019, a mother complained that she had to leave her home with her two children after suffering violence at the hands of her husband. It was reported that she did not file a complaint as police officers told her that if she did then her husband could also file a complaint and then both will be referred to court with the in flagrante procedure, a risk she was not willing to take.³⁷

---- There continued to be a non-application of the general law to the Muslim community of Thrace regarding marriage and inheritance. Early marriages persist in the Muslim and Roma communities. Concerning the application of sharia law by the Muslim community of Thrace, the law has changed making it optional. However, in conservative societies, pressure on women may be high enough to deter them from opting out of it, which is why it should be totally abolished.

----**GHM (Greek Helsinki Monitor) et al UN CERD** (The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) made the following observations:

Anti-racism legal framework

12. *While noting with appreciation the positive aspects incorporated in the new anti-racism law No. 4285/2014 (In 2014, Greece amended its antiracism law 927/79 and decriminalized hate speech), the Committee remains concerned that the new law is not fully compliant with the requirements of article 4 of the Convention, particularly as it does not criminalize the dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority and does not provide for a procedure to declare illegal and prohibit racist organizations. The Committee is also concerned at the persistence in the State party of the political party*

³⁷ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/GRC/INT_CAT_CSS_GRC_35372_E.pdf

Golden Dawn, to which the delegation referred in its opening statement as the most prominent racist organization, inspired directly by neo-Nazi ideas (art. 4).

13. Recalling its general recommendations No. 7 (1985) and No. 15 (1993) relating to the implementation of article 4 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party bring its anti-racism legal framework in full compliance with the requirements of article 4 of the Convention, and ensure its strict application. The State party should, inter alia, declare illegal and prohibit organizations that promote and incite racial discrimination, such as Golden Dawn, as previously recommended by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

Implementation of anti-discrimination provisions

14. *The Committee welcomes the information provided on the increased application of the anti-racist legislation in the State party by law enforcement authorities and in courts. It, however, remains concerned at the still low invocation and application of anti-racism legal provisions and the low rate of convictions in courts (art. 2).*

15. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its measures to strengthen the application of anti-racism provisions. To that end, the State party should:**

(a) Increase the human, financial and technical resources allocated to law enforcement authorities entrusted with investigating hate and racial crimes, namely, the special prosecutors and special police units, and ensure these bodies' outreach throughout the country;

(b) Undertake awareness-raising measures, including regular mandatory pre-service and in-service training, especially among the police, prosecutors, judiciary and lawyers, on the legal framework governing anti-discrimination and on the investigation of complaints of hate crimes.

Greece should therefore amend the related legislation along the lines recommended by the three highest expert bodies in the **Council of Europe** and the **UN**. As for “*the still low invocation and application of anti-racism legal provisions and the low rate of convictions in courts*” it is confirmed by the data Greece provided to **CM-DH** and even more the data **GHM** has available: both are analysed below.

3. Data on prosecution of hate crimes

In its October 2019 Action report concerning the Sakir group of cases Greece provides data on complaints and prosecution of hate crimes that confirm **UN CERD**'s concern on “*the still low invocation and application of anti-racism legal provisions and the low rate of convictions in courts.*” In that data, Greece reports 2015-2017 368 complaints for alleged racist crimes, 127 criminal prosecutions, 19 convictions and 4 acquittals. It also reports an additional 421 complaints for 2018-2019 but fails to give any information on what happened to them. It also claims that in mid-2019 there were 220 court briefs with the PB (racist violence) signalization.

- anti-discrimination practices.

In the New Penal Code, revised in July 2019, with the change of government, the penalties for crimes with racist characteristics are increased, in the lightest and most serious forms of crimes.

If racists for Misdemeanors, until July 2019, were punished with sentences to one year now they are punished with sentences 1 year and 6 months. In the case of severe cases, the punishment is being increased two more years.³⁸

Also, in the new penal code is being broadened the category of the selection criteria of the victims by omitting the term “hate crime” (!!!). The choice of the victim may be done due to characteristics of race, color, religion, genealogy, national or ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, and identity or gender characteristics. All those who are in the Greek Territory, regardless of whether they are Greeks or foreigners, enjoy the absolute protection of their life, honor and freedom, without distinction of nationality, race, language and religious or political beliefs, according to article 5 par. 2 of the Constitution, while the prosecutor must single out the motives and emphasize the racist motive.³⁹

- fighting hate crimes:

- Preventive measures against the spread of extremist views in certain social groups, against the financing of terrorism and radical groups, etc.**
- criminal proceedings;**
- convictions;**
- the adequacy of measures to combat radical manifestations in society, the relationship between radical manifestations on the one hand, and legislative or law enforcement actions of the State, on the other;**

Seven years after the murder of anti-fascist singer Pavlos Fyssas in Keratsini, and five and a half years after the beginning of the Golden Dawn trial, a three-member court in Athens issued on 7 October 2020 a landmark verdict.

The ruling found the seven members of Golden Dawn’s political council, including its leader Nikos Michaloliakos, guilty of directing a criminal organization. The Court also found guilty for participating in a criminal organization 11 former Golden Dawn MPs.⁴⁰

³⁸ <https://www.lawspot.gr/nomika-nea/egklima-me-ratsistika-haraktiristika-analysi-ton-diataxeon-toy-arthroy-82a-toy-poinikoy>

³⁹ <https://www.lawspot.gr/nomika-nea/egklima-me-ratsistika-haraktiristika-analysi-ton-diataxeon-toy-arthroy-82a-toy-poinikoy>

⁴⁰ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/10/greece-golden-dawn-verdict-sends-a-clear-message-against-the-politics-of-demonization-across-europe/>

The court also found Golden Dawn member Giorgos Roupakias guilty for the murder of anti-fascist singer Pavlos Fyssas and nine other defendants guilty for being accessories to murder. The court also found three defendants guilty for the attempted murder of Egyptian fisherman Abouzid Embarak and four defendants guilty for grievous bodily harm against three members of the PAME trade union. It was the culmination of a lengthy court process that some campaigners have called the largest trial of Nazis since Nuremberg. The party is associated with a string of serious assaults going back to the 1990s, yet for years Greece's political class seemed reluctant to enforce the law: as Kostis Papaioannou, a human rights activist involved in monitoring the trial, told me, "a long tradition of impunity for racist attacks" allowed Golden Dawn to "coexist" with Greece. There have been allegations that some police officers sympathised with Golden Dawn: wiretap evidence heard in court revealed direct contact between Golden Dawn members and several police officials. There are broader political questions, too. Did New Democracy, the governing party at the time of Golden Dawn's electoral success – and in government again today – find it useful to have a far-right party acting as a counterweight to its leftwing challenger Syriza, as it tried to force through unpopular austerity measures? Why did EU policymakers and international lenders persist with such rigid conditions attached to Greece's bailout, when it was evident they were tearing apart the social fabric of the country? Greek society must surely face an uncomfortable question, too, namely why it took the murder of a Greek man – Pavlos Fyssas – to trigger a decisive backlash against Golden Dawn, when a well-documented string of attacks on immigrants failed to have the same effect. Perhaps the most important story to be told about the trial is not what it revealed about the defendants, but about the people who fought back. Without the human rights activists and investigative journalists who painstakingly documented racist violence, the anti-fascist activists who organised mass protests, the volunteer legal teams who brought private prosecutions, and the victims and witnesses who gave evidence in court, this verdict would not have been reached. Racism, discrimination and far-right nationalism have not disappeared from Greece – and nor have they elsewhere – but a movement that sought to organise these into the most appalling violence has been shattered.⁴¹

It should be noted, however, that there is no room for complacency. Although, according to the RVRN records, incidents of organized violence have decreased since 2013, it continues to record attacks with features of a structured organization or committed by organized groups, as it has been also documented in its last [annual report for 2019](#). RVRN also notices a growing trend in the racist violence incidents in various aspects of everyday life both against refugees and migrants, as well as against LGBTIQ individuals. At the same time, attacks against human rights defenders remain an issue of concern. The rise of these incidents is inextricably linked to the institutional racist rhetoric through the public discourse used by some political leaders, at the central and local level, and the media, which significantly contributes to the normalization of xenophobia and intolerance. RVRN has been calling on State and local government representatives, as well as media representatives, to refrain from the racist rhetoric that encourages xenophobic reactions and affects social peace and cohesion. The court decision reminds us that the fight against racism and racist violence and the legal response to violent xenophobic groups is a matter of respect for human rights and the rule of law. The effect of the sentence against Golden Dawn constitutes in practice a form of protection to every individual who is different, and every community member targeted on racist, xenophobic, homophobic or transphobic motivation. May this decision be an additional

⁴¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/08/golden-dawn-neo-nazi-violence-greece-political-class>

reason to remind that no hate crime, motivated solely or cumulatively by hatred or bias, should remain unpunished.⁴²

== Since 25 April 2019, **Facebook** blocks sharing from the official websites of the Greek neo-Nazi party **Golden Dawn** because they “violate community standards.”⁴³

- A 2018 article on criminality in Greece by a then **Appeals Court Prosecutor** and now **Deputy Prosecutor at the Court of Cassation** where he stated inter alia that “*illegal immigrants and refugees constitute a population group with a high rate of serious criminality ... Greece, with the armies of hordes of destitute aliens, tends to become not only a dump of human souls, but, worst of all, a dangerous arena of multifaceted and upgraded crime.*” With **Decision 2907/5-9-2019** the **Athens Prosecutor for Racist Crimes (who is also the National Point of Contact of OSCE/ODIHR on Racist Crimes for Greece and has recently been promoted to Deputy Appeals Court Prosecutor)** archived the **GHM** complaint as not racist arguing that the article is an analysis of the weaknesses of the criminal system in Greece, adding that the entry to Greece without proper procedures of the tens of thousands of foreigners is a crime of the competence of the first instance courts, even though not one prosecutor in such courts ever pressed such charged.
- A 2018 post by a leader of a marginal “liberal” party claiming that “*being a Muslim is a penal crime.*” With **Decision 2615/5-8-2019**, the same prosecutor archived the **GHM** complaint as not racist but arguing that the post was a critical review of the principles of “Mahometanism” (term not used by the Muslims or the state in Greece...), with references to dogmas of that religion making its followers act in ways that constitute penal crimes like threat and constitution of criminal organization...
- A 2018 speech by the Mayor of Aspropyrgos, a Greater Athens suburb with a significant Roma population, who spoke of “*the uncontrolled group of Roma that has been active in the region for several years cannot come to their senses... the daily behavior of this particular group, characterized by others as vulnerable, but whose racism against us we endure, while we are called racists, has continued to operate in our region for over 20 years.*” With **Decision 169/19-8-2019**, the same prosecutor archived the **GHM** complaint as not racist arguing that the Mayor did not refer to the Roma as a whole but to those Roma who engage in criminal activity and in fact repeatedly over the years, a claim that **GHM** states is at least unfounded recalling that Greece has been convicted twice for anti-Roma behavior (including school segregation) in that particular city led by its then Mayor.⁴⁴

⁴² <https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/16791-racist-violence-recording-network-justice-shields-the-rule-of-law-and-human-rights-in-greece.html>

⁴³ <https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com/2019/04/25/2-188/>

⁴⁴ <https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com/2019/10/19/1-908/>

In all three cases, the persons against whom the complaints were submitted were NOT asked to provide explanations as usually happens with complaints: the supposedly specialized prosecutor took upon herself to argue on their behalf so as to archive the complaints. More generally, Athens Prosecutors for Racist Crimes are prosecutors who are assigned that duty in addition to their other duties for one year and change year after year. During the one-year term of the aforementioned prosecutor (2018-2019), she archived several cases (including the three mentioned above) but did not refer anyone to trial. On the contrary, her predecessor (2017-2018) referred to trial in 2019 and 2020 the following nine cases:

- An **extreme right newspaper** for a front page article with the title *“Transvestite Parliament – Beat all ‘sissies’ – this abortion of a law [on civil unions] was voted by 148 ‘perverts.’”*
- A **former Foreign Minister** who said in a television interview that *“The only good Turk is a dead Turk. I believe it because I haven’t found a good Turk. They lack elementary knowledge. The Turk does not have a sense of the law.”*
- An at the time **member of the Political Committee of New Democracy** who wrote in a post that *“being gay, bi, and trans is a perversion and unnatural.”*
- The **leader of a marginal left party** who wrote a conspiracy theory article stating inter alia that *“[arriving] illegal immigrants are suspects for terrorist acts”* calling for a *“general rebellion.”*
- An **extreme right blog** which published a hoax alleging that *“Video shock: Pakistani fanatics declare jihad in Greece – small children are initiated in the use of weapons”* – the video is from a school play in the celebration of a Pakistani national day.
- An at the time **Deputy Minister of Education** who said in a speech before Parliament inter alia that *“with patience and perseverance Jews secured the ownership of the Holocaust so as to claim their vindication.”*
- An **extreme right columnist** and an **extreme right blog** who published in front pages an article with the title *“Parliament a Jewish Synagogue!!!”* when a commemorative plaque for inter-war Greek Jewish MPs victims of the Holocaust was inaugurated in Parliament.
- A **notorious author and self-professed Nazi** for the manifesto of a new movement he founded where he asked for *“the deportation of all Muslim minority members who identify as Turks.”*⁴⁵
- A front page article in **Golden Dawn’s youth publication** with extreme anti-immigrant references and a call for violent action against them.
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Moreover, in the information provided by Greece, detailed reference is made to two court judgments, both though involving GHM. **Athens First Instance Court Judgment 1667/2018** concerns a **Golden Dawn** candidate who proffered on camera racist insults against Pakistani migrants. This was his conviction on appeal. In the first instance trial, two **GHM** lawyers had provided support for a Pakistani community leader as civil claimant. However, in the very end of that trial the civil claimant was thrown out as not personally offended. **Athens Mixed Jury Appeals Court Judgment 286/2019** was the conviction on appeal of two **Golden Dawn** members who had killed a Pakistani migrant, where **GHM** spokesperson was involved as a witness in the first instance trial to explain racist motivation. However, and contrary to the claims of the government, the judgment did not include the racist motivation because the previous related article 79.3 PC had been abolished while the new Article 81A PC called for harsher sentencing and thus could not be used. In any case, the CM-DH should know that the two defendants had been

⁴⁵ <https://greekhelsinki.wordpress.com/tag/inach/>

convicted to life in prison sentences at the first instance trial. On appeal, though, they were convicted to a reduced prison sentence of 21 years and 5 months, as the court recognized the mitigating circumstance of good behavior after the act. Moreover, they have since been set free after having stayed in prison for 6 years and 4 months, because of several measures allowing such release on parole! Finally, as to the claims of **Greece** that the parents of the victim were informed and travelled to Greece and testified, all that was done by a group of volunteer lawyers of the **Jail Golden Dawn** collective who bore all the expenses.⁴⁶

Regrettably, several prosecutors do not use Article 81A (now 82A) on racist motivation even in blatant racist cases.

A new NGO law announced in November 2019 specifically targets organizations in the field of international protection, migration, and social inclusion. It requires NGOs and their staff and volunteers to enroll in a new "NGO transparency registry." Amendments and ministerial decrees introduced in February, April, and May 2020 only added requirements and reduced eligibility for registration. They also established a new oversight body. A study commissioned by the European Parliament asserts the government also waged "smear campaigns" against NGOs to strengthen its "vague justifications" for the new rules.

