

## Activity report

December 2024



# GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR



A PROJECT OF THE COMMUNICATION AND POLITICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY (ETEPE), FOUNDED IN 1993,


## MONITORS, PUBLISHES, LOBBIES AND LITIGATES

ON HUMAN AND MINORITY RIGHTS AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ISSUES. IT ALSO MONITORS MEDIA FOR STEREOTYPES AND HATE SPEECH.

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**SINCE 2015**, in the framework of the project **Racist Crimes Watch**, cases of racist crimes (racist profiling, racist speech, racist desecrations & vandalisms, racist discrimination and racist violence) have been recorded on a **SPECIAL PUBLIC WEBSITE**

**[RACISTCRIMESWATCH.WORDPRESS.COM](https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com)**



and submitted to the Prosecutors for Racist Crimes who almost always launched criminal investigations (more than **900** in 2015-2024). The project was launched after UN and Council of Europe bodies expressed concern in 2015-2016 that cases of racism were underreported and under-prosecuted.

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**SINCE 2019**, GHM has campaigned to combat racism and Nazism online, as a member of the **INTERNATIONAL NETWORK AGAINST CYBER HATE (INACH)**. In 2023-2024 it has taken part in the related international project **'SAFENET - MONITORING AND REPORTING FOR SAFER ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS'**. Its reports led to the suspension of hundreds of racist and/or Nazi accounts and the removal of more than one thousand social media posts.

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**GHM HAS WELCOMED, AND BENEFITED FROM CONTRIBUTIONS BY, ONLINE VOLUNTEERS.**

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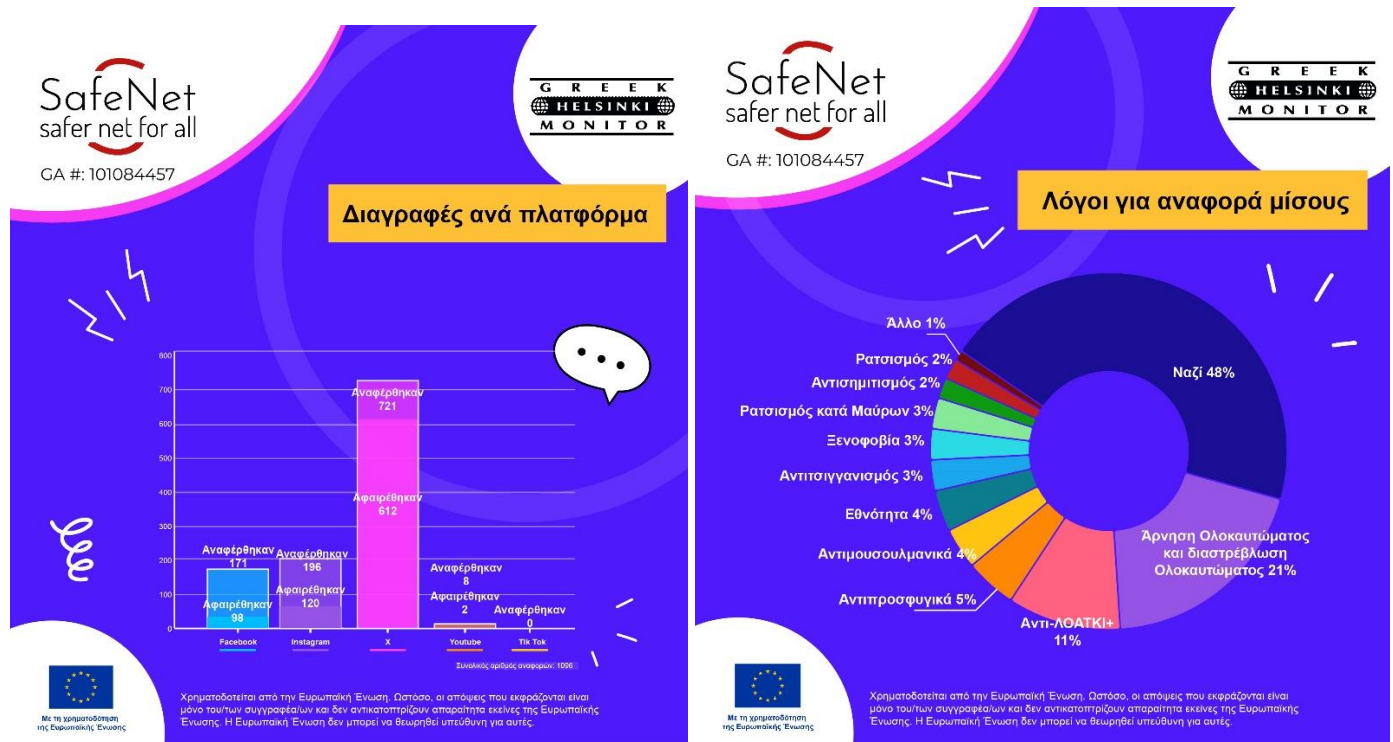
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## 1. Combatting Digital Hate & Extremism

