



PROTESTS ARE NOT BATTLEFIELDS

PATTERNS OF UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE BY POLICE AND IMPUNITY
IN GREECE

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



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Cover photo: Young female protester holding a placard during a demonstration for the Tempi rail tragedy in Syntagma Square in Athens (March 2025). The placard has the slogan 'I Have No Oxygen', a phrase spoken by one of the Tempi rail tragedy victims.

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INTRODUCTION

People in Greece have a long tradition of engaging in protests as a means to express concerns over issues such as austerity measures and measures affecting workers' rights, health, and education and cases of unlawful use of force by police. In the past three years, the country has witnessed large-scale protests in Athens, Thessaloniki and other cities and as well as protests abroad, demanding justice and accountability for the 2023 Tempi rail crash tragedy, which claimed 57 lives, many of them young students.¹ The phrase "I have No Oxygen" spoken by one of the victims during the emergency call became a rallying cry during the protests. Protests have also taken place in several cities and ports in solidarity with Palestinians and against the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

Despite this tradition and culture of engaging in protest as a means to express dissent, concern and campaign for change, as well as Greece being party to the key international treaties requiring protection for the right to peaceful assembly, Amnesty International has had persistent and serious concerns about violations of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly in Greece both in law and in practice. Amnesty International has documented some of these violations, including specifically around unnecessary or excessive use of force in the policing of demonstrations, problematic legislation on assemblies and long-standing impunity in previous reports – one of them regionally focused – published in 2021 and 2024.² However, concerns expressed in those reports on Greece have only grown in the face of persistent efforts by the Greek authorities to further restrict the right to freedom of peaceful assembly as evidenced by a contentious legislative provision that came into effect in October 2025 introducing a blanket ban on protests and the peaceful occupation or alterations in parts of Syntagma square outside the Greek Parliament and ongoing reports of unnecessary or excessive use of force in the context of the policing of demonstrations.³

This report presents Amnesty International's research into the current situation of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly in Greece and the organization's assessment of the compliance by Greece with its international, regional and domestic obligations.

The first section of this report documents how the Greek domestic legislation governing protests is not compliant with international human rights law and obligations which Greece has under the treaties to which it is party. The second section documents how the Greek police subject protesters to apprehensions for the purpose of identity checks without reasonable suspicion, resulting in what can amount to arbitrary deprivation of liberty. This section also outlines failures to uphold procedural safeguards during stop-and-

¹ The Tempi rail tragedy was the deadliest rail accident in Greek history. It occurred on 28 February 2023, when a passenger train collided head-on with a freight train in the Tempi valley in central Greece. The collision resulted in the deaths of 57 people – many of them young students – and left 81 people seriously injured, while many others sustained lighter injuries. In February 2025, the Hellenic Aviation and Railway Safety Investigation Agency found that the tragedy was a combined result of human error, poor infrastructure and systemic failures in railway safety management (See: [EODASAAM Accident Investigation Tempi-1.pdf](#)). In January and February 2025, mass demonstrations took place demanding justice and accountability for the victims, survivors and their families. In March 2026, a landmark trial relating to the Tempi tragedy began in Larissa, central Greece. A total of 36 individuals – including three station masters, executives and officials from organizations across the Greek railway sector, as well as officials from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation – face a series of criminal charges in connection with the deadly collision. Thirty-three of them are accused among others with the felony offence of dangerous interference with railway transport with possible intent. See: <https://greekreporter.com/2026/03/23/tempi-trial-begins-larissa-greece-amid-fierce-protests/>; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2wq13758no>.

² Greece: Freedom of Assembly at risk and unlawful use of force in the era of Covid-19, 14 July 2021 (AI Index Number: EUR 25/4399/2021), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur25/4399/2021/en/>; also Europe: Under Protected and Over Restricted: The state of the right to protest in 21 European countries, 8 July 2024 (AI Index Number: EUR 01/8199/2024), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur01/8199/2024/en/>.

³ Law 5240/2025, Establishment and organization of the legal entity under public law named Civil Aviation Authority and other provisions, Article 39.; The State of the World's Human Rights: Amnesty International's Annual Report 2025/2026, Entry on Greece, pp.185, April 2026 (AI Index: POL10/0320/2026), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/0320/2026/en/>.

search operations and/or deprivation of liberty, including: unnecessary and/or degrading body searches; failure to guarantee the right to inform a person of one's choice; denial of access to a lawyer; unlawful use of force during apprehension and/or detention; denial of medical assistance; failure to provide sustenance; and substandard detention conditions.