In July 2020, the Council of Europe's Expert Council on NGO Law issued a critical opinion that the new rules violate EU law. By "rais[ing] both procedural and substantive difficulties with respect to freedom of association and the protection of civil society space," and failing to consult NGOs in the process, the legal changes do not comply with European standards. The Council warns that "the provisions will have a significant chilling effect on the work of civil society," which, in turn, "may produce a worrying humanitarian situation, given [...] already existing gaps in service provision by the government and others [...]."

Indeed, the damage was already done. In June, 22 of the 40 organizations working in RICs had to suspend their operations. Local authorities in Lesbos similarly used regulatory procedures to force Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to close its COVID-19 clinic. Small- and medium-sized organizations have especially struggled to meet the burdensome requirements and manage other red tape.

Billed as an effort to improve transparency around NGO operations and finances, the rules instead curb these organizations' ability to independently monitor government action. They also stigmatize civil society in a country where skepticism of NGOs already has a long history. Stifling independent voices is counterproductive at a time when the government is trying to defend itself against accusations of wrongdoing. In fact, although authorities have attempted to cast doubt on NGOs' financial management, it is the government that has long been under investigation by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) for fund mismanagement. Most importantly, limiting civil society's ability to operate does most harm to vulnerable people. Debilitating and vilifying organizations that provide essential support makes little sense---particularly in the midst of a public health crisis and when the government refuses to deliver the services itself. At a LIBE Committee debate in October, Greek and European officials alike expressed thanks for the important work of

⁴⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/16791-racist-violence-recording-network-justice-shields-the-rule-of-law-and-human-rights-in-greece.html>

NGOs. Yet, the government had issued another directive exacerbating its harmful policies just the month before.⁴⁷

- Measures to support migrants, national and religious minorities by the State.

The new government scaled back *the Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (ESTIA) program*, which provides cash allowances to asylum seekers and refugees in Greece and hosts about 20,000 in rented apartments. The IPA codified a preexisting but loosely enforced six-month cap on continued ESTIA benefits for recognized refugees; an amendment later shortened it to one month starting in March 2020. The government argued the changes would promote autonomy, prevent dependency, and increase capacity to transfer asylum seekers to the mainland. However, it reduced this benefit without offering counterbalancing measures. The HELIOS transitional support program, launched the previous June, had enrolled fewer than 8,000 refugees at the time ESTIA benefits were reduced to one month, and only a fraction of enrollees had received rental subsidies. Dozens of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) claimed that ESTIA reductions could push thousands of vulnerable families into destitution and homelessness.⁴⁸

Mitsotakis government made little progress helping recognized refugees access livelihoods. Workforce participation by refugees in Greece is negligible, partly because of language barriers and partly because of difficulties obtaining certain identity documents. From June 2019 to June 2020, every economic inclusion indicator measured by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) showed outcomes had either worsened or barely improved for asylum seekers and refugees accommodated under ESTIA.

	June 2019	June 2020
Social Security Number Holders	95%	66%
Tax Identification Number Holders	68%	57%
Unemployment Card Holders	34%	23%
Bank Account Holders	4%	5%

Progress on access to formal education also stalled. Although the number of displaced children in Greece had grown from nearly 29,000 to more than 45,000 between April 2019 and April 2020, the number enrolled in formal education only grew from 11,500 to 13,000. As of early 2020, just 61 percent of refugee children living on the mainland and 6 percent of those living on the islands

⁴⁷ <https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/issue-brief-blocked-every-pass-how-greece-s-policy-exclusion-harms-asylum-seekers-and>

⁴⁸ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/greece-struggles-balance-competing-migration-demands>

were enrolled in formal education. Informal education on the islands, mostly run by NGOs, reached only 28 percent of children there.⁴⁹

3. The attitude of society towards immigrants, foreigners, various ethnic and religious groups:

For the most part, Greece's migration experience has focused on emigration rather than immigration. In the years following the Second World War, many Greeks migrated to fill gaps in the labour market in Northern European countries and beyond. By the mid-1970s net migration rates had become positive, with the inflow of ethnic Greeks from Egypt, Turkey, Cyprus and Zaire. Net migration remained positive until the financial crisis that began in 2009 prompted an exodus of younger workers, resulting in negative net migration until the larger inflows of refugees again made net migration positive. More recently, World Bank data had recorded a positive net migration rate of nearly 50,000 per year. Greeks are conscious that many younger people are moving abroad for a better future, an issue that was often raised in focus groups.⁵⁰ Anxieties about the loss of Greek identity are heightened by the way that this pattern of emigration and demographic trends have combined with an influx of newcomers from different cultures. Experiences of emigration are very much present in Greeks' minds and are often discussed in conjunction with concerns over integration, an issue that many worry about.

As demonstrated from the study conducted from '*More in Common*', 2019,⁵¹ the attitudes of Greeks towards immigration are far more nuanced than is often suggested in public debates. The country is not divided between two clearly defined pro- and anti-immigration viewpoints. Many Greeks, especially those in the middle groups, hold opinions that might at first glance seem contradictory. They have anxieties about immigration that are often connected to Greece's wider economic problems, but these concerns sit alongside deep humanitarian impulses. The evidence from this study suggests that many of these concerns can be addressed without adopting exclusionary immigration policies. One dimension of the attitudes examined in the study is the extent to which Greeks distinguish between refugees and other categories of migrants. Fully 77 per cent of Greeks state that refugees are different from other migrants because they had no choice about leaving their home country. However, as elsewhere, many Greeks question whether those arriving in their country are genuine refugees focusing less on the legal distinctions and more on the lived experiences of those arriving on their shores. Greeks have slightly more positive views of refugees than migrants. However, differences are very small, amounting to 5 per cent or less.

Refugees or economic migrants?: Just over half of all Greeks believe that most foreigners wanting to enter the country are not genuine refugees, but that they are coming for economic reasons. There seems to be a recognition of the legitimate motives of newcomers, but Greeks also see their own circumstances as so difficult that they worry about being expected to provide for large numbers of people from another country. In addition, 73 per cent of Greeks worry that allowing refugees in will encourage more who are not genuine

⁴⁹<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/greece-struggles-balance-competing-migration-demands>

⁵⁰ <https://www.lse.ac.uk/Hellenic-Observatory/Assets/Documents/Publications/GreeSE-Papers/GreeSE-No99.pdf>

⁵¹ https://www.moreincommon.com/media/Itinlnc/0535-more-in-common-greece-report_final-4_web_lr.pdf

refugees to seek to enter Europe. **Loss of control:** Greeks are frustrated by a sense that their authorities have lost control of the situation, a concern often expressed in terms of the poor social conditions within Greece and less in terms of the arrival of refugees. Fully 60 per cent of all Greeks believe that ordinary Greek citizens should start taking control of the situation themselves if the refugee and migration crisis continues (potentially through trying to turn boats back from Greek shores and protecting borders themselves). Alarmed Opponents and Nationalist Opponents stand out in their support for this sentiment. **Security fears:** Concerns about the risk of terrorism and increased crime are present in all segments, but much stronger in the 'closed' groups. Overall, 42 per cent of Greeks agree with the proposition that it is too dangerous to let refugees in the country due to the threat of terrorism. Nationalist Opponents stand out with the highest agreement (72 per cent), while Greek Multiculturals display the lowest agreement (26 per cent). **Integration and culture:** Concerns about integration and the retention of Greek identity and culture are the key caveats of Greek support for welcoming refugees. This reflects the importance most Greeks ascribe to their national identity. Another reflection of this is that the strongest consensus around welcoming refugees is evident when Greeks reflect on their values and traditions. Overall, 67 per cent of Greeks agree that 'we should accept refugees in Greece as we have always had a culture of solidarity and compassion.' A majority of Greeks in all six segments, Greek Multiculturals, Moderate Humanitarians, Detached Traditionalists, Instinctive Pragmatists, Alarmed Opponents, Nationalist Opponents except the Nationalist Opponents, agree with this sentiment.

An even higher proportion - 80 per cent of the total population - say that if refugees respect Greek culture and accept Greek laws, they should be welcome in the country. This includes 68 per cent of both Nationalist Opponents and Alarmed Opponents, the most 'closed' groups, reflecting the extent to which their opposition to migrants and refugees is connected to their concerns about the loss of Greek culture and identity. Yet this strong support for the acquisition of Greek language and culture does not, in the minds of most Greeks, mean that newcomers need to abandon their cultural identity. A majority in all segments, except Nationalist Opponents, believe that refugees coming to Greece should be allowed to maintain their own traditions. The proposition that refugees should learn the Greek language receives 80 per cent support, with large majorities in every segment. Indeed support for this proposition brings together the Greek Multiculturals and the Nationalist Opponents, with 84 per cent and 83 per cent of them in agreement respectively. A similar consensus exists in connection with allowing refugees who are unaccompanied minors to stay in Greece. Only 15 per cent of Greeks support the proposition that children arriving without any family should be sent back home and not resettled. A majority of every group disagrees with sending unaccompanied children back, even including 55 per cent of Nationalist Opponents. The protection of children appears to resonate especially strongly with Greeks, and it was often raised during the focus group discussions as one of the issues that worried participants the most. Taking all of these factors into account, the overall balance of opinion in Greece tends to be in favour of refugees, but with several caveats. The proposition that Greece should not accept any more refugees and should close its borders is accepted by 39 per cent of Greeks, but rejected by 43 per cent. Majorities for this proposition only exist among Nationalist Opponents (68 per cent) and Instinctive Pragmatists (53 per cent). There is an expectation that refugees should leave Greece once the situation in their own countries has improved, rather than be given the option to live

permanently in Greece. The 76 per cent support for this proposition includes a majority of all groups, including the Greek Multiculturals and Moderate Humanitarians.⁵²

There is clear support for the principle of asylum, but there are deep concerns about the capacity of the authorities and economy to provide the necessary support. There is a strong expectation that refugees should respect Greek customs and acquire the language, and strong support for active measures to this end. Finally, there are some differences in opinion based on region. Greeks in Western Macedonia appear to be more distrustful than others of foreigners trying to enter the country as refugees, with 67 per cent believing that those who do so are not really refugees followed by 65 per cent of Greeks residing in the Peloponnese. The lowest percentages for distrust of refugees' motives were found in Attica and Northern Greece with 45 and 46 per cent respectively.

- Sociological polls or other studies in your country to determine the motivation of public attitudes towards these groups? What are the results? What, in your opinion, had a decisive influence on the formation of this motivation (activities of political parties, NGOs, media, radical manifestations on the part of representatives of these groups, any events in socio-political and economic life, government propaganda, etc.);

In the research, "What do the Greeks believe", conducted on behalf of diANEOsis by MARC A.E. in November and December, 2019 in a total nationwide sample of 2,502 people. It is the fourth research wave of a timeless effort to record the views, perceptions and attitudes of Greek society on a variety of issues concerning the position of Greece in the world, ourselves and others, the economy, politics, future opportunities and threats, immigration, demographics, new technologies, climate change, etc.

In the survey of Dianeosis, 2020, the majority of Greeks are against the right of same-sex couples to marry (55.4%) or have children (74.1%). Almost half of the Greeks are in favor of the reinstatement of the death penalty, something that, of course, is prohibited by the acquis communautaire. The majority of respondents (54.2%) believe that "you are born Greek" and not that "you become Greek" (39.3%). Which groups disagree? The young, the well-off, the educated and those who position themselves in the center-left, the left and the far left of the spectrum. However, the characteristic that the respondents believe that most of all characterizes one's Greekness is still "to adopt Greek customs and traditions", more than being born to Greek parents or speaking Greek. According to the same survey, the attitudes of Greeks people in comparison with 2018 and 2016 results demonstrate that they have become stronger.⁵³

The views of the Greeks on the phenomenon of immigration are extremely negative. 92% of respondents believe that the number of immigrants is "too large" - there is not a single group of the population that disagrees with it - while a large majority believe that immigrants increase crime, increase unemployment, have a negative economic impact (64% of farmers believe this), do not "help solve the demographic" and do not "enrich our culture". Only 1 in 5 believe that illegal immigrants in our country should be integrated into our society, while the view that children of legal immigrants born in Greece should immediately obtain Greek citizenship has fallen from 75.2% in April 2015 at 58% in December 2019.

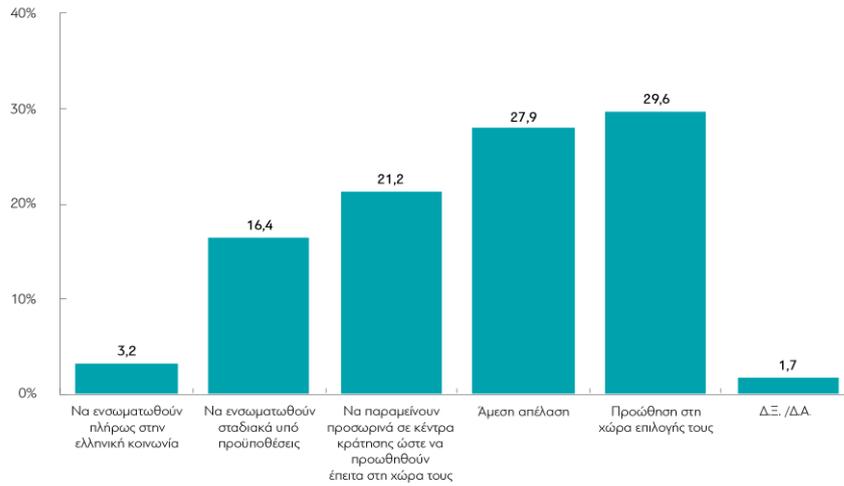
⁵² file:///C:/Users/OWNER/Downloads/0535-more-in-common-greece-report_final-4_web_lr.pdf

⁵³ <https://www.dianeosis.org/2020/03/ti-pistevoun-oi-ellines-to-2020/>

What should be done with illegal migrants in the country?

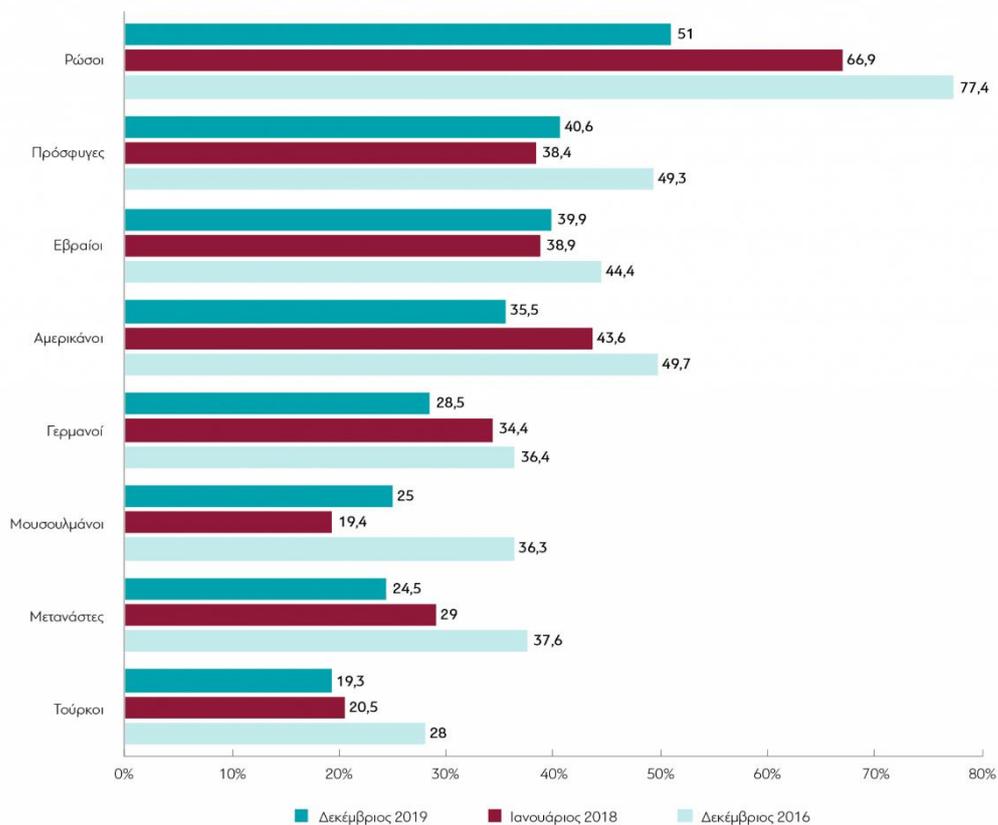
3, 2 % believe that they must be fully integrated in the Greek society, 16, 4% believe that they should be integrated under certain conditions, 21, 2% believe that they should remain in temporary centers of accommodation, 27, 9 % believe in the urgent deportation, 29, 2% believe in their return in a country of their choice, whereas 1, 7% don't know don't respond.

