



PRESS RELEASE
RACIST VIOLENCE RECORDING NETWORK*

The Greek State must send a clear message against racist violence

Athens, 25 September 2013 – “Those who killed yesterday have been training on the bodies of immigrants for three years,” said Panagiotis Papanikolaou, superintendent at the hospital of Nikaia, after the murder of 34-year old Pavlos Fyssas.

It is exactly the same message that the **Racist Violence Recording Network** ceaselessly reiterates in its two years of operation. Since October 2011, the Racist Violence Recording Network, coordinated by the National Commission for Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and consisting of 33 NGOs and other civil society actors, has recorded **more than 300 incidents of racist violence** after interviewing the victims, which are refugees and migrants in their overwhelming majority. In addition, a significant increase in homophobic and transphobic attacks has been recorded.

The Racist Violence Recording Network has repeatedly raised the alarm not only on the **dramatic increase in racist attacks** but also on their characteristics: According to victims’ testimonies, the most common practice is an organized “patrol” of pedestrians or motorcyclists in black clothes who attack refugees and migrants as unprovoked squads on the street, at squares or at public transportation stops. In some cases of particularly brutal attacks, the victims have recognized among the perpetrators individuals associated with Golden Dawn. Official complaints to police authorities have been lodged in only few of these cases. **The victims report the inability or unwillingness of prosecuting authorities to conduct sufficient investigation and arrests.** The vast majority of victims who lack legal documents don’t file complaints to the authorities for fear of arrest and deportation.

The Racist Violence Recording Network underlines that **impunity triggers the escalation of racist attacks and perpetuates violence. The Network calls upon the authorities to take all necessary measures for the arrest and conviction of those involved in acts of violence motivated by hatred or racism.**

Specifically, the Network reminds and reiterates its proposals, and calls upon the State to adopt them:

(1) **Protection of victims and main witnesses of racist violence acts**, through the suspension of their arrest and deportation (if they lack legal residence documents); as well as granting of a temporary residence permit. This way, it will be possible to report and investigate the acts, irrespective of the victims’ legal status and without the danger of their arrest, while the prosecution of the perpetrators will be extended, facilitated and accelerated.

(2) **Investigation of the racial motive** by prosecuting authorities since the stage of preliminary inquiry, regardless of whether it will be considered an aggravating circumstance in the sentencing stage.

The Racist Violence Recording Network calls upon the State, through the adoption of these proposals, to finally send a clear message to the “squads” operating with impunity, namely that racist violence cannot be tolerated.

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***About the Racist Violence Recording Network**

Monitoring the escalation of racist attacks against refugees and migrants in the last few years, as well as the lack of a formal and reliable mechanism of recording racist incidents, the **UN Refugee Agency** and the **National Commission for Human Rights** took the initiative and established in the summer of 2011 the **Racist Violence Recording Network** numbering today the following 33 non-governmental organizations and other bodies which provide legal, medical, social or other support services and come into contact with racist violence victims:

Aitima

Antigoni – Information and Documentation Centre on Racism

Arsis

Doctors of the World

Amnesty International

Network for the Social Support of Refugees and Migrants

Hellenic Action for Human Rights - Pleiades

Hellenic League for Human Rights

Hellenic Red Cross

Greek Helsinki Monitor

Greek Council for Refugees

Greek Forum of Migrants

Greek Forum of Refugees

Human Rights Commission of the Bar Association of Rhodes

“Positive Voice”

“Medin”

“Babel” Day Centre

Integration Centre for Working Migrants - Ecumenical Refugee Program

Movement for the Support of Refugee and Migrant Rights (Patras)

World Without Wars and Without Violence

LATHRA-Solidarity Committee for Chios refugees

METAdrasi

Group of Lawyers for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants

Group of Lawyers for the Support of Refugee and Migrant Rights (Thessaloniki)

Lesbian & Gay Community of Greece

Association of Afghans United in Greece

Forum of Migrants in Crete

Act-up

ASANTE

Colour Youth

i-RED Institute for Rights, Equality and Diversity

PRAKSIS

YsMedia

And the Greek Ombudsman and the Council for Migrant Integration of the Municipality of Athens as an observer.