The third section presents detailed findings on a series of incidents involving unnecessary or excessive use of force during peaceful demonstrations in Athens, Thessaloniki, and other cities in 2024 and 2025. In many of these demonstrations, the participants were overwhelmingly peaceful and only a minority of them engaged in acts of violence. The section examines the dangerous deployment of stun grenades and the resulting serious physical injuries and severe trauma, as well as the obstacles victims face in obtaining justice. The section further analyses the unlawful, dangerous, and punitive use of batons, the misuse of chemical irritants and water cannon against protesters, specific concerns regarding police motorbike units, cases of unlawful force during arrest and allegations that some protesters have been subjected to treatment amounting to torture or other ill-treatment while in detention, as well as delays in police authorities providing access to medical assistance.

The fourth section documents the criminalization of protesters simply for exercising their right to peaceful assembly. This includes cases involving (1) the arrest of two Amnesty International activists and (2) criminalization of protesters for alleged participation in banned demonstrations and for civil disobedience actions.

The fifth section highlights persistent impunity for police abuses against protesters. It presents findings by the National Mechanism for the Investigation of Arbitrary Incidents by Law Enforcement Officials (EMIDIPA) and research by experts and NGOs that highlight failings in disciplinary investigations and the very low number of prosecutions and convictions in cases involving unnecessary or excessive use of force. The section also identifies structural factors contributing to impunity, including the failure of public order police to wear identification badges and highlights the need for a police complaints mechanism that has more resources and enhanced powers.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations to the Greek authorities aimed at ensuring the protection and facilitation of the right to peaceful assembly and aligning policing of assemblies with national and international human rights standards.

METHODOLOGY

Between March 2024 and May 2026, Amnesty International interviewed 78 individuals including 17 members of the press who described experiencing and/or witnessing human rights violations in the policing of demonstrations including unnecessary or excessive use of force, identity checks and unlawful use of force during arrest/and or detention. Amnesty International also interviewed four individuals for cases of unnecessary use of force in other contexts. Two of them have also provided testimony of human rights violations in the policing of demonstrations.

The testimonies and/or other material reviewed concern protests that took place in 2024 and 2025 in Athens, Thessaloniki, Chania, Volos and Rhodes. The protests documented include protests for the 2023 Tempi rail tragedy in Athens and Thessaloniki, protests in solidarity with Palestinians in Athens, Volos, Chania and Rhodes, protests for the anniversary of the 1973 Polytechnic Uprising of 17 November 1973, protests for the anniversary of the killing of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos by a police officer in Athens on 6 December 2008 and protests concerning reforms on education. Findings also draw on the conclusions of Amnesty International's Greek section protest observation team who documented two protests in Athens and Thessaloniki on 8 March 2025 and a protest in Athens, on 17 November 2025.

For the section focused on criminalization of protests, Amnesty International documented cases for the period of 2022-2025 and interviewed four protesters. For concerns around violations of the obligation to ensure accountability, Amnesty International has interviewed ten individuals and the family member of a protester who was a victim of violations and has since passed away. The cases documented concern: two cases from 2011; one case from 2012; one case from 2020; one case from 2021; three cases from 2022; and two cases from 2023.

Some individuals were interviewed in relation to more than one of the cases documented because either they reported being victims of unlawful use of force more than once or experienced two separate violations. Other individuals, protestors, journalists and lawyers were found to have experienced human rights violations and also witnessed others having their rights violated by the police. Amnesty International researchers also reviewed videos, pictures, medical certificates, judicial rulings and other pertinent official documents either provided by victims, witnesses or obtained separately. Interviews were conducted either remotely or in person.

In compliance with informed consent given by interviewees and as is the norm in Amnesty International's investigations, we provide the date of when the interview took place but have protected the identity of some of the people with whom we have spoken by using a pseudonym or other means to anonymize the individual, in accordance with their wishes. Where actual names have been used, consent was obtained.

Amnesty International has also interviewed 19 lawyers representing victims of arbitrary transfers to police stations for the purpose of identity checks and/or unlawful use of force and protesters who have been criminalized. Some of the lawyers interviewed had also reported experiencing and/or witnessing human rights violations in the policing of demonstrations.

Amnesty International acknowledges that racialized people face specific risks when exercising their right to peacefully protest and documented some of these specific concerns for the purposes of the research for the regional report published in 2024. In interviews conducted in 2024 with some racialized people and NGOs working with refugees and migrants they highlighted the specific vulnerability of refugees and migrants in their experiences with the police in situations such as identity checks and when participating in protests particularly when they are already in detention. We take this opportunity to acknowledge this as a concern which merits further research beyond the scope of this piece as well as dedicated attention by the authorities to prevent any discriminatory practices against racialized people.