Τι από τα παρακάτω πιστεύετε πως πρέπει να γίνει με τους παράνομους μετανάστες στη χώρα μας...



Whereas in the following graph, in the question what constitutes the ethnic groups, the answers are as following

Θα σας διαβάσω ορισμένες λέξεις και θα ήθελα να μου πείτε εάν για εσάς προσωπικά αντιπροσωπεύουν κάτι «καλό» ή κάτι «κακό»:



First of all, it seems that every year Greeks like almost all foreigners and "others" less and less. In 2016, 77.4% of respondents believed that Russians are "good" - this year the corresponding percentage is only 51% - about 1 in 4 Greeks changed their mind. Of course, the Turks remain last group in the likes of the Greeks (we remind here that the investigation was conducted before the recent crisis at the border), while all other peoples are considered "good" at rates much lower than 50%. Migrants (Μετανάστες) are liked with lower rates than previous years with 24,5%, Muslims (Μουσουλμάνοι) 19,4%, Germans (Γερμανοί) with 28,5%, Αμερικανοί (Americans) 35,5%, Εβραίοι (Jews) with 39,9% the same percentage as in 2019, Πρόσφυγες (Refuges) with 40,6%.

A first general finding is that the comparison with the data of previous surveys 2015 - 2018 confirms or enhances the long-term stability of Greek society in given views, attitudes and beliefs but also highlights significant changes. We can assume that these changes are due to important events that took place in 2019, developments that mediated between the current and previous research and explain the differences between them. Such events include the change of government, the course of the economy, the rise of immigration, the crisis in Greek-Turkish relations, the Macedonian issue, the phenomena in Greece and the world that sparked the debate on climate change, the previously announced Brexit, etc. The influence of the above is obvious in all the relevant topics, in the prioritization of opportunities and threats and in general in the formation of our perception of ourselves and the world around us.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ <https://www.dianeosis.org/2020/03/oi-apopseis-tis-ellinikis-koinonias-to-2020/>

Religion plays a significant role in Greek national identity and in shaping attitudes towards refugees and migrants. According to Pew Research, 90 per cent of the adult population in Greece belongs to the Orthodox faith. Religious identity remains an important part of Greek national identity, in a way true of few other European Union nations. The Greek Orthodox Church is part of the communion of Eastern Orthodox churches, but it has a specifically Greek identity. It possesses significant status and influence, and enjoys many legal privileges even though Greece's constitution formally declares the separation of church from state. For instance, for many years the church played a large role in resisting the construction of a mosque in the country's capital. Indeed, until 2006, the construction of all religious buildings in Greece required the permission of the local Orthodox bishop.⁵⁵ It was only in November 2018 under the Syriza government that agreement was reached to remove the civil servant status of bishops and priests. Earlier in 2018, the government had defied the opposition of the church to pass a gender identity law intended to improve legal protections for transgender people. Being part of the Orthodox church is a part of Greek national identity (indeed, 55 per cent declare it is very important to them) although the proportion reporting that they actually feel close to the church is lower, at 44 per cent, perhaps indicative of Greeks distinguishing between religion and faith on the one hand and the church as an institution on the other. On this issue, there is a large gap among the segments: 63 per cent of Nationalist Opponents feel close to the Orthodox Church while that sentiment is shared by just 22 per cent of Greek Multiculturals. The distrust of the Orthodox Church's motives was reflected in a comment from an Instinctive Pragmatist during a focus group while discussing whether the church is doing something to help migrants and refugees: 'I believe that what the Church will do first of all is to safeguard and protect its interests.'

Understanding the connections between attitudes towards Islam and Muslims in the context of immigration and refugees is particularly complex in Greece given Greek-Turkish relations and the fact that a minority of the population is Muslim. Greece is a linguistically and culturally homogeneous society with small religious and linguistic minorities; only the Muslim community of Western Thrace is officially recognised by the Greek state as a religious minority. Sharia law is in place in Western Thrace, a region bordering Turkey, where there is an approximately 120,000-strong Muslim minority (although it is not a homogeneous population). Sharia law has been in place there since the 19th century when Greece gained independence from the Ottoman Empire, although Turkey itself abolished Sharia law in 1924. In fact, Greece is the only country in the EU with Islamic religious courts. Since January 2018, Greece has made the application of Sharia law to Muslims in the region optional rather than obligatory. This decision was welcomed by many of Greece's Muslim minority as the new legislation enables them to sidestep sharia law in family disputes (indeed, leading Muslim MPs actually advocated for the sharia courts to be fully abolished).⁵⁶

Although the longstanding presence of Muslim Greeks could be expected to break down some of the 'otherness' of Muslims, it is complicated by the fact that the Muslim minority of Western Thrace is often 'connected with the continual diplomatic collision between Greece and Turkey.' Although the 'Muslim minority...cannot disrupt the religious and cultural order of Greece, it may definitely be perceived as a political threat that supports internal and external tendencies and thus challenges the country's unity.' On the other hand, a wider historical perspective highlights that 'at different moments of the Greek history, depending on changes in internal policies or the foreign relations with the neighbouring nation-states, Muslims were viewed as the 'Self' or the 'Other.' Security concerns are a key factor in influencing Greek attitudes towards Muslims. Only one in

⁵⁵ <http://grease.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/11/Greece-Report.pdf>

⁵⁶ https://www.moreincommon.com/media/Itinlnc/0535-more-in-common-greece-report_final-4_web_lr.pdf

five Greeks believe that Islam is a peaceful religion (21 per cent) while 49 per cent disagree that it is peaceful. A majority of Greeks are also more inclined to believe that Islam is incompatible with Greek society (57 per cent). Unsurprisingly, Nationalist Opponents stand out in both cases as harbouring the most negative feelings towards Muslims and are the only group to have a majority expressing a strong sentiment. Fully 81 per cent of Nationalist Opponents agree that Islam and Greek society are incompatible (64 per cent strongly) while 73 per cent strongly dispute that Islam is a peaceful religion (59 per cent strongly). But these concerns are shared more broadly, even among Greek Multiculturals, with more believing that Islam is not peaceful than those who do not. Despite concerns, most Greeks also recognise that Muslims suffer unfair discrimination. While many fear or disagree with some Islamic practices such as women wearing headscarves, or worry about the population impacts of Muslims having large families, all segments except Nationalist Opponents hold a mix of views. While Greek Multiculturals and Moderate Humanitarians are unsure about how compatible Islam is with Greek society, many of them are comfortable with the idea of a mosque being built near their home (59 and 45 per cent respectively). Similarly, while Detached Traditionals are the least likely to identify personally with Muslim values, they are also the mostly likely to believe that Muslim women in Greece should be allowed to wear veils or headscarves. Many Greeks are also concerned about the level of discrimination Muslims are facing, while simultaneously being concerned that Greeks who criticise Islam are judged as racist or ignorant. Nevertheless, the largest difference in attitudes towards Muslims amongst the segments is in their levels of openness. Overall, 32 per cent of Greeks believe that most Muslims hold similar values to them personally and 54 per cent agree that Muslims are discriminated against in Greece. While Greek Multiculturals may be as unsure as other Greeks about the place of Islam in Greek society, nearly 60 per cent state that they would not mind if a mosque was built near their home, making them the only group with a majority supporting this. Attitudes towards Islam are one area where regional differences exist, although only to a small degree and perhaps hinting at the differences in attitudes between rural populations and town and city dwellers who have been more exposed to Muslims in their daily lives. On the question about whether Islam is a peaceful religion, most people express similar views, with Western Macedonia, Central Macedonia, Thessaly, and the Peloponnese showing the lowest levels of agreement (around 17 per cent, below the average of 20 per cent) while in Epirus, 25 per cent agree. In terms of sharing similar values, Greeks in Epirus are more likely to believe that most Muslims share similar values to them (45 per cent), whereas in Attica and Crete and the Aegean islands this percentage goes down to 33 per cent. Regional variations on the question of cultural compatibility also exist, with a high of 69 per cent of people in Thessaly believing that Islam and Greek society are incompatible, compared to lows averaging around 53 per cent in Western Macedonia, Attica, and the Peloponnese.

In any case, while Greeks remain unsure about their feelings towards Islam, this does not translate into discriminating against Muslims when providing refuge to those in need. A majority in all segments, including Nationalist Opponents, reject the idea of only accepting refugees who are not Muslim. Notably, only 14 per cent of Greeks agree that Greece should only accept refugees that are not Muslim, with a slightly above-average level of 19 per cent of Greeks in Crete and the Aegean islands.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ file:///C:/Users/OWNER/Downloads/0535-more-in-common-greece-report_final-4_web_lr.pdf

- How is the general attitude of the Society towards immigrants, foreigners, various ethnic and religious groups has changed;

Greek society is not positive about the phenomenon of immigration. In the research of Dianeosis conducted in collaboration with the Hanns Seidel Foundation and the research company Marc in early 2019, although the Greeks rated immigration as the fifth most important problem (behind the economy, unemployment, security and the then topical issue of the Prespa agreement), nevertheless expressed quite clear and strong views on this.

For example, 56% of respondents believed that the impact of the existence of immigrants on the Greek economy is negative. 58% believe that the presence of immigrants in Greece "is a risk of altering our national identity." 79% believed that the presence of immigrants does not help solve the demographic problem. 53% believed that their presence increases crime.

3 in 4 consider that the movement of refugees to Greece is a more permanent and not temporary phenomenon, and in fact 54% believe that in the future more refugees and immigrants will come. Almost 40% do not know the Turkey-EU agreement to reduce migratory flows, and of those who know it, 80% consider it ineffective.⁵⁸

According to a study published by Greece's University Mental Health Research Institute (ΕΠΙΨΥ) recently, the vast majority of Greek teenagers have positive feelings towards refugees and migrants that are currently living in the country.

In particular, the survey found that 57.7 percent of the teenagers who participated said that they have positive feelings for refugees and migrants, with 25.4 percent saying they have neutral feelings for them.

Only a small minority of 16.9 percent claimed that their feelings about the country's refugees and migrants are negative.

The age range of those who participated spanned from 11 to 15 years, and the survey was conducted in 2018.

However, the results of the study were published in December 2019.

The survey also found that the overwhelming majority of teenagers, 90.6 percent, support the position that the children of refugees and migrants who live in Greece should have the same opportunities in education as other children.

Additionally, nearly 8 out of 10 teenagers agreed that refugees and migrants should have the chance to maintain their customs, speak their own language and have the same rights as Greek citizens.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ <https://www.dianeosis.org/2020/01/ti-pistevoun-oi-metanastes/>

⁵⁹ <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2019/12/21/study-finds-vast-majority-of-greek-teenagers-have-positive-feelings-about-refugees-and-migrants/>

In general, girls were more favorable in their answers compared to boys.⁶⁰

- Describe negative social manifestations towards immigrants, foreigners, various ethnic and religious groups, give examples;

Soon after taking power, Mitsotakis government began trying to move asylum seekers and refugees from overcrowded Aegean Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) to mainland Greece. From July 2019 to March 2020, when the population of the Aegean camps peaked, nearly 30,000 people left the islands, though not always without incident. Occasionally, buses carrying asylum seekers to mainland facilities were turned back at informal roadblocks, and some hotels designated to serve as reception centers received threats. New arrivals, moreover, outpaced transfers; over the same period, nearly 55,000 migrants arrived by sea. Greece's island RICs, which have a stated capacity of just over 6,000, grew from hosting 17,000 asylum seekers to nearly 40,000.

Mitsotakis asked fellow EU Member States for solidarity, but his appeals fell on deaf ears. Just one out of 27 replied to an October 2019 letter requesting help relocating 4,000 unaccompanied minors then living in Greece. Not until March 2020 would the European Commission announce a plan to relocate unaccompanied minors from Greece, eventually committing to receive 2,000. Only about 200 transfers had taken place before the Moria fire, though multiple countries have announced plans to accept additional minors in its aftermath.

In mid-November, the Greek government announced it would *close RICs on frontline islands and replace them with closed facilities in which asylum seekers would be held throughout their asylum process. Regional and local authorities quickly denounced the plan, fearing that the new centers would become permanent, and demanded instead the prompt decongestion of the islands. The government backed down, taking no further action in 2019.*⁶¹

In October 2019, Residents of the small village of Vrasna, northeast of Thessaloniki, forced Greek authorities on Tuesday to abandon plans to house approximately 400 migrants and refugees in local hotels.⁶²

Local residents blocked the road at the outskirts of the seaside village to stop the buses carrying the migrants, who had been transferred from an overcrowded camp on the island of Samos.⁶³

⁶⁰ <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2019/12/21/study-finds-vast-majority-of-greek-teenagers-have-positive-feelings-about-refugees-and-migrants/>

⁶¹ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/greece-struggles-balance-competing-migration-demands>

⁶² <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/20387/greek-villagers-throw-stones-at-migrant-buses>

⁶³ <https://www.facebook.com/GreekReporter/posts/residents-of-the-small-village-of-vrasna-northeast-of-thessaloniki-blocked-the-r/10156831752250829/>

Riot police were also called in when local hoteliers, under pressure from the protesters, reneged on their initial agreement to house the new arrivals. “We had warned the authorities not to bring to Vrasna more people because local residents are enraged. They didn’t listen to us,” Volvi mayor Diamantis Liamas told the local news website Voria.⁶⁴



“There was tension early on and eventually, when the buses arrived, the hotels were closed,” he added.

The migrants will now be sent to the island of Evia instead, to be hosted in bungalows by the sea, authorities announced on Wednesday.

Ministry sources told the Athens-Macedonia News Agency (AMNA) that the reaction of the residents was understandable, as the municipality of Volvi is already hosting a number of migrants and asylum seekers.

The same sources said that, on the one hand, we talk about the poor conditions prevailing on the islands and on the other hand we don’t have anywhere to take the migrants because local communities on the mainland do not want them.