Greek Helsinki Monitor's main activity in 2023-2024 was its participation in the EU-funded 24-month project **"SafeNet: Monitoring and Reporting for Safer Online Environments"**. SafeNet's main goal has been the continuous monitoring of the IT platforms' adherence to the **EU Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online** with submission of reports of hate speech to the IT's, the large majority of which has led the platforms to remove the posts or suspend the accounts reported. In the diagrams below, there are statistical summaries of the removals/suspensions for the 1,096 reports between January 2023 and June 2024 (75%+ removal rate) and of the hate speech reasons invoked (two thirds were advocacy of Nazism and Holocaust denial). Since June 2024, some 350 more reports have been made with similar results.



## 2. Litigating cases of hate speech and hate crimes

A 25 October 2023 [response to a parliamentary question](#) that opposition party **SYRIZA** kindly agreed to submit on 4 October 2023 upon **GHM**'s request is reproduced below in a screenshot with **GHM** translation of the texts in Greek. In the nine-year period 10/9/2014 - 30/9/2023, following the introduction of Law 4285/2014, which amended Law 927/1979, there were 1,280 criminal cases for racist hatred and racist violence. Some 1,000 of them were submitted mainly to the **Athens Prosecutor** by **Greek Helsinki Monitor**, and some 100 of them were transferred from the **Athens Prosecutor** to other **Prosecutors** because of local competence. This means that some 85% of these cases were submitted by **GHM** and very few were in fact launched ex officio by **Prosecutors** or **Police**. Most importantly, there were only 93 convictions and 84 acquittals while some 165 trials were pending. It should be added that several convictions at first instance were overturned on appeal; this has occurred in more trials since August 2021. In addition, in 2024, there were four judgments leading to convictions for racist crimes following **GHM** complaint reports that are listed below plus a judgment awarding compensation to a Rom for ill-treatment in a case started by **GHM**; while, also in 2024, the **Athens Prosecutor for Racist Crimes** opened 10 case files and launched preliminary investigations following submissions by **GHM** (5 for antiziganism, 4 for homophobia and 1 for antisemitism).

ΥΠΟΘΕΣΕΙΣ ΡΑΤΣΙΣΤΙΚΗΣ ΒΙΑΣ ΑΠΟ 10-9-2014 ΕΩΣ 30-9-2023									
CASES OF RACIST VIOLENCE FROM 10-9-2014 TO 30-9-2023									
						ΑΠΟΦΑΣΕΙΣ DECISIONS			
	Σύνολο εισερχομένων μηνύσεων Total incoming complaints	Ρητορική μίσους Hate speech	Ρατσιστική βία Racist violence	Αρχειοθετήθηκαν Filed to the archives	Προκαταρκτική εξέταση (επεξεργασία) Preliminary examination (in process)	Καταδικαστικές Convictions	Αθωωτικές Acquittals	Άλλες * Other *	Προς εκδίκαση Trials pending
ΕΙΣΑΓΓΕΛΙΕΣ ΕΦΕΤΩΝ Prosecutors	17	4	13	0	0	4	3	4	6
ΕΙΣΑΓΓΕΛΙΕΣ ΠΡΩΤΟΔΙΚΩΝ First Instance Prosecutors	1263	543	720	650	121	89	81	163	159

\*παύει υφ' όρων, ανάκληση της έγκλησης, διαβιβάζει λόγω αρμοδιότητας κτλ. \*conditional quashing, recall of complaint, transfer to other jurisdiction because of local competence, etc.