In addition, Amnesty International's Evidence Lab, analysed 76 videos filmed between 2020 and 2025 during protests in Athens, Thessaloniki, Volos, Chania and Rhodes. The videos were identified through searches of social media platforms and relevant local, national, and international media reports containing allegations of the use of less lethal force by police against protesters and members of the press and other human rights violations such as transfers to police stations ahead, during and after demonstrations without reasonable suspicion of criminal activity. Some videos were provided by the victims or their families or members of the press. The analysis involved verifying the footage and confirming its authenticity by establishing the precise location and date on which each video was filmed. In 24 analysed incidents, videos were also corroborated by testimonies and where available other evidence. In addition, the Evidence Lab examined the material to identify the types of weapons used to police the assemblies and how those weapons were deployed.

Amnesty International met with Mr Michalis Chrisochoidis, the Greek Minister of Citizen Protection, Lieutenant General Dimitris Mallios, the Chief of the Hellenic Police and other high-ranking officials on 23 July 2024 and 10 September 2025 and had a meeting with Dr Andreas Pottakis, the Greek Ombudsman and staff of his office on 9 September 2025 to discuss the organization's ongoing concerns on human rights violations in the policing of demonstrations and get their views on steps taken by the Greek authorities to address such concerns and on the work of the Greek Ombudsman in his capacity as a National Mechanism for the Investigation of Arbitrary Incidents by Law Enforcement Officials. A summary of the report, key human rights concerns, cases and recommendations were shared ahead of the publication of the report with the Minister of Citizen Protection, the Chief of the Hellenic Police (hereafter the Greek Police), the Deputy Minister of Citizen Protection and the General Secretary for Public Order on 12 May 2026; and the Minister of Justice and the Greek Ombudsman on 13 May 2026. On 28 May 2026, the International Police Cooperation Division of the Greek Police Headquarters sent a response to Amnesty International's findings, and this can be read in full at Annex 1. At the time of the publication of the report, a response was pending from the other authorities.

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Amnesty International would like to express its deep gratitude to all people who have kindly given their time and courageously and generously shared their experiences, including members of families of victims and survivors of the Tempi rail crash tragedy.

Information was kindly shared by the NGO Hellenic League for Human Rights, Anastasia Tsoukala, researcher at CECLS (Paris) and former Associate Professor of Criminology (University Paris-Saclay), and Panayote Dimitras, spokesperson of the Greek Helsinki Monitor. Footage was kindly shared by members of the press. An interview was also conducted with Giorgos Pouloupoulos from the site Copwatch that documents cases of unlawful use of force by police.

We are grateful all who generously shared their insights and expertise, including the representatives of the Greek authorities and the Greek Ombudsman and his staff who shared their time and knowledge with the organization.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greece has a long history of protest, from anti-austerity, trade unions and student demonstrations, to protests against unlawful use of force by police, mass mobilizations demanding justice for the 2023 Tempirail tragedy, and protests in solidarity with Palestinians. Despite this tradition and repeated assurances by the Greek authorities that the right to freedom of assembly is guaranteed, Amnesty International's research reveals persistent and serious breaches both in law and in practice. The findings show a troubling pattern of punitive protest policing and abusive use of force, seemingly aimed at punishing participation and deterring people from exercising their right to peaceful assembly, rather than respecting and facilitating the same.

This research was conducted during a two-year period and is based on interviews with over a hundred individuals including protesters, lawyers and members of the press; discussions with academic experts and NGO representatives; and meetings with the Greek Minister of Citizen Protection, the Chief of the Hellenic Police and other high ranking officials as well as the Greek Ombudsman and staff from his office. It is also based on the verification and analysis of video evidence filmed between 2020 and 2025, conclusions of Amnesty International's Greek section protest observation team and the review of pertinent documents and judicial rulings.

Greek legislation adopted in 2020 that regulates public outdoor assemblies continues to be a cause of concern as it is not in line with the country's commitments under international human rights law. The legislation introduces a mandatory notification regime and links failure to notify with the possibility of dispersal of an assembly; grounds of prohibition of assemblies that are insufficient and can unduly restrict the right to freedom of peaceful assembly as they give a wide margin of appreciation to the authorities to pronounce and enforce a prohibition; grounds of dispersal that can lead to unnecessary and disproportionate interferences with the right to freedom of peaceful assembly; and undue limitations for counter demonstrations. In relation to the regulation of spontaneous assemblies, the respective provision leaves a lot of room for the exercise of discretion by authorities, which discretion may be abused. Concerns also exist in relation to an article in the legislation providing that assembly organizers are responsible for compensating those who have suffered harm to their life, bodily integrity or property from participants. The organization's concerns have deepened in October 2025 when the Greek Parliament introduced a blanket ban on protests in parts of Syntagma Square, a symbolic site associated with the expression of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

Concerns also remain that the 2021 National Plan for the Management of Public Outdoor Assemblies (the 2021 Guidelines on the policing of demonstrations) allow the use of force in a wide range of situations during demonstrations and remain silent regarding the threshold of risk for which the different means, methods and weapons will be used. It also appears that while detailed regulations on de-escalation seem to exist, they are not public, which makes their compliance with international human rights standards difficult to assess, therefore hampering effective police accountability for the handling of assemblies. The same applies to operational regulations on the use of less lethal weapons such as stun grenades which are confidential.