They also added that the ministry’s intention is to fairly distribute refugees throughout Greece but noted that regional governors have not yet sent any proposals on potential accommodation sites, as they had agreed to do in a recent meeting with the minister.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ <https://www.ekathimerini.com/245776/article/ekathimerini/news/villagers-in-northern-greece-block-refugees-from-settling-in-local-hotels>

⁶⁵ <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2019/10/23/residents-block-resettlement-of-400-migrants-in-northern-greece-video/>

The atmosphere in Giannitsa, northern Greece, early on Sunday morning, on November 2019, was volatile as residents tried to prevent buses carrying 100-150 migrants and refugees from settling in an area hotel.

According to a SKAI TV report, about 30 locals blocked the road, trying to prevent the buses from reaching the hotel.

Police quickly arrived and created a passageway for the buses to approach the hotel. The refugees and migrants were able to enter the hotel after the road was cleared.

However, the residents quickly went to the local police station and filed a lawsuit protesting the town's acceptance of the migrants.⁶⁶

This was the third incident in three days where local residents in three different parts of Greece rose up in revolt against the government's decision to house refugees and asylum seekers in certain areas for an indefinite period of time.

On Saturday, the mayor of Kos and island residents, using municipal vehicles, blocked the island's port in order to prevent 77 migrants and refugees who were scheduled to be housed on the island.

Previous to the blocking of the port, Kos Mayor Theodosios Nikitaras had posted a statement on social media asking for the government to ease the burden of the already-overcrowded hot spot on the island by sending some of the migrants to the mainland.

On Friday, Leros Mayor Michalis Kollias and island residents decided to block a ship carrying 40 migrants who had been on the island of Symi.

The mayor characterized the current conditions prevailing on the island as "unacceptable," as approximately 3,000 foreign nationals are already living in camps on the small island.⁶⁷

On January 22, 2020, nearly 10,000 residents of the Greek islands of Lesbos, Samos and Chios demonstrated in Lesvos demanding solutions to problems that had festered for half a decade: near-constant irregular arrivals, growing numbers of asylum seekers in squalid camps, and the strain on infrastructure and services. Under the slogan "we want our islands back, we want our lives back," the islanders shut stores and closed public services, as people demonstrated on the streets, waving Greek flags.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ <https://www.keeptalkinggreece.com/2019/11/03/greece-migration-protests-resettlement/>

⁶⁷ <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2019/11/03/greek-citizens-revolt-against-migrants-temporarily-settling-in-their-communities/>

⁶⁸ <https://www.shbh66.com/article/greece-struggles-balance-competing-migration-demands>



Trade unionists and regional lawmakers demanded that the Greek government immediately transport the thousands of migrants stranded at camps to the mainland after registration.

In the past six months, 45,000 refugees arrived in Greece, leading the government commissioner to say the situation was "clearly more critical" for Greece than the 2015 migrant crisis, at the high point of people fleeing the civil war in Syria.

Currently, there are more than 41,000 people waiting at the infamous camps on the islands such as Moria on Lesbos or Vathy on Samos, according to the Greek government — this is the highest number since the EU-Turkey refugee pact came into force in 2016.⁶⁹

Protest organizers said they are also seeking more information on the government's announcements that it will build more camps on the islands.

'Our island can no longer be the site of lost souls'

"We can't continue to put up with this situation in our small town," said Giorgos Stantzos, mayor of Vathy, the main town on the island of Samos.

"Our island can no longer be the site of lost souls and suffering people," the regional governor of the northern Aegean Sea region, Kostas Moutzouris told Greek broadcaster ERT Open. Kostas Moutzouris, who was elected with the support of Golden Dawn made references for the refugees as people that want to impose on us another way of life, another religion...(..).It was the fault of all of us, when there was no uprising when the river started. He referred to a plan being pursued, noting a 2000 UN Population Substitution plan, which argued that Europe would need many millions of foreigners. Referred to Dublin 2 as "our grave". He added: "We want prevention. "Fatherland is in danger."

The "theory of replacement" of the population (with false documentation of alleged decisions of a conference in Morocco on immigration) is a xenophobic, Islamophobic, conspiracy and racist position of the international far right which in fact recently inspired e.g. the mass killings in New

⁶⁹ <https://www.dw.com/en/greece-expects-100000-more-migrants-in-2020/a-51716555>

Zealand with 51 dead and 49 wounded in the Muslim religious community and the shootings in El Paso with 22 dead and 24 wounded targeting the Latin American community in Texas and inspired by the Nazi Ummvolk reversal of the ethnic composition of the population ”.⁷⁰ Dimitris Christopoulos, former president of the International Federation for Human Rights stated: “With his recent statements, the Regional Governor is being placed outside the horizon of the liberal character of the democratic regime.”Advocating for an open society means, if nothing else, denouncing intolerance, conspiracy theories and the provocation of citizens into racist violence.”

There are more than 21,500 asylum seekers on Lesbos – spelled locally as Lesvos – and the sense of frustration from all sides is palpable. The majority live in the Moria refugee camp. A former military base, it was supposed to accommodate 2,840 people but now has a population of about 19,300.⁷¹ Governors and mayors from the region planned to travel to Athens to present their demand to the government. The North Aegean regional governor, Kostas Moutzouris, told the crowd at the protest in Mytilene that there was a “pact of silence” among European states and the Greek government. The Greek government, under conservative Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, announced in October 2019 that it wants to send 10,000 migrants back to Turkey by the end of 2020 as part of a more hardline approach to migration. The minister for migration and asylum, Notis Mitarakis, said the “anxiety and indignation” of the islanders was justified and vowed to find a solution to stem the flow of arrivals to Greece and decongest the islands. Last Thursday the government announced plans to build a 2.7km floating barrier off the island of Lesbos to be completed by the end of April. The administration said the barrier would help to deter and reduce arrivals to the island.



The makeshift camp next to the refugee camp of Moria on Lesbos, January 22nd. Photograph: Aris Messinis/AFP/ Getty

⁷⁰ <https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com/tag/%ce%b5%ce%b8%ce%bd%ce%b9%ce%ba%ce%ad%cf%82-%ce%bc%ce%b5%ce%b9%ce%bf%ce%bd%cf%8c%cf%84%ce%b7%cf%84%ce%b5%cf%82-national-minorities/>

⁷¹ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/we-want-our-islands-back-greeks-protest-against-asylum-seeker-burden-1.4159530>

Dr Apostolos Veizis, director of medical operational support for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Greece, said that the camp was a direct result of EU policies. “The situation in Moria is reflecting the political choice of the European Union,” he said. “Greece never had the capacity both in the reception and the asylum services, which the Greek authorities and the European Union knew very well from the beginning.”

MSF operates a clinic at the foot of the camp. It has consistently spoken out against what it says are inhumane conditions created in part by the EU-Turkey deal of 2016, which requires all asylum seekers to have their applications processed on the Greek islands.

“The European Union and member states are presenting the situation as a humanitarian crisis but this is a policy-made crisis and a management crisis,” he said. “Before we even talk of solidarity, it’s important that EU leaders radically rethink their policies for safe and legal ways for people to seek refuge in Europe. We need to talk to our governments and tell them not in our names: this is happening under the eyes of all European citizens.”⁷²

Mitsotakis had pledged to resolve these problems, but they had worsened under his watch. Two weeks later, hundreds of asylum seekers living in Moria staged their own demonstration, marching peacefully to Mytilene to demand better living conditions and faster asylum proceedings; they were stopped by riot police with tear gas and flash grenades.

As tensions rose, the government responded by pledging to build the closed structures it had proposed the previous November. This proved a grave misjudgment of how islanders would react. Local authorities blocked ferry ports and obstructed access to construction sites. When military construction crews escorted by riot police arrived on February 25, they met fierce, quasi-insurrectionary resistance in Lesbos and nearby Chios. Subsequent clashes between police and local protesters left dozens injured over two days. Rebuked by both regional authorities and local communities, the Mitsotakis government reversed itself, and construction crews and riot police withdrew after 48 hours. Before a meaningful dialogue could be established, however, geopolitics intervened to redirect the tensions. On February 27, Turkish authorities unexpectedly announced they were opening their western borders to asylum seekers heading to Europe. Thousands soon gathered at the Kastanies border crossing and at Turkey’s shores. On March 1 alone, 736 asylum seekers reached Greece by boat, a four-fold increase compared to February 1, although the number of maritime arrivals would drop again over the following days.⁷³

The move redirected the target of frustration in the Aegean from Athens to Ankara. Greece’s public discourse took on military overtones as officials accused Turkey of orchestrating an “asymmetric” invasion. Police and military forces, with assistance from the EU border agency Frontex, prevented large-scale arrivals and secured Greece’s land borders with tear gas, water cannons, and, according to multiple reports, deadly force. News outlets and NGOs reported that dozens of asylum seekers suffered serious injuries, and that at least two were killed. (Greek authorities have flatly denied using deadly force or other breaches of the law, despite evidence from digital forensic analysis and

⁷² <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/we-want-our-islands-back-greeks-protest-against-asylum-seeker-burden-1.4159530>

⁷³ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/greece-struggles-balance-competing-migration-demands>

multiple videos taken at different scenes.) At sea, a 4-year-old boy drowned after the dinghy he and 47 other passengers were in capsized off the Lesbos coast.⁷⁴

While Greece's October appeals for relocating unaccompanied minors had gone unmet, European support was immediate in March. At the Greco-Turkish border, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen praised Greece as Europe's "*aspida*" ("shield"). Greece suspended all new asylum registrations for the month of March, for which it was criticized by UNHCR and others—but notably not the Commission. The government eventually relented, allowing most people who arrived in March to lodge asylum applications.

Turkey's gambit transformed the February confrontations on the islands. What had begun as a clash between the central government and regional authorities over managing arrivals and reception took on a nationalist framing. Soon, however the COVID-19 pandemic reached Greece and Turkey, transforming the situation yet again.

Greece confirmed its first COVID-19 case on February 26, and in subsequent weeks the government imposed a national lockdown, closed nonessential services, and imposed travel restrictions. Many of these swift actions won praise for Mitsotakis. Greece's new infections curve remained flat through the spring and early summer. Although transmission grew in August as tourism reopened, as of early September Greece had recorded fewer than 12,000 cases.⁷⁵

The global lockdown also undercut the rising tensions at the border. After the disturbances of late February and early March, irregular arrivals plummeted to just a few dozen per month.

At the same time, the pandemic provided the government with a new rationale to confine asylum seekers on the islands. On March 17, the government ordered a strict lockdown of every island reception center. It also closed the asylum service for ten weeks. Even as lockdowns eased across Greece and tourists began returning, RIC lockdowns were extended continually and remained in place as of late September.

By early summer, the spring confrontations between the government and islanders had been supplanted by Turkey's gambit and COVID-19. Yet while the underlying issues remained unresolved, the government turned towards expedient stop-gap measures. Although it had not been able to build closed reception centers, the facility lockdowns served the same purpose, confining most inhabitants inside. And after receiving EU praise for its forceful defense of Europe's external borders, the government continued testing the limits. Over the summer, repeated allegations surfaced of unlawful pushbacks at Greece's maritime borders and from the interior, including the use of extrajudicial detention.

Conditions steadily worsened in the reception centers throughout the summer, with inhabitants growing anxious due to the extended lockdowns and uncertainty resulting from the closure of the asylum service. Three asylum seekers died in Moria during lockdown, two in violent altercations and another in an apparent drug overdose. Two major fires broke out in April at RICs on the islands of Chios and Samos, following disturbances at each site.

⁷⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/issue-brief-blocked-every-pass-how-greece-s-policy-exclusion-harms-asylum-seekers-and>

⁷⁵ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/greece-struggles-balance-competing-migration-demands>

In September, COVID-19 outbreaks were identified in the reception centers in Chios, Samos, and Lesbos. On September 9, multiple fires broke out in Moria, destroying most of its structures and leaving more than 10,000 people homeless. Greek authorities arrested five former inhabitants whom they accused of starting the fires in protest after the coronavirus had been detected in the camp.

On September 2020 residents of Kamena Vourla, who oppose the temporary accommodation of 39 unaccompanied minor refugees and immigrants in a hotel in the city, continued their mobilizations for the third day.

A symbolic occupation of the National Road at the height of the tolls of the Holy Trinity was planned, on Friday, September 25, at 4.00 in the afternoon. At the same time, the municipal council decided to suspend the operation of the schools for yesterday and to plan "collective actions for the immediate removal of immigrants / refugees from the urban fabric of the city of Kamena Vourla". ⁷⁶

"Our most important problem and what provoked the reactions of the residents is that we were not asked. No local agency was informed. **They decided for us without us "will say in Athens 9.84 the mayor of Kamenon Vourlon Giannis Sykiotis** . We would have suggested another accommodation in other parts of the city. **This hotel was closed for 15 years and miserable conditions prevail.** These children, who are from 15 to 23 years old, just wanted to leave when they arrived. No beds were made for sleeping. We hope that the issue will be resolved. We are in consultation with the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum. "We are neither racist nor inhospitable," he said **Mr. Sykiotis** stressing however that he also considers it a problem that the hotel is located in the urban area and in fact opposite the primary school while he did not answer the question why this is a problem. ⁷⁷

Last night at 11.00 there were small incidents by the unaccompanied children in the hotel "They broke beds and threw stones", says the mayor, "however the incident ended quickly with the intervention of the Police".⁷⁸

⁷⁶ <https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/09/27/unaccompanied-child-migrant-uses-foul-language-against-greeks-while-others-trash-hotel-room/>

⁷⁷ <https://www.athina984.gr/2020/09/25/synechizontai-oi-antidraseis-sta-kamena-voyrla-gia-tin-diamoni-asynodeyton-anilikon/>

⁷⁸ <https://www.athina984.gr/en/2020/09/25/synechizontai-oi-antidraseis-sta-kamena-voyrla-gia-tin-diamoni-asynodeyton-anilikon/>



Children look out the back window of a bus at the port of Mytilini on Lesbos on September 28, as hundreds of refugees and migrants left homeless by the destruction of the Moria camp were transferred by ferry to the Greek mainland for relocation to other facilities. [InTime News]

- Radical manifestations on the part of ethnic and religious groups, what, in your opinion, are the reasons for these manifestations.