On 11 March 2024, the **Athens First Instance Administrative Court** published a [judgment](#) finding “*excessive police violence and inadequate investigation of his criminal complaint*” [submitted by **GHM**] against a Rom that “*violated the national legislation and the substantive and procedural aspects of Article 3 ECHR causing damage to his personality and moral damage*” awarding him 5,000 euros.

On 7 August 2024, the **Supreme Court** rejected the application for cassation of a [conviction](#) (both at first instance and on appeal) of a newspaper for incitement to racial hatred against Pakistani to a suspended 6-month prison sentence and 5,000 euros fine with a front page article on 28 March 2017. The case was initiated by a **GHM** complaint report.

On 10 October 2024, an **Athens Single-Member Misdemeanors’ Court** [convicted](#) a bus driver to a suspended 8-month prison sentence for unlawful violence with racist motives against a migrant on 6 May 2021. The case was initiated by a **GHM** complaint report.

On 20 November 2024, a **Thessaloniki Single-Member Misdemeanors’ Court** [convicted](#) each of 17 persons to 39-month prison sentences and 5,000 euros fines (sentences suspended until the appeals trial) for unlawful violence, jointly, systematically and repeatedly, with racist motives, as well as public incitement to violence and hatred, repeatedly, against refugees while no mitigating circumstances were recognized, on 22 October 2019 in **Vrasna, Thessaloniki**. The case was initiated by two **GHM** complaint reports.

On 25 November 2024, a **Thessaloniki Three-Member Misdemeanors’ Court** [convicted](#) a football fan to a suspended 7-month prison sentence for unlawful violence with racist motives against a migrant on 18 April 2020. The case was initiated by a **GHM** complaint report; on 11 October 2022, a **Thessaloniki Single-Member Misdemeanors’ Court** had acquitted the defendant, but an appeal was filed following a request by **GHM** to the **Supreme Court Prosecutor** on the same day. This is the largest sentence ever imposed for racist crimes in Greece.

### 3. Communication to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on the execution of ECtHR judgments

[Communication](#) from **Greek Helsinki Monitor** on 14 October 2024 concerning the cases of *Bekir-Ousta and Others* and *House of Macedonian Civilization and Others v. Greece* (Applications No. 35151/05, 1295/10) (*Bekir-Ousta and Others group*)



#### 4. Submissions to UN Treaty Bodies reviewing Greece and Cyprus in 2024

Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), Minority Rights Group - Greece (MRG-G), Humanist Union of Greece (HUG), and Coordinated Organizations and Communities for Roma Human Rights in Greece (SOKADRE): “[Parallel Report](#) on Greece’s compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” dated 2 January 2024

Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM): “[Parallel Report](#) on Cyprus’ compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” dated 15 January 2024

Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), Minority Rights Group - Greece (MRG-G), Humanist Union of Greece (HUG), and Coordinated Organizations and Communities for Roma Human Rights in Greece (SOKADRE): “[Parallel Report](#) on Greece’s compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” dated 16 September 2024

Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM): Submission to the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (SPT) for its upcoming visit to Greece (6-17 October 2024) dated 3 October 2024 [confidential]

Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), Minority Rights Group - Greece (MRG-G), Humanist Union of Greece (HUG), and Coordinated Organizations and Communities for Roma Human Rights in Greece (SOKADRE): “[Parallel Report](#) on Greece’s compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination” dated 31 October 2024

Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM): “[Supplementary submission](#) on Greece to the UN Human Rights Committee and to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination” dated 1 November 2024

#### 5. Third-party interventions in ECtHR cases

Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM): “Third-party intervention in the cases of United Macedonian Organisation Ilinden and Others against Bulgaria & 9 other applications” dated 27 June 2024

Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM): “Third-party intervention in the case of Muhammad v. Greece” [death of an asylum seeker before crossing the Evros river Greek-Turkish border] dated 18 November 2024