The report also documents how identity checks are being used as a tool to suppress peaceful protest, and potentially also as a means to punish participation and deter protestors from participating in peaceful assemblies. The information gathered, including the way police themselves refer to transfers to police stations for the purpose of identity checks as "preventive" and official police statistics, indicates that identity check transfers are being used by police as a means to prevent often large numbers of protestors from exercising their right to peaceful assembly.

Amnesty International has documented cases where protesters and other individuals have been transferred to police stations ahead, during and after demonstrations without reasonable suspicion of criminal activity

and despite possessing identity documents or providing their credentials as lawyers or journalists when requested. In some cases, merely carrying tear gas masks/other protective masks was treated as a basis for suspicion, absent any additional circumstances indicative of criminal activity. The cases documented also include a journalist and a lawyer conducting their legitimate and essential work. For several of the individuals interviewed who were on their way to take part in a protest, the action by the police to arbitrarily hold them at the police station and for a prolonged period (or indeed, at all) meant they were prevented from taking part in the demonstration.

The cases documented also highlight how the Greek authorities have failed to uphold their obligations and ensure the necessary safeguards during stop and search operations and during deprivation of liberty of protesters and other individuals apprehended for the purposes of identity checks. Those interviewed described unnecessary and, in some instances, degrading body searches; failure to guarantee the right to notify someone in the outside world; unlawful use of force ahead of their transfer to the police station /or during deprivation of liberty; denial of medical assistance; failure to provide sustenance; and substandard detention conditions. Particular concerns arise about the lawfulness and human rights compatibility of body searches carried out in the context of identity checks. Lawyers also reported that protesters undergoing identity checks were denied access to legal assistance while deprived of their liberty.

The report analyses a series of incidents during 15 demonstrations that took place between February 2024 and December 2025. The testimonies provided and videos verified and analysed by Amnesty International indicate that law enforcement repeatedly used unnecessary or excessive force against individuals who were peaceful or posed no apparent threat. In many of the documented demonstrations, clashes of varying scale occurred between police and groups of individuals. However, the overwhelming majority of participants were peaceful. Seventeen interviewees including members of the press reported that they sustained injuries ranging from hearing loss, burn, head, jaw, neck and limb injuries or deterioration of existing health issues and some also suffered breathing difficulties as a result of chemical irritants. Some also reported experiencing ongoing mental health harms as a result of and in addition to their physical injuries.

The report documents dangerous deployment of stun grenades by police and the cases presented demonstrate that stun grenades can cause considerable injury to people. Many interviewees consistently described police dangerously deploying stun grenades against peaceful protesters, in a direct trajectory toward individuals, above their heads, or at their feet and/or in dense crowds. Verified footage also shows among others their deployment without warning against people who were peaceful; stun grenades exploding in the midst of a dense, peaceful crowd; and a riot police officer throwing a stun grenade in the direction of a photojournalist. In cases where protesters and members of the press have sustained life-changing or serious injuries from stun grenades, perpetrators have gone unpunished or victims are still waiting for the outcome of the investigations. Meanwhile, the reasoning of some judicial rulings risks legitimizing unlawful force, and could encourage deployment of stun grenades during assemblies, in reckless disregard of the duty of the police to minimize harm. Amnesty International concludes that stun grenades must never be used in the policing of assemblies due to their overly harmful and disorientating effects. Greek police also used batons, other beatings and kicks in ways which were unlawful, dangerous and punitive. Testimonies and evidence verified and analysed by Amnesty International demonstrate that Greek police used unlawful force as they struck peaceful protesters with batons; engaged in so-called “baton charges”, with police running after people to hit whoever was within reach; and used batons against persons already brought under control. Several protesters and a member of the press interviewed by Amnesty International sustained head and other injuries as a result of police using batons against them. Testimonies provided to Amnesty International and videos verified also demonstrate cases where police have misused chemical irritants; some testimonies and videos also demonstrate cases where police have unlawfully used water cannon to disperse protesters that do not appear to pose any threat. Specific concerns were raised a number of times by interviewees, regarding the dangerous and unlawful use of force specifically by police motorbike units. On the basis of interviews with protesters, lawyers and reviewing pertinent footage of the events in question, the report also presents cases of unlawful use of force by police against protesters during arrest even though they clearly did not resist or pose any threat. Amnesty International has also received allegations that some protesters have been subjected to treatment amounting to torture or other ill-treatment while in detention.