4. Activities of radical groups. Right-wing radical groups and parties:

Incidents of organized violence have decreased since 2013. However, in 2019 is being recorded a significant number of attacks showing signs of structured organizations or committed by organized groups targeting refugees and migrants. Organized groups attacked asylum-seekers and refugees in major urban centres but also in regional areas, especially where accommodation sites for asylum-seekers or unaccompanied children are located. These groups proudly state that they are infused with extreme xenophobic ideologies, they adopt the respective vocabulary, dress code and practices and they behave as if they believe they are on a mission. Violent attacks by organized groups against migrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees occurred both in large cities but also in the regional areas, especially where there are reception/ accommodation sites for asylum-seekers or unaccompanied children. The Racist Violence Recording Network has many times in the past emphasized the link between the rise in xenophobia and racist manifestations with both the absence of a coherent and human-centered migration policy, based on international standards and safeguards, and the prolonged critical overcrowding and dire conditions at the island reception centers which hinders the harmonious coexistence and burdens both the refugee and migrant population and the local communities. The rise of these incidents is further inextricably linked to the institutional targeting of refugees and migrants through the public discourse used by political leaders and the media in the context of, inter alia, the tensions created recently at the Greek-Turkish border. Targeting is also exacerbated by decisions, such as the recent suspension on the registration

of asylum applications, which constitutes a violation of international law: access to the asylum procedures needs to be urgently restored for the protection of those who need it.⁷⁹

Organized attacks were also recorded in which the perpetrators, while riding a vehicle, targeted the victim who was moving near a reception/accommodation site. Such an attack was recorded by RVRN on an Aegean island, where there is a Reception and Identification Centre. RVRN recalls that the surprise factor and the attacks by groups against refugees has already been identified and recorded in its Annual Reports since the beginning of its operation. Hence, it appears that this is a recurring practice, which is repeated whenever the circumstances so permit. Regarding the incidents that take place in the islands, RVRN has observed a correlation between the rise in xenophobic and racist incidents and the worsening overcrowding at island reception centres for asylum-seekers, due to higher sea arrivals in 2019 and the continued policy of geographical restriction as a result of the EU-Turkey Statement, keeping thousands in dire conditions on a handful of islands for lengthy periods. Therefore, for humanitarian reasons and in order to prevent exacerbation of social tensions and far-right rhetoric, it is necessary to immediately proceed with the decongestion of the islands by implementing transfers to the mainland. In addition, attacks by far-right groups seemed to have occurred in places of worship or monuments associated with religious communities of Greek citizens which, however, do not belong to the country's dominant religious identity (Muslim cemetery, Holocaust memorials). These attacks highlighted once again the existence of organized or semi-informal anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic trends within the Greek society. For 2019, in addition to the attacks by organized groups that were driven by extreme far-right beliefs, a trend of incidents of everyday racist violence. By the term «everyday» is intended to describe the expression of racist behaviours or even racist violence, usually of low intensity, expressed by individuals in the context of everyday life: in public transport, at school, at work, in public services. In the same context, incidents against Greek citizens occurred, targeted not as migrants or refugees, but as «less» Greeks, on grounds of ethnic origin. Those recordings, combined with the growing trend of incidents against refugees and migrants, highlighted the repugnance that part of Greek society shows towards diversity, which is largely linked to the serious lack of culture of tolerance and policies of actual integration and acceptance of diversity. Racist rhetoric at central and local political levels played a key role in the development of such behaviours, and significantly contributed to the normalization of xenophobia and intolerance. Another element evident in the behaviour of the perpetrators, according to testimonies from victims is their indifference of the consequences that their actions may have on the country's institutional framework – attacks have been carried out in public spaces in front of witnesses, in some cases police officers has observed that to a large extent the victims of such attacks have accepted their victimization as a «normal» feature of their daily lives and the perpetrators seem to be attacking with the perception that their act will go unpunished. This painful context for communities affected by racist violence on grounds of nationality, ethnic origin, colour and/ or religion is further aggravated when it is affected by institutional racism, expressed either through policies that restrict access to basic rights, or through the inappropriate behaviour of public officials resulting in the exclusion of individuals of different ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic backgrounds, from services and goods. It is no coincidence that asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants are the majority of victims in incidents involving law enforcement officials or civil servants. The growing racist rhetoric in the public sphere often aims to discredit the work and services offered by organizations of defending human rights, while the lack of special protection

⁷⁹ <http://rvrn.org/2020/03/racist-violence-recording-network-serious-concern-over-attacks-against-refugees-and-humanitarian-workers/>

for human rights defenders deteriorates the conditions in which organizations are called upon to operate. Following the above, the following conclusions briefly describe the quantitative and qualitative picture of racist violence in the country in 2019: 1. 2019 continued to record attacks that either have features of structured organizations or are committed by organized groups, and saw a growing trend in the incidents of individual perpetrators (neighbours, property owners of the homes where refugees live, public transport employees, etc.) 2. 2019 recorded incidents against Greek citizens on grounds of ethnic origin, but also violent attacks on monuments or places of worship of Greek citizens with different religious identity. While anti-Semitic attacks seem to have decreased compared to 2018 (two incidents for 2019, nine incidents for 2018), the attack on a Muslim cemetery shows the anti-Islamic motive of the incident. 3. In comparison to 2018 the recorded attacks on LGBTQI+ individuals were on the rise. 4. The recorded incidents involving law enforcement officials and civil servants remained consistently high. Such incidents enhance institutional racism, exclude or delay victims from accessing goods and services to which they are entitled, and in their worst form contribute to a climate of insecurity and intimidation. 6. Attacks on human rights defenders remained alarming. Another type of activity deriving from specific grassroots movements and groups operating in the island was the use of **misinformation**. Thus, the spreading of misinformation aiming to cause new tensions on the Greek island of Lesvos led many refugees and migrants to rush to the port in the capital city of Mytilene on Tuesday, believing that they would be allowed to go to the Greek mainland.

As the local website *Sto Nisi* reports, unknown individuals have been spreading fake news, either deliberately or unintentionally, that ferries are waiting at the port of Mytilene to transfer them to Piraeus and other port cities on the Greek mainland.

For this reason, dozens of them left the Moria refugee camp and walked to Mytilene only to find out that some as-yet-unknown evil minds had played with their hopes once again.

Many of them had even packed whatever clothes they had and walked to the port, believing that they would somehow be transferred to the mainland, where they would then be free to go anywhere they chose.

Increased numbers of police officers are already stationed at the port, and are urging the refugees and migrants to return to their camps.

The spreading of misinformation, both deliberate and unintentional, appears to be booming these days on Lesvos, as local residents have also been listening to information suggesting that angry migrants, carrying rocks or bats are heading toward the city to cause havoc, which was untrue.

It is still unclear who is playing with this sensitive issue. For example it may be that we are dealing with individuals who enjoy provoking the migrants and stoking tensions — or it could be a much worse "game" played by other, unknown powers, which wish to destabilize and disrupt normal life on Lesvos.

Meanwhile, Greek Premier Kyriakos Mitsotakis declared once again that Greece will protect the European borders, as it is his "duty is to protect the sovereignty of my own country."⁸⁰



Tense moments ensued as police officers tried to push back refugees and migrants in Mytilene. Photo Credit: stonisi.gr.

- The presence of neo-Nazi and nationalist groups, movements, political parties (a brief discription).

The sudden and explosive rise of a Nazi party in Greece, and its entry into Parliament, was undoubtedly one of the worst aspects of the multifaceted crisis in which Greece sank almost simultaneously with the outbreak of the debt crisis. The specific physiognomy of the Golden Dawn (the use of Nazi symbols, the organized resort to violence, its vulgar extreme and intolerant speech, its military-type public presence) combined with its unforeseen penetration into Greek society, created an explosive mixture, which peaked multiply (according to opinion polls, it is said to have even reached 20%), in the summer of 2013, when the behavior of its leadership group led to an escalation of street violence, culminating in the organized and cold-blooded assassination of Pavlos Fyssas - an action that, it seems, was fatal to the future of the organization and the political system, sinful in many ways until then.

After the criminal prosecution against Golden Dawn by the Justice as a criminal organization and the condemnation of its leadership at the end of 2020, the landscape of the far right is being restructured. Before the decision, Golden Dawn had already collapsed, electorally, remaining outside Parliament since the summer of 2019, but also internally, having split between the parent organization of Nikos Michaloliakos and its imitations of the previous its vice-presidents, Ioannis Lagou and Elias Kasidiari.

The Golden Dawn audience (apart from Kyriakos Velopoulos who entered Parliament, albeit with smaller percentages, approximately with 5%) try to claim many far-right parties and formations that in most cases are from extremely small to single-person and often constitute communicating vessels with each other. But other communicating vessels are the small Nazi and fascist organizations that - unlike the parent organization - move exclusively in the darkness of illegality and try to fill the gap left on the street by the Golden Dawn Raid Battalions, withdrawn due to the trial. Here we proceed to a mapping of this landscape, recording those who have shown a greater mobility in the last decade. We separately record the Golden Dawn and its offshoots that extend to the small extremist organizations of the Nazi and fascist space, and separately the parties and formations of the traditional Far Right. But despite the existence of all these forms, despite the pulverization of the far right after the revelations in the Golden Dawn trial and despite the fact that

⁸⁰ <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2020/03/03/fake-news-on-lesvos-make-refugees-migrants-rush-to-mytilene-port/>

part of this area is covered by the SW, a gap remains open at the far right of the political spectrum which does not preclude the emergence of other potential candidates.

Golden Dawn, after the assassination of Pavlos Fyssas and the subsequent prosecution that followed, but also the cessation of its funding as an elected party from the budget of the parliament, began to fluctuate and split into larger or smaller parties and organizations that overlap. The first split groups were the Popular Greek Patriotic Union (LEPEN) of Christos Rigas, the Patriotic Radical Union (PATRIE) of Eleftherios Synadinos, the National Popular Consciousness (ELASYN) of Giannis Lagos and the, last, Greeks for the Fatherland, Kasidiari. Of course, a reference should be made also to the alt far-right party of the Independent Greeks of Panagiotis Kammenos, former MP and minister of ND, who was in the government as a partner of SYRIZA in the period 2015-2019, which has a more opportunistic character than a clear ideological goal. Of course, these are not the only parties that exist or have existed, but they were the ones that had in some way, to a greater or lesser extent, a historical influence on the far right itself or on the wider scene.

The party that entered in parliament in 2019, is the Elliniki Lyssi (Greek Solution), founded by Kyriakos Velopoulos, a former MP of Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos (Greek Orthodox Rally) of Georgios Karatzaferis. In the party's political programme dedicated to the "immigration issue" the party argues,

Integration programmes for the illegal immigrants have already been prepared and this means that unfortunately they came to stay! European countries will not open their borders and this means that in Greece hundreds of thousands of Muslim illegal immigrants will settle. The alteration of our Language, our Religion, our Traditions, and our Values and in general of Hellenism is a matter of time. For as long as this dangerous coalition government stays in power, this time is getting closer!

Through a detailed description of the implementation of a series of security measures that are necessary in order to confront immigration waves, the party argues that "we, the Greeks, need to take back our country and preserve our language, civilization and religion!"

Another party playing with islamophobia discourse, mainly through twitter and Facebook is the neoliberal party of Thanos Tzimeros. Among many comments, texts, and tweets one that actually summarizes his views is the following

[...] Islam is BY ITS NATURE bigoted, aggressive, INTOLERANT to diversity and [the Europeans] should proceed to the next step which is its FULL BAN within the EU. As I have written in tens of articles, it is [Islam] not only a religion but a regulative, legislative framework which CONTRADICTS ALL the basic values of the Western Civilisation. In the same way that we wouldn't accept an association of paedophiles, of men beating up their wives, children oppressors and aspiring murderers of other faith followers, it is not possible to accept within the EU the presence of a 'religion' with the exact same values, something that we realised after they managed to gain power through the rise of their population and after they started to show their real face. Europe IS NOT going to avoid the clash with Islam. The sooner the better. It is already too late.⁸¹

⁸¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmF51y16z-c>

Regarding islamophobia, the main conclusion regarding politics is that open Islamophobia is evident in the extreme-right and other small political parties, although it could be also present in concealed forms in other parties and politicians as well. An interesting finding emerged from interviews with Muslims in which they argued that covert Islamophobia could be found in the state apparatuses as well, a form that could be described as “institutional Islamophobia”. One example mentioned was the control by the police and the secret services of prayer houses, especially in Athens, and another one was the delay of the construction of the first official mosque in the Greek capital. It was argued that the continuous delays and obstacles raised with regard to the mosque might imply a covered Islamophobia by the state, which actually does not want a mosque to be built.

An interesting parameter related to politics is the two-week-long public deliberation on the law with regard to the administrative council of the new mosque in Athens that opened in May 2018. Despite the fact that the law passed from the Greek Parliament it is quite illuminating for one to pay attention to the comments uploaded in this public deliberation. The vast majority of the 148 comments from individuals or organised groups were against the construction of the mosque, while at the same time they expressed openly Islamophobic views. Although in such cases it is usual that people of the same ideological background enter the discussion massively in order to make their voice heard, the fact is that among all the comments written during this process not even one positive view and in support of the mosque and Muslims was expressed. The main arguments, among others, were that the construction of the mosque will create many dangers, Muslims will be radicalised, the mosque is unconstitutional, Muslims are invading Greece, Greece is an Orthodox country, and Islam is incompatible with the Greek history and civilization, and that it will lead to the Islamisation of the country.

(...) However, other newspapers like *Dimocratia*, which belongs to the right-wing spectrum, have hosted views and articles which are openly Islamophobic. Among the authors of such articles is Failos Kranidiotis, whose party *Nea Dexia* was mentioned in the above section on politics. Throughout the year, *Dimocratia* published news and articles echoing views against Islam, immigration, multiculturalism, and arguing that politicians in Greece should learn from the lessons in other countries, implying the terrorist attacks that have taken place during the last years. In addition, the articles argue that the integration of Muslims in Greece and Europe is impossible and that the mosque the government decided to build in Athens is an endeavour that should not take place for cultural and for security reasons.

Apart from the media that belong to the right and the extreme-right ideological and political spectrum, one can also find Islamophobic opinion pieces and articles in other newspapers of liberal and/or centre-right background like the news site *liberal.gr* and the newspapers *Athens Voice* and *Ta Nea*. The fact is that these media include articles of specific authors who could be considered as important figures in the Islamophobia network; for example, the former politician and minister *Andreas Andrianopoulos*, and the author *Soti Triandafyllou*.⁸²

Apart of these formations with elements of islamophobia, near Golden Dawn milieu, it is worth mentioning also the loose network of people, blogs and small groups operating around the central core of the Black Lily (MK, Μαύρος Κρίνος), with the latter gaining a few minutes of publicity

⁸² <https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com/2020/02/14/1-972/>

through an interview with its alleged member in the newspaper Dimokratia. Without a clear organizational structure, it is reminiscent of the model of organizations such as the Atomwaffen Division, as an organization belonging to the National Socialist space and in particular, to its stratified version, i.e. the positions expressed by the left wing of the NSDAP. Of course the Greek far right was not unaffected by the rise of the identity movement and was expressed by Propatria, Ideapolis and Arma Hellas, with whom he had (or still has) a swordsman instructor and the founder of Necromantia and the most inactive Black Lotus Records, Magus Wampyr Daoloth (George Zacharopoulos), and who maintained a literary column in the music magazine Metal Invader. A similar column existed in the other magazine of the time, signed by Sun Knight (Haris Prasoulas), with strongly identical content. Finally, reference should be made to Combat18, also part or a copy of a loose network of homonymous organizations in Europe and North America started in England, and in Greece they cooperated with the AME (Unarmed Meandering Nationalists). The latter are theoretically the spiritual children of "Periandros" and have made a series of attacks among themselves the desecration of the Jewish cemetery in Larissa, while the former, led by George Dimitriou (Alexandros Tsampanikas) make their appearance with the desecration of the monument of Pavlos Fyssas and continue with attacks on social spaces and squatting, among them Antivaro, Favela, Antipnia, Pasamontana and the Jewish cemetery in Athens.

An important role in the group was played by the lawyer George Makris,⁸³ a former member of DAP, ONNED and ND, who passed from the New Right of Failos Kranidiotis to end up in the organization United Front of Greek Ideology of Compatriots (WE) of Konstantinos Pleviris. While he was also a lawyer for the members of the far-right organization Apella who attacked Athens Pride 2017, and which is also a split from the core of the Golden Dawn in Piraeus.⁸⁴ In 2018 Combat 18 Hellas, was banned as a criminal organization.⁸⁵

The party of Failos Kranidiotis the Nea Dexia (New Right), is openly against Islam, immigrants, and refugees in general. Kranidiotis speaks repeatedly not about immigration and immigrants and refugees, but about the 'Islamic colonization' of Greece and Europe that should be confronted.⁸⁶ The party also praises and supports leaders like Salvini, Orban, and Trump as well as their views and policies on immigration flows and Islam. In its published theses regarding the so-called demographic and immigration problems, which are the most important topics in the party's discourse, the New Right argues,

The evidence so far leads to a situation in which the Greek population and the Greek society as we know them until now are being altered. We do not have the right to passively accept these developments. We have to take our responsibilities, especially towards our own children. [...]
The so-called integration is actually a colonization. The mass reception and settlement of people especially Muslims, with all the consequences of that, will create in a short time a new community that will replace the previous one [i.e. the Greek one].