#### 6. Applications to the ECtHR adjudicated or registered after preliminary admissibility decisions

[Application no. 44758/20](#) “Athanasios PANAYOTOPOULOS and Others against Greece” lodged by GHM on 30 September 2020 and communicated to Greece on 18 March 2021 concerning ill-treatment of three Roma – judgment pending

[Application no. 40911/21](#) “Communication and Political Research Society against Greece” lodged by GHM on 2 August 2021 and communicated to Greece on 15 December 2023 concerning inadequate compensation by domestic courts for excessive length of the proceedings – judgment pending

In addition, the ECtHR has preliminarily declared admissible and registered 15 other applications (of which 6 in 2024) submitted by GHM, of which one jointly with a lawyer of the **Istanbul Bar Association** and another jointly with the **Greek Council for Refugees**, all of which are awaiting communication to Greece. Four

concern inadequate compensation by domestic courts for excessive length of the proceedings, three concern pushbacks of asylum seekers (one fatal for the victim), and eight various violations of **GHM** members' rights.

## 7. Persecution of GHM members

In the [European Parliament resolution of 7 February 2024 on the rule of law and media freedom in Greece](#) it is mentioned inter alia “*The European Parliament, ... Q. whereas Panayote Dimitras, a human rights activist and founder and head of the Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), is being prosecuted for illegal trafficking even though it appears that he was acting lawfully to provide humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers; whereas in December 2022, he was handed down a fine and prohibited from being involved with the GHM; whereas the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights voiced concerns about the case; whereas the Anti-Money Laundering Authority ordered the freezing of all of Dimitras's assets in May 2023; whereas Dimitras stated on 31 May 2023 that he had only received EU funding designated for combating hate speech and that the funds were only used for that purpose; whereas the recent acquittal of 16 aid workers and volunteers demonstrates that criminal charges against those providing humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers have no legal basis; ... 18. Is concerned by the attacks against civil society and, in particular, smear campaigns and judicial harassment by Greek authorities targeting human rights activists; is alarmed by the recent trials against humanitarian workers and people who provide humanitarian assistance to migrants and refugees; calls on the Greek authorities to drop all charges immediately and ensure that humanitarian workers and volunteers can provide assistance safely and freely;*” The **Government's** response signed by the **Minister of Justice** and tabled in **Parliament** by the **Prime Minister** included the false claim that **Panayote Dimitras** was arrested in **Kos**; on 25 April 2024 he filed a [complaint](#) against both for breach of duty, aggravated defamation, as well as violation of Article 18 **ECHR**. The **Supreme Court's** response included the false claim that **Panayote Dimitras** had telephone conversations with the traffickers while the asylum seekers were still in **Turkey** before they started their journey to **Greece**: on 9 April 2024 he submitted the rebuttal [Comments on “Minutes and Decision of the Administrative Plenary of the Supreme Court 2/2024” and Request for Action](#) in which also all abusive and unlawful actions against him were documented asking the **Supreme Court** leadership who had signed the response to examine all these alleged violations of the guarantees of fair trial so that the provisions of the rule of law can be applied and to establish the violations of the guarantees of fair trial so that his criminal prosecution be terminated and the freezing of his bank account be lifted, as well as impose criminal and disciplinary sanctions on those who had violated the guarantees of a fair trial, and indeed repeatedly, with the aim, not of course to deliver justice, but to smear him and obstruct his work as a human rights defender. The **Supreme Court** snubbed the submission. the ban to continue his work was lifted. However, the ban to travel abroad was maintained despite repeated formal requests to have it lifted, inter alia so that **Panayote Dimitras** can attend in the fall of 2024 the **UN Human Rights Committee** and **UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** reviews on **Greece**. The abusive freezing of **Panayote Dimitras's** account and the criminal investigation for alleged misuse of 178.666,80 euros donated to **GHM** in 2010-2015 by private donors, which though were used for the NGOs expenses is detailed in the comprehensive **Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders** [statement](#) “**Greece: Continued judicial harassment of migrants' rights defender Panayote Dimitras**” dated 14 August 2024. In the latest development, **Panayote Dimitras** and his wife and fellow **GHM** advocate **Nafsika Papanikolatou** were summoned on 31 May 2024, by an **Athens Magistrate** carrying out a preliminary criminal investigation into alleged breach of trust and money laundering, following the opening of a criminal case by the **Athens First Instance Prosecutor** following the aforementioned report of the **Anti-Money Laundering Authority**. They replied to the summons and their file is in the hands of the **Athens First Instance Prosecutor** since then.