The report presents cases of peaceful protesters being criminalized simply for exercising their right to peaceful assembly. It highlights the case of two Amnesty International activists arrested following the dispersal of a demonstration in Athens in November 2022 and their detailed testimony that they experienced unnecessary and abusive force during their arrest. Protesters have also been criminalized for alleged participation in banned protests or for civil disobedience actions including a symbolic action against the blanket ban on protests in parts of Syntagma square. In one of the documented cases relating to an anti-war demonstration in February 2024 in Athens, protesters were unanimously acquitted from all charges.

Concerns about a long-standing culture of impunity for human rights violations by law enforcement officials in the policing of demonstrations persist. Regarding violations in the context of protests, Amnesty International knows of only a few cases where perpetrators of unlawful use of force in the policing of demonstrations have been held accountable in court at first or second instance or referred to trial. In few cases where injured protesters and members of the press were able to get reparations, they did not necessarily obtain justice. Findings by EMIDIPA, and research by experts and NGOs highlight flaws in disciplinary investigations and indicate very low number of police officers held accountable in disciplinary and criminal proceedings in cases concerning allegations of human rights violations by law enforcement officials. Concerns also persist as failures continue in a very important element of accountability. Amnesty International has observed cases where public order police officers were not displaying their identification numbers or cases where the numbers were written with a black marker and were smudged and/or very small and thus not clearly visible in the way that they are required to be. The report also presents the need to strengthen EMIDIPA as it has insufficient staff and resources to conduct more of its own investigations and “has no power to compel action and can only make recommendations to the police”.

Amnesty International makes a series of recommendations to the Greek authorities so that they ensure the protection and facilitation of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly including introducing reforms in the legislation regulating public outdoor assemblies to fully protect, respect and facilitate the right to peaceful assembly, in accordance with international human rights law and standards; complying with the obligation to prevent, eradicate and punish acts of torture and ill-treatment; and repealing the provision introducing blanket bans on protests in parts of Syntagma square.

In relation to policing practices in demonstrations, the organization calls on the Greek authorities to ensure among others that the police have a facilitative approach towards assemblies including counterdemonstrations, through supportive measures and a higher degree of tolerance; end the practice of depriving peaceful protesters of their liberty for identity checks without reasonable suspicion of criminal behaviour; prohibit the firing of tear gas grenades at individuals; and prohibit the use of stun grenades in the policing of public assemblies.

The Greek authorities must also refrain from criminalizing acts that break a domestic law which contravenes international human rights law and standards; and ensure that liability for any alleged offences is based on individual actions and supported by compelling evidence, not mere presence at a protest.

As accountability is key to stopping the cycle of impunity of human rights violations in the policing of demonstrations, the report makes a range of pertinent recommendations to the Greek authorities including ensuring that all public order police display easily visible individual identification, with penalties for failing to do so; amending relevant legislation to ensure that EMIDIPA is empowered among other things with powers to make binding recommendations for prosecution, disciplinary sanctions, reparations and policy reviews; and ensuring that EMIDIPA is provided with sufficient funding and resources.

Finally, Amnesty International urges the Greek authorities to take concrete and immediate steps toward complying with and implementing the recommendations by the UN Human Rights Committee in its 2024 Concluding observations on Greece regarding the right to peaceful assembly and implement the binding judgments of the European Court of Human Rights concerning ill-treatment by law enforcement agents and the lack of effective investigations in this regard.

1. GREECE OBLIGED TO RESPECT, PROTECT AND FULFIL THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

The exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly is enshrined in Greece's Constitution under Article 11 and Greece is also party to the key international treaties which outline the international and regional human rights standards governing the right of peaceful assembly.⁴ These laws oblige Greece to facilitate peaceful assemblies and, among other things, remove obstacles to participants and organizers, fully justify any restrictions in line with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality, and exercise tolerance and restraint including in relation to disruptions. The UN Human Rights Committee has emphasized, as a core principle, the "presumption in favour of (peaceful) assemblies", which should be reflected in domestic legislation, policy and practice.⁵