⁸³ <https://www.ereportaz.gr/aytos-einai-o-dikigoros-poy-empleketai-me-tin-akrodexia/>

⁸⁴ <https://luben.tv/stream/146496>

⁸⁵ <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2018/03/11/greek-court-remands-neo-nazi-suspects-in-custody/>

⁸⁶ <https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com/2020/02/14/1-972/>

The party makes a series of suggestions in order to confront immigration – including some very strict and non-humanitarian ones⁸⁷ – and includes a special section regarding Islam with the following measures:

- Ban of funding coming from Islamic organizations from abroad.
- Exclusive use of the Greek translation of the Koran.
- Legislation about Islam based on the example of Austria. Ban of symbols used in public places.
- Ban of use of any kind of head covering [meaning especially the headscarf and all its variations] deriving from a religious obligation in public and private places and of all clothing that conceals the face. High fines in case of violation of this legislation.
- Investigation of the legality of purposes and activities of every organized Islamic structure, e.g. unions, clubs, associations, etc.
- Ban of Sharia law in every part of the country. In the case of the implementation of Sharia, the consequence will be the removal of citizenship, if this is the case, and immediate deportation.
- The start of a political debate on the topic of whether Islam is actually a religion given that its holy book is considered as law by Muslim communities.
- Closure of every illegal mosque.
- Annulment of the first [official] mosque of Athens.⁸⁸

It is very interesting that on 18 October, certain members of Nea Dexia resigned and on 27 October formed another political movement called “Ethnos kai Eleftheria” (Nation and Freedom). What is even more interesting is that among this movement’s first texts is one on immigration and the so-called demographic problem which is actually identical with the one of Nea Dexia mentioned above – especially the measures that are necessary against Islam.

A similar organization of this size is the Greek Socialist Resistance (ESA), which typically uses the emblem of the British Fascist Union as its emblem of the British Union of Fascists (BUF) by Oswald Mosley. The ESA looks close to the version of National Socialism promoted by "Periandros", while it made its appearance with rallies in favor of the murderer of Zak Costopoulos, Thanasis Chortaria.⁸⁹ The latter is (or was) the representative and coordinator of the Patriotic Front, an organization of "non-partisan" citizens, which was found in the news when a member threw a shoe at Prime Minister George Papandreou during the TIF in 2010, relations with the organization Konstantinos Zouraris also seems to have had it. The leader of this organization is the self-proclaimed "general" Stavros Vitalis, who, among other things, has passed through the Hellenic Voluntary Guard (EEF), where together with members of the Golden Dawn, participated

⁸⁷ <https://www.liberal.gr/apopsi/o-polemos-me-to-islam-teleiose/102432>

⁸⁸ <https://www.dimiourgi.axana.gr/%CE%B3%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%B5%CE%B9%CE%BF-%CF%84%CF%85%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%85/%CE%B4%CE%B5%CE%BB%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CF%85%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%85/3026-%CE%B5%CF%80%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B7-%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%B1%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7-%CE%BA%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B1%CF%86%CE%BF%CF%83-%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85-%CE%B8%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%BF%CF%85-%CF%84%CE%B6%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%BF%CF%85-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%B1%CE%B3%CE%B3%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CF%83%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B7%CF%83-%CE%B2%CE%B9%CE%B1%CF%83>

⁸⁹ <https://www.kathimerini.gr/society/1006901/ta-sygkoinonynta-docheia-toy-akrodexioy-extremismoy/>

in war crimes in Bosnia, with his political career including POLAN, LAOS to be in the Constituent Assembly-Direct Democracy.⁹⁰

- The influence of neo-Nazis and radical nationalists changed over the period on civil society, on local and central legislative / executive authorities;

- The RVN, in light of the growing tensions and incidents in the islands and in the mainland made the following observations
- **the Greek authorities to ensure the safety** of refugees, asylum-seekers, humanitarian workers and the members of civil society.
- Calls on the representatives of the State, local officials and the media to **abstain from the xenophobic rhetoric** that normalizes and encourages xenophobic reactions.
- Calls on the State to ensure the **immediate transfer of asylum seekers from the islands to the mainland** to continue their asylum application procedures, as well as the implementation of the anti-racist legislation in full.
- Calls on all those involved to exercise self-restraint, as well as the **minimum awareness of the effects of their actions** on the already damaged social peace and cohesion.

On the level of society, the tensions in the island of Greece vis a vis refugees touched unprecedented levels during 2020. It was difficult to persuade mayors to evacuate camps, hotels.

In Kilikis some local communities are being stigmatized for bringing the virus. Actually, pandemia was an opportunity for more tensions.

The Municipal faction "Free Citizens of Mytilene", on its Facebook page on December 3, 2020, stated that the islands are being Islamized. The country becomes the garbage dump of Europe. «The aim of the post is to provoke public concern and incite hatred towards Muslim refugees and immigrants whom he / she considers "rubbish" since, with its alleged "Islamization", the country will become a "garbage dump".⁹¹

4. Activities of radical groups. Islamists:

Not reported because as contacted with the representative of the Greek Muslim Community in Greece, Anna Stamou, the community has a highly sense of self-protection against people that may trouble the balance in Greece. Also, because of the cultural affinities, many Greek people lived in Middle East, Egypt etc, Muslims integrated very easily in the Greek society belonging to the upper social strata of society, being dispersed in all the country, in quite difference with the ghettoization process of other European countries. Also, the past of Greece, being not a colonial country helps a lot for Greece not being a place for the activities of radical islamist groups. Furthermore, the activities of Muslim community in Greece are highly monitored from the state. Even the Turkish minority, acknowledged community from the state, has not a severe critique towards Greek state. But, in Greece, there is widespread islamophobia, that can function as a factor for the cultivation of resentment and possibly violent attacks/

⁹⁰ <https://ddgreece.wordpress.com/%CE%BF-%CF%83%CF%85%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%BD%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%83/>

⁹¹ <https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com/category/%cf%81%ce%b1%cf%84%cf%83%ce%b9%cf%83%cf%84%ce%b9%ce%ba%cf%8c%cf%82-%ce%bb%cf%8c%ce%b3%ce%bf%cf%82-racist-speech/>

Islamophobia encompasses the belief that the very presence of Muslim communities constitutes a serious danger for the West. The underlying premise of every islamophobic narrative is the monolithic depiction of Islam and Muslims, a depiction that comes in many shapes depending on the political/ideological beliefs of the islamophobes. In response to this underlying premise, every counter-narrative is aiming at fighting monolithic perceptions of Islam.

In Greece, the history of encounters with Islam is long and tumultuous, extending back to the early Byzantine period and the creation of the Caliphate. The demise of the Christian Byzantine Empire was succeeded by the long Ottoman occupation of contemporary Greece. Under Ottoman rule, the reigning Sultan's subjects were defined in religious terms and it is from this religious cleavage, that modern Greek nationalism emerged in the late 18th century. The 1821 War of Independence led to the formation of the Modern Greek state (1830), grounded in strong ethno-religious definitions of nationhood. Orthodoxy remains to present one of the pillars of national identity in the country (Pew, 2016, 21), also surfacing in the Constitution. The formation of the Greek state at the expense of the collapsing Ottoman Empire was completed until 1947 with the 1923 treaty of Lausanne, delineating the borders with Turkey and establishing the presence of a significant number of Muslims in Thrace. Nevertheless, the various attempts of the Greek state to suppress aspects of the minority's presence² are hard to classify as Islamophobic, since state policy aimed to reinforce their Muslim – at the expense of their Turkish ethnic – identity. Therefore, given that political representation of the minority in Greece reflects nationalist rhetoric (Tsitselikis, 2012, 225)⁹², the discourse about the minority revolved, mainly, around nationalism and its consequences rather than ethno-religious identity. Other voices in the discourse insist that, in Athens ¹ For a concise overview of the history of this formative period, see Clogg, 1992. ² For a history of the treatment of minorities, see Tsitselikis, T., 2012. Workstream 2: Dominant Counter-Narratives to Islamophobia – Greece Dr Matilda Chatzipanagiotou & Iason Zarikos Working Paper 13 and in Thrace, it is the ethnic identity and religious beliefs of the minority that are targeted by narratives of anti-Muslim hatred, rather than just nationalistic rhetoric (Huseyinoglou, *ibid*). Huseyinoglou distinguishes, in light of the historical Muslim minority and the recent migration wave, between two groups: historical and neo-Muslims. Each group comprises sub-groups. Historical Muslims are present in Northern Greece, particularly Western Thrace, and on the islands of Rhodes and Kos in the Southeastern Aegean Sea. Huseyinoglou observes that the collective rights of Muslim populations,⁹³ particularly the Muslims of Western Thrace, are recognized only within the boundaries of Western Thrace. Nevertheless, the relations with Turkey do influence the treatment of Muslims as such. As it has been reported in the first paper, the lingering hostility towards Turkey proved to be a fitting vehicle for the articulation of Islamophobic narratives through their intertwining with the omnipresent Turkish threat especially after 2015 (Workstream 1 Report, 4). However, counter-narratives are not addressing the nexus between Islamophobia and the role of Turkey; this highlights the impossibility of a complete identification of counter-narratives with the narratives of hatred that trigger them. Such identification would be, in any case, undesired as ineffective.³ In other crucial aspects, however, the historical formation of narratives countering Islamophobia shares important similarities with the formation of Islamophobic ideas. It was after 2015 that contemporary narratives started to develop in order to oppose the emerging Islamophobia associated with the development of terrorism linked to ISIS/Deash on the one hand and the refugee crisis on the other, both catalysts to the formation of narratives and counter-narratives.⁹⁴

⁹² <https://brill.com/view/title/21133>

⁹³ http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/en/2006/05/Case_study_report_Thrace.pdf

⁹⁴ <https://cik.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2018/04/2018.04.09-MC-IZ-WS2-Greece-Final.pdf>

- ***The main ideological trends and groups.***
- ***Forms of radical Islam;***
- ***Models of the formation of radical groups from the Islamic environment.***
- ***Radical and extremist demands in their programs against the government of your country, Islamic and non-Islamic population.***
- ***Activities of legal and illegal Islamist organizations. Do they pose a threat to public stability?***
- ***How has the influence of radical Islamists on civil society, central and regional authorities in your country changed over the past 10 years?***

We can identify four main ideological trends, groups and forms of Islam among Muslim immigrants in Greece: a) the missionary movements and the Sufi groups, which perform grassroots awareness, work about Islam. They include the Tablighi Jamaat, Dawat-e-Islami and the Sufi neo-brotherhoods, which focus on the reform of the individual and abstain from open engagement in politics. b) Islamic associations that have politicized Islam and are associated with Islamic organizations abroad (Islamic Forum of Europe and the Minhaj ulQuran and Muslim Brotherhood), c) the majority of the moderate Sunni Muslims and d) Salafists and neo- Salafists.

There are two models of formations: a) associations based on nationality (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Egypt etc.) and b) associations or groups among informal worship places.

The most radical among the neo- Salafists criticize particularly their Sunni co-nationals on religious grounds, and they blame them for purportedly trying to dominate the Muslim community in Greece through the formation of relationships with the Greek state.⁹⁵

The last ten years there are one or two cases where Muslims involved in violent tensions and riots due to reasons linked with the perception of insult of Islam or as the outcome of the general mobilization in the Muslim world (2009 riots as the outcome for insult to the Koran, 2012 riots due to the movie the Innocence of Muslims, 2020 Muslims burn pictures of President Macron).⁹⁶

Approximately 25 years after the last recorded international terrorist attack on Greek soil, the country is currently experiencing an increased, mainly background activity of international Muslim terrorists (2015). So far, this activity has been limited to a logistical, recruitment and support basis. However, Greek authorities declare that they are ‘at a heightened state of vigilance’ at the moment, due to the fact that Greece is a Jihadist crossover to and from Syria. The large pool of young male irregular immigrants from Muslim countries, whose presence is not recorded in official data, in combination with their dire living conditions and the lack of formal and monitored places of worship create a fertile environment for Islamist radicalisation.⁹⁷

In Greece, today, co-ethnics from former Soviet Union and Albania along with immigrants coming mostly from Islamic countries (i.e. Pakistan) account for more than 9 percent of the total resident population (Greek Ministry of Immigration Policy Statistics, April 2019). A notable increase since 2015-2017 in asylum seeker and undocumented migrant arrivals from Middle East (particularly from Syria and Iraq), Asia and Africa via Turkey coincided

⁹⁵ Personal interview of mine with an expert on Islam organizations in Greece

⁹⁶ <https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/11/01/islamists-athens-macron/>

⁹⁷ <http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Report.Greece.FINALGR.pdf>

with the deterioration of the economic and political crisis and the historical rise of extreme right political forces. In fact, the rejection of the religiously ‘other’ lies at the core of the racist ideology articulated by the neo-nazi Golden Dawn party. Meanwhile, the increase of Islamophobia, the hate-speech rhetoric, and the rise in anti-Semitic and anti-immigrants attacks denote that religious intolerance in Greece is on the rise. It is impressive, however, that not a single Islamist terrorist attack has taken place in the country, and there are no recorded cases of organised Islamist radicalisation on Greek soil (Skleparis, 2017).⁹⁸

The Muslim population consists of two legal categories. Those who are Greek citizens and belong to a traditional religious minority who enjoy special legal status on the basis of a ‘historical settlement’ (“Old Islam”) (Tsitselikis, 2012: p.535). The second category includes foreigners who are not Greek citizens and have the legal status of aliens (allodapos) (“New Islam”). The two groups represent diametrically different cases which makes Greece perhaps the only European Union member state where Islam is configured in these two forms (Tsitselikis, 2012: p.19). With respect to “New Islam”, according to the Ministry of Immigration Policy statistics, immigrants from South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa represent 10,1 percent (56,027 out of 554,269) of the total immigrant population in Greece (April 2019). These are mainly staying in the country as immigrants and asylum seekers, while living in clustered ethnic communities’ mainly in urban centers or in reception facilities (State Department, 2019a: p. 3) Immigrants from South Asia, particularly from Pakistan and Bangladesh, constitute the largest Muslim community of “New Islam” in the country. They are predominantly employed in the low skill and low cost sectors of the economy: agriculture, construction, textiles, services and trade (Gemi, 2018). As a result of the economic crisis that hit the Greek economy, it is estimated that over 90,000 Pakistani and Bangladesh have left the country in search of employment in other European countries. According to the key informants there are one hundred mosques where they practise Islam, among which only three are officially registered while the rest operate unofficially under the label of cultural associations. Of those, 97 mosques belong to Sünni Islam and three to Shia denomination. While in the early years fewer prayer sites gathered much more ethnically diverse audience, later on there is a growing fragmentation of informal mosques along ethnic lines. This may reflect the existence of different Islamic traditions among immigrants of the same ethnicity. Faced with mounting difficulties in relation to religious practice, after years of controversies over the official established mosque operating in Athens, currently the mosque is ready to be soon inaugurated in the neighbourhood of Eleona, not very far from the central Athens. At the same time, however, there is no Islamic cemetery in Athens and Muslim immigrants are therefore forced to use the cemeteries in Western Thrace for their funerals or to cover the cost of transporting the bodies to the place of origin with the help of migrant communities and co-ethnic entrepreneurs. As for 20 hectares of land allocated for a Muslim cemetery in Schisto near Athens⁷ for the burial of Muslims, no progress had been made so far.⁹⁹