Moreover, an **Athens Three-Member Misdemeanors' Court** trial of **Panayote Dimitras** for “*false accusation*” and “*aggravated defamation*” in his complaint against a **Mayor** who had made racist anti-refugee comments led to an acquittal on 17 April 2024 (see the aforementioned **Observatory's** [statement](#)):

however, a **Prosecutor** appealed against the acquittal and **Panayote Dimitras** is scheduled to be tried again by an **Athens Three-Member Appeals' Court** on 19 February 2025. That **Mayor's** related lawsuit seeking 25,000 euros for moral damages is pending before the courts. On the contrary, on 20 October 2023, an **Athens Multi-Member First Instance Court** with **Judgment 3577/2023** ruled that a **GHM** complaint against the **leader of a Greek Marine Le Pen-affiliated party** who had called asylum seekers entering Greece "*illegal plunderers*" was libelous and awarded him 3,000 euros for moral damage (he had asked for 120,000 euros). **Panayote Dimitras'** appeal before the **Athens Three-Member Appeal Court** is scheduled to be heard on 18 September 2025. The **GHM** criminal complaint reports against the **Mayor** and the **far-right politician** for their racist statements had been previously filed to the archives.

During the **UN Human Rights Committee** review of **Greece** [on 22 October 2024](#), a **Committee** member asked: "*The state party unfortunately did not provide explicit information yet on attacks against human rights defenders or on related investigations. The Committee continues to receive information that human rights defenders, especially those working with migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and those reporting on push backs are regularly subjected to smear campaigns, harassment, threats and criminal prosecution. A widely reported case is that of Mr. Panayote Dimitras, a human rights defender from the Greek Helsinki monitor who has faced legal harassment and criminal charges despite his actions being lawful and aimed at providing humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers. According to information we have, he continues to face restrictive measures such as a travel ban which has prevented him from coming to Geneva to follow this dialogue in person. He also faces reporting requirements and the freezing of his bank accounts. Could the state party please explain to the Committee why it considers these measures to be necessary and proportionate? How does the state party protect in law and in practice human rights defenders and ensure that they can carry out their work safely and without undue interference, obstruction or judicial harassment? And which measures has the state party taken to ensure that perpetrators of attacks do not enjoy impunity?*" **Greece's** reply: "*just a comment, please, about Mr. Dimitras' case that it is in judicial procedure so we cannot comment something.*" The reply was factually false since, as mentioned above, the government did comment in its reply to the **European Parliament**, with the aforementioned false claim.

During the **UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** review of **Greece** [on 4 December 2024](#), a **Committee** member asked: "*And I want you to just comment for me on at least one specific case of a human rights defender that I certainly met many others like me who were special procedures mandate holders when we visited Greece. And that is somebody who is very highly held in high regard in the human rights, in the global human rights community, Panayote Dimitris who is with the Greek Helsinki monitor. And I understand that he is under suspicion of his work as a lawyer to with people who have migrated who are in the cycle of migration and he has worked with them as an attorney, as a human rights defender and he is being sort of harassed. He has had his assets frozen. And he is sort of being held for a long time in limbo on charges of trafficking or whatever. And I just want to hear because even last month, this was brought up before the Human Rights Committee. Excuse me, if I'm going over the territory that's been trended already in our discussions but this is a very specific case. But there are others. And it was cited by the Human Rights Committee a month or so ago. And so I'm wondering if you could comment on these specific cases of human rights defenders who are now being charged with the very thing that they have been working against in their work as human rights defenders.*" **Greece's** reply: "*In Greece, the justice system is completely independent. That is the reply to the question, namely that in Greece, human rights defenders are neither better protected nor less protected than any other Greek citizen or any other citizen. So the question is in front of the Greek courts and we have as an executive branch, we have absolutely no implication in whoever goes before the court. I think the Ministry of Justice should come in now... I would like to echo what you have just said that if a case is pending, we cannot comment until we have a final decision of court decision. So I echo what you have said.*"