Greece has both negative obligations (to avoid unwarranted interferences with the exercise of the right of peaceful assembly), and positive obligations (to both protect those exercising the right and to facilitate the exercise of the right in ways that make it possible for participants to safely assemble and achieve their objectives). Any limitations placed on the right of peaceful assembly must in turn adhere to the principles of legality, proportionality and necessity. Greece must respect, guarantee in law and ensure that all individuals can exercise their right to freedom of peaceful assembly without discrimination based on ethnicity, sex, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, political or other opinion, socio-economic status, nationality or any other status. The right of peaceful assembly covers any form of assembly provided that they are "peaceful". An assembly must still be considered "peaceful" even if there is sporadic violence or unlawful behaviour by some individuals. When a minority of participants are engaging in violence, as opposed to widespread and serious violence by participants, the authorities should ensure that those who remain peaceful can continue to exercise their rights without the entire assembly being restricted or dispersed.

⁴ Greek Constitution as revised on 25 November 2019 (Government Official Gazette A 211/24 December 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/3Y0Tcnx>); Article 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)93 and Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Greece ratified the ICCPR on 5 May 2007; and the ECHR on 3 September 1953.

⁵ General comment No. 37 (2020) on the right of peaceful assembly (article 21), 17 September 2020, CCPR/C/GC/37 (CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37), para. 17, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-37-article-21-right-peaceful>.

NATIONAL LEGISLATION ON PROTESTS CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

Despite the country's commitments to guarantee and facilitate the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, there are persistent and serious violations of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly in Greece. These include legislation on protests that is not compliant with international human rights law as detailed below. Continuing efforts to further restrict the right to freedom of peaceful assembly are evidenced by a contentious legislative provision that came into effect in October 2025 introducing a blanket ban on protests and the peaceful occupation or alterations in parts of Syntagma square outside the Greek Parliament.⁶

LEGISLATION ON PROTESTS NOT BEING COMPLIANT WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

MANDATORY NOTIFICATION REGIME

LEGISLATION IN GREECE	INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL
<p>Legislation introduces a mandatory notification regime.</p> <p>The law speaks about an obligation to notify, and the process entails an evaluation of the notification by the police.⁷</p> <p>The legislation also links failure to notify with the possibility of dispersal of an assembly. Several decisions of the Greek police prohibiting protests cite failure to notify as one of the reasons for the prohibition despite the fact that legislation on public outdoor assemblies does not refer explicitly to this as a ground of prohibition.⁸</p>	<p>UN Human Rights Committee General Comment 37 (HRC General Comment 37)</p> <p>"A failure to notify the authorities of an upcoming assembly, where required, does not render the act of participation in the assembly unlawful, and must not in itself be used as a basis for dispersing the assembly or arresting the participants or organizers, or for imposing undue sanctions, such as charging the participants or organizers with criminal offences. [...] Any notification regime should exclude assemblies for which the impact of a gathering on others can reasonably be expected to be minimal, for example because of its nature, location or limited size or duration".⁹</p>	<p>Amnesty calls upon the Greek authorities to reduce the types of assembly that are subject to <i>mandatory</i> notification requirements under domestic law and to expand the range of assemblies that may proceed without mandatory notification, whether or not notification is then volunteered.</p> <p>If at all, Greece should apply the notification regime only to assemblies that are likely to have a relevant impact on others.</p> <p>In any case, the possibility to disperse an assembly merely for failure to notify should be dropped in law and in practice. Additionally, failure to notify must not be used as grounds to prohibit assemblies in practice.</p>

SPONTANEOUS ASSEMBLIES

LEGISLATION IN GREECE	INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL
<p>While spontaneous assemblies are protected explicitly in the legislation, the protection is</p>	<p>Venice Commission Guidelines (2020)</p>	<p>The UN HRC notes that, while Law No. 4703/2020 provides for an exception to the requirement</p>

⁶ Law 5240/2025, Establishment and organization of the legal entity under public law named Civil Aviation Authority and other provisions, Article 39, available at: <https://www.taxheaven.gr/law/5240/2025>.

⁷ Law 4703/2020 "Public Outdoor Assemblies and other provisions", Article 3 and Article 9. para. 1 d, available at: <https://www.lawspot.gr/nomothesia/nomos-4703-2020/>; also Presidential Decree 73/2020 "Regulation of Public Outdoor Assemblies" (PD 73/2020), Article 3 and Article 10, available at: <https://www.elinyae.gr/ethniki-nomothesia/pd-732020-fek-167a-792020>.

⁸ Research in the Greek police website publishing decisions on restrictions and prohibitions of assemblies found 20 cases concerning police decisions prohibiting demonstrations where failure to follow notification procedures has been cited in such decisions as one of the grounds leading to the prohibition of a demonstration or as a factor taken into account when prohibiting a demonstration. See: <https://www.astynomia.gr/apofaseis-gia-synathroiseis-sygekentroiseis-poreies/>.