So far, Islamist-related radicalization activity has been limited to a logistical, recruitment and support basis. However, Greek authorities declare that they are ‘at a heightened state of vigilance’ at the moment, due to the fact that Greece is a Jihadist crossover to and from Syria. The large pool of young male irregular immigrants from Muslim countries, whose presence is not recorded in official data, in combination with their dire living conditions and the lack of formal and monitored places of worship create a fertile environment for Islamist radicalisation.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ <http://grease.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/11/Greece-Report.pdf>, pg. 4

⁹⁹ <http://grease.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/11/Greece-Report.pdf>, pg. 8

¹⁰⁰ http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Policy.report.ENG_.pdf

Outlawed groups

As Greece is a member of the European Union, the following terrorist entities are outlawed in Greek territory via the EU Terrorist list:

- Al-Qaeda
- Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh)
- Hezbollah (military wing only)
- Hamas (including the military wing Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades)
- Palestinian Islamic Jihad
- Kurdistan Workers' Party

Greece is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.¹⁰¹

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Greece is a member of the Financial Action Task Force, and its financial intelligence unit, the Hellenic Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorist Financing Commission (HAMLC), is a member of the Egmont Group. The Foreign Ministry's Sanctions Monitoring Unit ensured that Greece met its commitments to enforce international sanctions, including terrorism-related sanctions. The HAMLC inspected more than 2,000 suspicious transactions in 2017 but did not report evidence of terrorist financing in Greece. As described in the 2016 report, Greece freezes terrorist assets until completion of judicial proceedings and requires banks to report suspicious transactions of any kind, regardless of the type of entity (for-or not-for-profit). The Greek government directly monitors such entities if necessary. For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the *2018 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes*.¹⁰²

In 2017 Greece enriched its legal framework by incorporating the European Directive 2017/541 on the fight against terrorism. According to the law, crimes constitute the following: the facilitation of terrorist travels as well as theft, extortion and counterfeiting related to terrorist activity. There are also special provisions for international cooperation and access to, collection and transmission of information on terrorism, and special care is provided for victims of terrorism, as appropriate medical care is provided to them immediately after the terrorist attack and for as long as space is necessary.

The adjustment has to do, on the one hand, with the introduction of independent crimes, such as those of public provocation or incitement to commit terrorist acts and the recruitment and training of terrorists, and, on the other hand, in the provision of special investigative actions. In this way, the effective confrontation of the specific criminal phenomenon is achieved, without, however, being deprived of the fundamental rights of the persons against whom the investigative acts are carried out under the supervision of the Prosecution and Judicial Authorities.¹⁰³

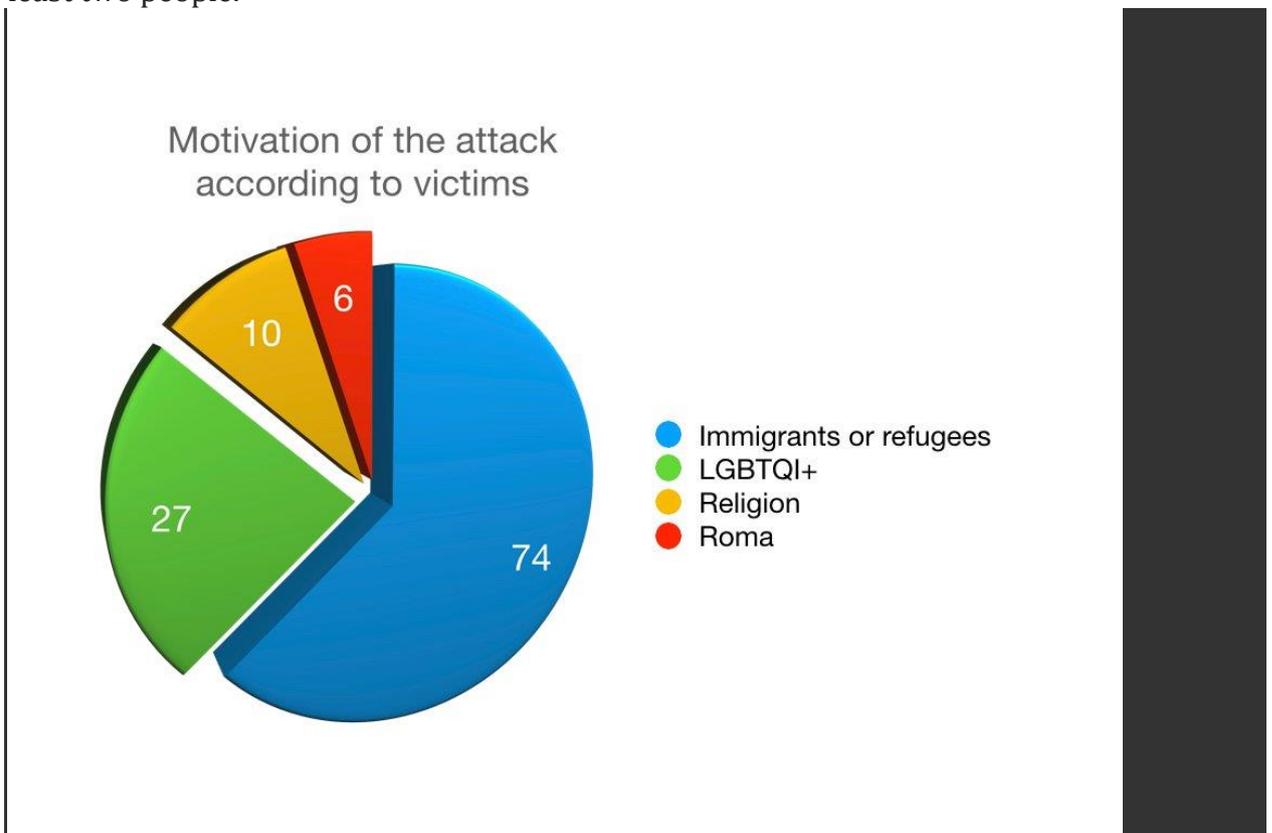
¹⁰¹ <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5bcf1fa48.html>

¹⁰² <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5bcf1fa48.html>

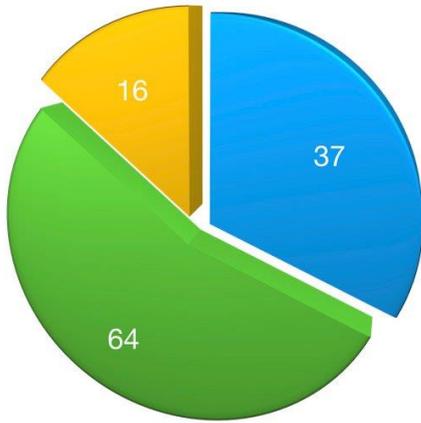
¹⁰³ <https://www.lawspot.gr/nomika-nea/ti-provlepoyin-oi-nees-diataxeis-gia-tin-katapolemisi-tis-tromokratias-ensomatosi-odigias>

6. Hate crimes (statistics and short descriptions), law enforcement, criminal cases, racist attacks, violence and terror over the period (data from government bodies and NGOs):

According to **Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN)**, that is an umbrella of 47 organizations of Civil Society reporting hate crimes, from January to December 2018, there were documented, through interviews with victims, **117 incidents** of racist violence, with more than 130 victims. In **74 incidents** the victims were **migrants or refugees** on grounds of ethnic origin, religion, colour, **associations of third country nationals, human rights defenders due to their connection with refugees and migrants**, as well as a memorial to the victims of shipwrecks. In **six (6) incidents**, Greek citizens were targeted due to their colour, foreign or ethnic origin. In **nine (9) incidents**, the targets were Jewish sacred or symbolic places and the Jewish community and in **one (1) incident** the target was a Greek citizen due to **educational activity against anti-Semitism or perceived religion**. In **27 incidents** the targets were **LGBTQI+ persons**, including **five (5) refugees, asylum-seekers and EU citizens**. In **59 incidents** more than one victim was targeted, whereas in **63 incidents** the assault was committed by a group of at least two people.

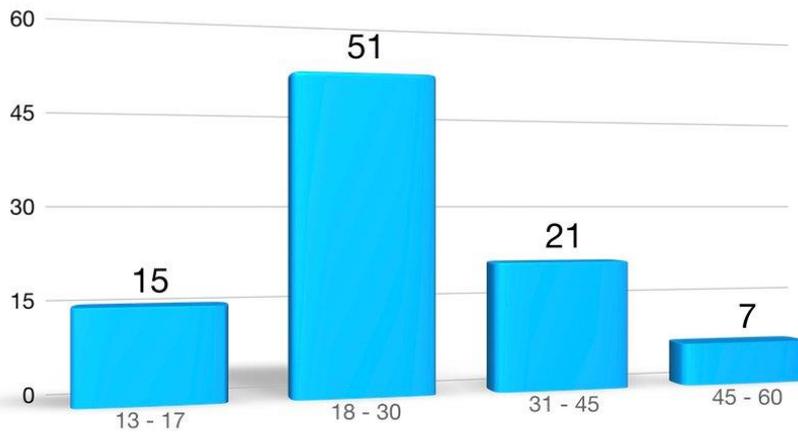


Reported incidents

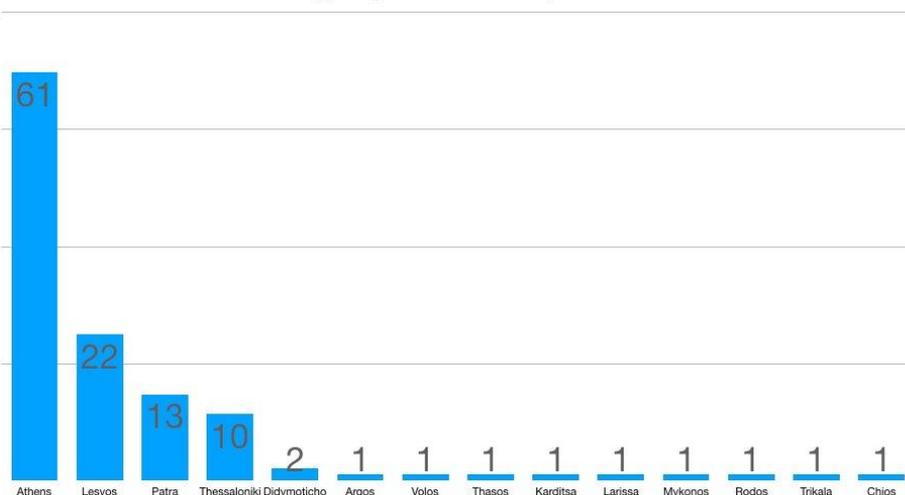


- Incidents reported to the police
- Incidents reported to RVRN member organisations
- Incidents that the victims stated they had not reported to the police but intended to do so

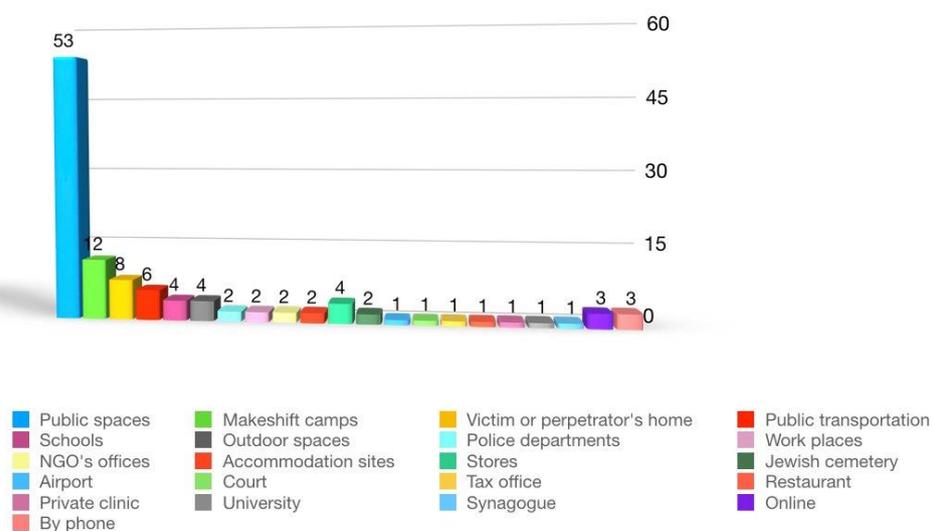
Age of victims



Geographical dispersion



Sites



The RVRN has documented that support for racist violence increased, as attacks were carried out by groups which proudly professed their extreme xenophobic ideologies. Aggressive actions by citizens in everyday aspects of urban life had also been recorded.¹⁰⁴

Between January and December 2019, there were recorded 100 incidents of racist violence, with more than 104 victims. In 51 incidents the targets were migrants, refugees or asylum-seekers on grounds of ethnic origin, religion and/or color, human rights defenders due to their connection

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/11379-racist-violence-reporting-network-annual-report-2018.html>

with refugees and migrants, as well as accommodation sites for unaccompanied children. In two incidents, the targets were Greek citizens on grounds of foreign or ethnic origin, while in three incidents, the targets were Jewish and Muslim sacred or symbolic sites. In 44 incidents, the targets were LGBTQI+ individuals and human rights defenders due to their association with LGBTQI+ groups (out of which one third-country national without legal documents/residence status). In 27 incidents the targets were more than one victim, whereas in 52 incidents the assault was committed by a group (of at least two persons). 70 incidents took place in Athens, mainly close to the city center.