⁹ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 71, 72.

LEGISLATION IN GREECE	INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL
<p>restricted by provisions that the spontaneous assembly must not present “any discernible risk of disruption of public safety or serious disruption of socio-economic life”. What amounts to “discernible risk” or such “serious disruption” is not outlined in law and is subject to the discretion of the authorities.¹⁰</p> <p>The authorities also have the discretion to proceed with the dissolution of a spontaneous assembly if participants do not adhere to the restrictions imposed on them, such as assembling in a specific part of the road or in cases where they cannot conform with the obligation to appoint an organizer.¹¹</p>	<p>States should ensure that spontaneous and non-notified assemblies are “facilitated and protected in the same way as assemblies that are planned in advance”.¹²</p> <p>Any restriction must have a basis in domestic legislation and this must be easily accessible to the public, be formulated clearly and be foreseeable in its application.</p> <p>Legal provisions on possible restrictions or prohibitions must not be overly vague or broad, which would open them to abuse or misinterpretation. The public must know what to expect and be able to comply with the requirements of the law. To be sufficiently foreseeable in its application, law and/or relevant regulations must clearly set out criteria and considerations that should govern the decision about whether to restrict an assembly (and the form of restriction to be imposed) and under which (exceptional) circumstances an assembly may be prohibited to achieve a legitimate objective.¹³</p>	<p>to provide notification for spontaneous assemblies, the conditions for the exception are vague, which raises concerns about the suppression of such assemblies.¹⁴</p> <p>The legislation leaves a lot of room for the exercise of discretion by authorities, which discretion may be abused.</p>

BROAD POWERS TO DISPERSE

LEGISLATION IN GREECE	INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL
<p>Legislation allows for the dispersal of an assembly for failure to notify; deviation from a route; prohibition of an assembly; and if the assembly becomes violent.¹⁵</p>	<p>HRC General Comment 37</p> <p>“Only in exceptional cases may an assembly be dispersed. Dispersal may be resorted to if the assembly as such is no longer peaceful, or if there is clear evidence of an imminent threat of serious violence that cannot be reasonably addressed</p>	<p>The grounds of dispersal as provided in legislation can lead to unnecessary and disproportionate interferences with the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.</p> <p>The legislation fails to take into account the need to protect the right of peaceful protesters to continue with the assembly and that police can in many</p>

¹⁰ Law 4703/2020, Article 3, para. 3.

¹¹ Law 4703/2020, Article 3, para. 3 and PD 73/2020, Article 3, para. 5.

¹² Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly (Warsaw and Strasbourg: Venice Commission and ODIHR, 2020, 3rd ed.) (Venice Commission Guidelines 2020), para. 79.

¹³ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 39; OSCE-ODIHR, HR Handbook on Policing Assemblies, p. 19; Amnesty International Guidelines on the Right to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, 2024, para. 3.1, p. 20, <https://policehumanrightsresources.org/guidelines-on-the-right-to-freedom-of-peaceful-assembly>.

¹⁴ UN HRC, Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Greece, CCPR/C/GRC/CO/3, 28 November 2024, para. 34, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4067637?v=pdf>.

¹⁵ Law 4703/2020, Article 9.

LEGISLATION IN GREECE	INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL
	by more proportionate measures, such as targeted arrests.” ¹⁶	instances take measures such as targeted arrests of those individuals engaged in violence instead of proceeding with the dispersal of the whole assembly. It also allows dispersal of peaceful assemblies merely for failure to comply with procedural requirements.

BROAD GROUNDS OF PROHIBITION

LEGISLATION IN GREECE	INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL
<p>According to the law on assemblies, police or the coastguard can prohibit an upcoming public outdoor assembly amongst other reasons if: there is imminent danger of serious risk to public safety, due to the particularly likely commission of serious criminal offences, in particular offences against life, physical integrity, property, and the constitutional order; or a serious disruption of socio-economic life in a specific area is threatened (including common peace).¹⁷</p>	<p>HRC General Comment 37</p> <p>“[...] peaceful assemblies can sometimes be used to pursue contentious ideas or goals. Their scale or nature can cause disruption, for example of vehicular or pedestrian movement or economic activity. These consequences, whether intended or unintended, do not call into question the protection such assemblies enjoy.”</p> <p>“The prohibition of a specific assembly can be considered only as a measure of last resort. Where the imposition of restrictions on an assembly is deemed necessary, the authorities should first seek to apply the least intrusive measures.” “[...] assemblies are a legitimate use of public and other spaces, and since they may entail by their very nature a certain level of disruption to ordinary life, such disruptions must be accommodated, unless they impose a disproportionate burden, in which case the authorities must be able to provide detailed justification for any restrictions.”¹⁸</p>	<p>National legislation introduces grounds of prohibition of assemblies that are insufficient and can unduly restrict the right to freedom of assembly as they give a wide margin of appreciation to the authorities to pronounce and enforce a prohibition.</p> <p>Terms such as “imminent danger”, “particularly likely” and “constitutional order” are vague and are open to an abusive interpretation. Further, risks of violence should only be taken into consideration when related to the assembly as a whole and not individual acts as the formulation in the legislation seems to imply. Furthermore, disruption of socio-economic activity is not enough to justify the prohibition of an assembly.¹⁹ And the provided examples representing such a disruption are overly broad and vague, open to abuse and insufficiently justified prohibition of assemblies.</p> <p>The relevant provision does not establish a prohibition of an assembly as a last resort, does not oblige authorities to consider</p>