35 incidents took place in public spaces (street, squares, parks, beaches, etc.), nine in the victim's or the perpetrator's home or in the apartment building in which victims and perpetrators live, as well as two in another type of accommodation (hotel, dormitory), five in public transportation, bus stops and stations, three in schools or universities, two in fields and outdoor spaces in villages, two in police stations, four in the victim's workplace, two in associations' and NGO's offices, four within accommodation sites, five in Reception and Identification Centers in the islands and Evros, four in shops, eight in public services (ministries, hospitals, courts, Citizen Service Centres(KEP), two in a bank, three in Jewish monuments and a Muslim cemetery, one in a court, two in a stadium and a gym, seven online and by telephone. From the incidents where the targets were individuals - not sacred sites or monuments - the victims of 62 incidents were men, eight of whom were transgender, while in 26 incidents they were women, 14 of whom were transgender. In five incidents, the victims identified themselves as queer, non-binary or asexual. In 16 incidents, minors 12-17 years old were targeted on grounds of foreign origin, religion, ethnic origin or sexual orientation, whereas in 38 incidents the victims were 18-30 years old. In 29 incidents, the victims were 31-45 years old, whereas in six incidents they were 46 -60 years old. In two incidents, the group of victims was of various ages, including minors and adults (15-20 years old). According to the testimony of the victims, in 75 incidents the perpetrators of the recorded attacks were men, in 13 incidents women and in seven incidents the attack came from mixed groups of men and women. In the rest of five incidents the victims did not see/spot the perpetrators (e.g. case of desecration of sacred sites). In six incidents the perpetrators were or were involving minors, in 26 incidents they were 18-30 years old. In 17 incidents the perpetrators were 31-45 years old, while in 15 recorded incidents the perpetrators were older (up to 80 years old). While in 29 incidents the age of the perpetrators could not be determined, in seven incidents, particularly those where racist violence is expressed within the family, the age range of the perpetrators varies.¹⁰⁵

-Vandalism in cemeteries, attacks on religious buildings;

Local Jewish leaders estimated the Jewish community in the country consisted of approximately 5,000 individuals. Anti-Semitic rhetoric remained a problem, particularly in the extremist press, social networking sites, and certain blogs. A Eurobarometer survey, conducted in December 2018, found that local citizens did not regard anti-Semitism as a major problem, despite a recent spate of attacks. Vandalism of Holocaust monuments and memorials continued in the city of Thessaloniki. On January 25, unknown perpetrators vandalized a monument marking the site of the former Jewish cemetery at Aristotle University campus in Thessaloniki. On January 28, Archbishop Ieronymos of the Greek Orthodox Church publicly denounced the attack, describing "the desecration and vandalism of synagogues, Jewish cemeteries and Holocaust memorials" as "hideous acts that brutally offend our history, culture, nation, and faith." On April 10, perpetrators vandalized two memorial metal plaques at the Thessaloniki port area dedicated to persons who perished during the Holocaust. Another incident

¹⁰⁵ <http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2019-english.pdf>

was being recorded in Trikala Holocaust Memorial as well as an attack and desecration of a Muslim cemetery in Alexandroupoli, a city near Turkey. The peculiarity of these incidents lies in the fact that the targets are not specific individuals of the Jewish or Muslim community, but through the desecrations a message is sent to the whole community. However, the imprint of the attacks is broader and goes beyond the Jewish or Muslim community, as it concerns any community with different features which, however, is part of a society. A case in point was the statement of Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, who said that Europe is facing a shocking reality, where anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim and other racist hate crimes are increasing at an alarming rate. In the case of desecration of the Muslim cemetery, the perpetrators had left flyers of the Golden Dawn, while they had spray-painted symbols of the organization, such as the «Target» and the ancient Greek meander. These incidents constitute one more evidence of the actions of organized extremist groups. In fact, the organizations, by assuming responsibility seek to strengthen their presence in the neo-Nazi field and to send a message to society about their actions, either to attract new members or to intimidate those who do not embrace their ideology.

The Central Board of Jewish Communities (KIS) continued to express concern about anti-Semitic comments by some journalists in the mainstream media and by some religious leaders, including Greek Orthodox Church clerics. On May 13, the KIS reiterated concern about political cartoons and images in the mainstream media where political controversies were mocked with the use of Jewish sacred symbols and comparisons to the Holocaust. The KIS issued the statement about a commentary on social media by journalist Kostas Vaxevanis, criticizing statements by the then main opposition leader. Vaxevanis, arguing that the former leader supported a seven-day work week, illustrated his commentary with a sketch of the entrance to the Auschwitz concentration camp where the phrase *Arbeit macht frei* (work sets you free) was paraphrased as “12 hours of labor liberates.”¹⁰⁶ The KIS explained that the use of that sign for journalistic commentaries was unacceptable because it trivialized a symbol of horror and of Nazi barbarism.

On April 18, a misdemeanor appeals court in Thessaloniki sentenced a 62-year-old medical doctor to a suspended 14-month jail term for putting up an anti-Semitic sign in 2014 at his municipal practice which read, “Jews Are Not Welcome Here,” in German.¹⁰⁷

===Assaults against LGBTQI+ individuals and actors

In 2019, RVRN recorded 44 incidents of attacks on LGBTQI+ individuals (25 on grounds of gender identity, 16 on grounds of sexual orientation and three incidents on grounds of sexual orientation/ gender identity). The recorded attacks against LGBTQI+ individuals include verbal attacks and physical assaults in patterns of all possible intensity.¹⁰⁸

In 16 out of the 44 incidents against LGBTQI+ individuals, the victims were targeted on grounds of sexual orientation. Victims: Eight incidents against men, five against women, one against a non-binary person and one against an individual who is self-identified as a queer. Lastly, one incident took place against defenders of the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals. Age of the victims: in three

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/greece/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/greece/>

¹⁰⁸ <http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2019-english.pdf>

incidents the victims were 14-18 years old, in seven incidents the victims were between 19 and 31 years old, in five incidents they were 31-56 years old. The attacks mainly include verbal threats/insults but also physical violence, while in eight incidents the victims said that they had been attacked again in the past. Perpetrators: In 12 incidents the perpetrators were men, out of which one was a minor, in one incident the perpetrator was a woman, while in three incidents the perpetrators were both men and women, plus one minor girl. Also, the perpetrators' ages varied, ranging from 16 to 60 years old. Based on the recorded incidents, RVRN pointed out that any confrontation or tension may end up as a racist crime, even if it does not begin as such. In an incident recorded in 2019, the quarrel had started over a parking space. The victim's employee car was parked in a parking space owned by his neighbor and ended up in a homophobic attack by the neighbor, a trend that had been seen in previous RVRN recordings as well. Among the reported attacks, special mention should be made of domestic violence incidents that usually occur when the child discloses its sexual preferences or gender identity to the parents. In those cases, the parents turn from protectors to perpetrators. Among the incidents recorded in 2019, there were also attacks that took place either in schools or universities, with the perpetrators being the victims' either classmates or teachers (for more information on attacks involving civil servants, see page 18). The latest findings increase RVRN concerns, given that families and schools are social structures within which any individual should enjoy acceptance and safety. Also, RVRN found that the attacks against individuals on grounds of sexual orientation occurred in various public spaces. There have been recorded attacks on social media as well as on the street, in restaurants or outside nightclubs, on the beach and in supermarkets. The victims, while engaging in their daily activities either alone or with their friends or partners, were initially attacked verbally, with homophobic vocabulary and phrases, which often end up being physical attacks. A case in point is of a same-sex couple, who were walking on a busy street in Athens and in their words were first verbally and then physically attacked by two law enforcement officials. After that, the couple called the police to report the incident. In 2019, online attacks against Colour Youth organization continued. For instance, in response to a post of a photo from the pride parade on the Colour Youth webpage, a minor individual posted photos of people trampling on and burning rainbow flags, as well as a photo of a seriously injured man, with the perpetrators around him smiling. The picture had the caption: Racist Violence Recording Network 22 "Our Orthodox brothers⁷ know what they are doing, only here we've let them get cocky." RVRN highlights that the attacks on human rights defenders show that perpetrators identify them with those who they defend. Although the defenders of LGBTQI+ people are not always part of that social group, the targeted organisations do consist of members of the LGBTQI+ community, which is why the assaults have a high impact.¹⁰⁹

Attacks due to gender identity In 2019, some 25 incidents of attacks on grounds of gender identity were recorded. Victims: 14 incidents against women 23-52 years and eight incidents against men 12-32 years, as well as two incidents against non-binary individuals and one case against an asexual individual. In 2019, 17 incidents of verbal violence, two incidents of physical violence, combined with insults or threats, two incidents of sexual abuse and sexual assault, and two incidents of rape (one case involving a minor) were recorded. Perpetrators: In 18 incidents, the perpetrators were men, mainly 13-80 years old. In five incidents they were women 12 to 55 years old, while in two incidents the perpetrators were both women and men. As pointed out in previous reports, victims of violence on grounds of gender identity, often suffer multiple assaults inside their homes, while they are also targeted by their neighbours, people from their workplace or

¹⁰⁹ <http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2019-english.pdf>

unknown individuals. In 2019, a trend of behaviours was recorded, which involve problematic and highly harassing behaviour against transgender individuals by family, classmates, employers and colleagues, civil servants, but also ordinary citizens, challenging the selfdetermination of the individual. A case in point is the testimony of a trans woman, who under the threat of her physical integrity by her own brother, was forced to burn her clothes because «they were not for men». RVRN would like to recall the still relevant finding from an earlier statement of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, that while LGBTQI+ individuals enjoy greater protection in many European countries than ever before, they are still struggling to enjoy fundamental freedoms and rights in environments where homophobia and transphobia are widespread⁸. In addition to harassing behaviours expressed by civil servants against trans individuals, which will be elaborated in the relevant sections (for more information on attacks involving civil servants, see page 18), RVRN wishes to focus on the verbal attacks against transgender people at the time of their transition. The recorded incidents show that transgender people suffer verbal abuse, almost daily, which escalates as their transition progresses⁹ and becomes more visible. As a victim of such attacks noted a very common form of such incidents against trans people, is the deliberate reference in the wrong gender (misgendering). “Referring intentionally and deliberately in the wrong gender, stigmatizes, abuses and is an appalling type of violence on grounds of gender identity, because it challenges the identity of trans people and jeopardizes protection of their personality, as gender identity is an integral part of the personality of trans individuals.”¹¹⁰

Incidents involving law enforcement officials and civil servants

RVRN analyses the cases involving law enforcement officials and civil servants in a different section, because of their added value. 1. Police violence RVRN has recorded incidents in which police violence is linked to racist violence, namely where there are specific qualitative characteristics (insults, threats e.tc.) showing racist motives during violent incidents, where the perpetrators were law enforcement officials. Specifically, in 2019, in 17 recorded incidents the perpetrators were law enforcement officials, when in 2018 the corresponding number was 22 incidents, which was particularly increased compared to the 10 incidents recorded in 2017. The victims of these attacks were mainly asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants, either with a residence permit or without legal documents (14 incidents), but also Greek citizens, who suffered violence due to ethnic origin (one incident), sexual orientation (the victims were a homosexual couple), as well as gender identity (the victim was a trans woman). As regards the qualitative characteristic of these attacks, they all involved disagreeable behaviour demonstrated by law enforcement officials during routine or non-routine police control operations. In most of these incidents, the victims reported that they suffered physical violence in public spaces, inside police departments in Athens and in reception or detention centres. According to the testimonies of unaccompanied minors, we conclude that there is pattern of stereotyped violence against minors 15-17 years old in the detention or reception centres, where they reside until their transfer to accommodation centres. The shortcomings in managing similar matters are evident in the words of the perpetrators. In one incident, police officers, while beating the minor for about 15 minutes, were making at the same time abusive and insulting comments to his parents, threatening to return him to their country of origin. In another incident, inside a reception and identification centre on an Aegean island and based on the victim’s testimony, police officers used to enter the container for three nights in a row, most of them were drunk, and beat them for no reason, making abusive

¹¹⁰ <http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2019-english.pdf>

and racist comments. They pulled them out of their beds and started punching and hitting them with batons, saying: “You are in my country [...] leave my country”¹¹¹

Incidents involving civil servants

In nine incidents the perpetrators were civil servants. By categorizing all incidents per reason for targeting, it becomes evident that all targeted groups face problems when dealing with the public sector. Specifically, three incidents against asylum-seekers were recorded, two incidents against recognized refugees and four incidents against Greek citizens on grounds of sexual orientation (one incident) and gender identity (three incidents). The incidents recorded by RVRN, show the lack of tolerance for diversity, the development of a culture of harassment for refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as for LGBTQI+ individuals. For asylum-seekers, most of the incidents took place within public services, to which the victim is referring to conclude administrative procedures, while the civil servant raised obstacles, in addition to the provisions of the relevant institutional framework, and sometimes also attacked the victim. A case in point is of two victims who were recognized refugees and addressed to the Tax Office of the area they live in, to declare their new residential address. “... The victim who speaks very good Greek, went with a friend [...] at the Tax Office of Nikaia to declare their new residential address [...] The employee [...] asked for their IDs and they showed them. As soon as the employee realized that they are foreigners, she started shouting that they were illegal and that they cannot stay in Athens. One of the victims replied that they stay in Athens legally and they have all the necessary documents. The employee then dropped the lease to the ground and another male employee asked his colleague “How long has he been living here (in Greece)?”. The employee saw that the Residence permit¹³ was issued in 2018 and said “you are lying, you cannot be only 2.5 years in Greece and speak Greek so well. I am sure you have been at least 10 years in Greece, and you were illegal.” Then the employee told him that they should go to the Asylum Service and change their address there.¹¹²

-inter-ethnic clashes;
No reported cases

-Cases of violence on racial, ethnic, religious grounds, attacks on human rights defenders and anti-fascists;

In 2019, RVRN recorded two incidents against Greek citizens on grounds of ethnic origin and three attacks on grounds of religion.¹¹³

1. Incidents against Greek citizens on grounds of ethnic origin. In 2019, RVRN recorded incidents against individuals who have Greek citizenship and are not targeted as migrants or refugees, but as «less» Greeks - on grounds of ethnic origin. Specifically, in the two incidents recorded in 2019, the victims said that they were attacked on grounds of ethnic origin. In the first case the perpetrators were law enforcement officials, while in the second case, the victim had been attacked again in the past.

There have been several alarming reports of vigilante violence against humanitarian workers, journalists, and migrants and asylum seekers on Lesbos since February 29. Thugs are

¹¹¹ <http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2019-english.pdf>

¹¹² <http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2019-english.pdf>

¹¹³ <http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2019-english.pdf>

violently preventing boats from landing in Lesbos, based on media reports and information that Human Rights Watch received from humanitarian workers on Lesbos.

Some local residents are blocking buses from transferring newcomers to the government's hotspot facility for asylum seekers and migrants, while local activists reported that men holding bats and chains gathered on the streets leading to the Moria refugee camp. On March 1, there was an arson attack on an empty migrant facility in the northern part of the island, according to humanitarian workers on Lesbos sharing information on social media. A fire destroyed a warehouse used by a nongovernmental group on the island of Chios on March 2.¹¹⁴

-Hate-motivated murders;

Not registered. Only some cases denounced by Helsinki Monitor concerning two Roma people of Albanian citizenship and a Roma woman of Turkish citizenship that died all of them in prison.

-Terrorist attacks based on radical nationalism and religious fanaticism.

Not reported

7. Conclusions for the period

The fairly new Greek government, which came into power last summer 2019, has taken an increasingly anti-migrant stance. It changed rules of management of the refugee issue in a more conservative, law and order approach. Greece has never worked with doing integration of migrants before and doesn't have a solid integration plan for recognized refugees: to help them get jobs and long-term housing and learn the Greek language. Apart from this lack of institutional memory and skills, the process of integration of the refugees and migrants is deteriorated because of the discourse of government regarding the issue.

Also, the process of integration requires the cooperation of Greek society. Greeks need to employ refugees, rent out apartments to them. But people are less willing to do that in this environment.

“Because when you demonize refugees and then you ask from the whole society to show solidarity, it sends mixed messages and in an increasingly toxic environment. And people react. It makes complete sense.”

Using all available evidence, we conclude that overall levels of racial violence are at significant levels in Greece, with the subcategory of police and border-guards is worryingly visible. The incidents recorded are mainly physical violence by police against Roma, refugees, and physical violence against immigrants, refugees by border-guards. There are also reports in another subcategory, of detention conditions. Damage to property principally seems to concern Jewish and Muslim cemeteries/monuments for the subcategory of religious buildings. Threats against the person seem to concern LGBT community, refugees and these attacks had an organized character mainly through citizen's initiatives that were supported from mayors, governors of conservative political milieu.

¹¹⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/04/greece/eu-respect-rights-ease-suffering-borders>