¹⁶ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 85.

¹⁷ Law 4703/2020, Article 7, para. 1 and PD 73/2020, Article 8.

¹⁸ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 7, 37, 47.

¹⁹ Large public assemblies can affect the free flow of traffic and the accessibility and functioning of businesses, public services and institutions, etc. However, this does not justify banning assemblies in certain locations: The use of public space for the purpose of holding an assembly is as legitimate a use of public space as its use for traffic, businesses or other purposes. Hence, a certain level of disruption must be accepted and tolerated and authorities should rather consider mitigating measures such as diverting traffic, or keeping sidewalks open to enable access to buildings. See: Amnesty International guidelines on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, 2024, section 3.3., p. 28.

LEGISLATION IN GREECE	INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL
		<i>all</i> available alternative risk mitigating means first and provides only for a selected alternative (changing the location of an assembly) and even this without imposing a strong obligation on authorities to consider this option. ²⁰

UNDUE LIMITATIONS FOR COUNTERDEMONSTRATIONS

LEGISLATION IN GREECE	INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL
National legislation gives the authorities the discretion to prohibit counterdemonstrations, if another already scheduled, notified and not prohibited demonstration with an opposing aim takes place in the same or nearby area and at the same time. ²¹	<p>HRC General Comment 37</p> <p>“States must in principle take a content-neutral approach to counterdemonstrations, which must be allowed to take place, as far as possible, within sight and sound of the assemblies against which they are directed”.²²</p> <p>Counterdemonstrations to express opposition to other assemblies must be facilitated in the same manner as the assembly they are opposing and be allowed to take place within sight and sound of the assemblies at which they are directed.²³ However, the authorities must ensure that participants of assemblies and counter-demonstrations do not impede each other’s right to freedom of peaceful assembly.²⁴</p>	The Greek authorities should respect and facilitate counterdemonstrations, seek to accommodate them as much as possible within sight and sound of the main assembly and repeal the provision that allows for their prohibition for the mere reason of being a counterdemonstration.

LIABILITY OF ORGANIZERS

LEGISLATION IN GREECE	INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL
The law provides that the assembly organizer is responsible for compensating those who have suffered harm to their life, bodily integrity or property from participants. ²⁵	<p>HRC General Comment 37</p> <p>Assembly organizers may be held accountable “only for their own unlawful conduct”, including the incitement of</p>	The UN HRC expressed concerns “about other provisions in that law that impose financial liability on assembly organizers for any harm suffered or for damages to property inflicted by

²⁰ Amnesty International Guidelines on the Right to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, 2024, section 1.3.

²¹ Law 4703/2020, Article 7, para. 1c and PD 73/2020, Article 8, para. 1c.

²² CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 26.

²³ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 26; HRC, Joint report SR, A/HRC/31/66, para. 24; OSCE-ODIHR, HR Handbook on Policing Assemblies, p. 16.

²⁴ Amnesty International Guidelines on the Right to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, 2024, para. 6.2, p. 44.

²⁵ Law 4703/2020, Article 13, para. 2.

LEGISLATION IN GREECE	INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL
	others. ²⁶ “Isolated acts of violence by some participants should not be attributed to others, to the organizers or to the assembly as such”. ²⁷	assembly participants.” ²⁸ This provision should be repealed.

Despite, Amnesty International’s concerns regarding the incompatibility of the legislation on public outdoor assemblies with international human rights law that have also been raised in high-level meetings with the Minister of Citizen Protection and the Chief of the Hellenic Police, the Greek authorities responded that the legislation is in line with the country’s human rights commitments.²⁹

RECENT FURTHER RESTRICTIONS IN LAW OF THE RIGHT TO PEACEFUL PROTEST

LEGISLATION IN GREECE	INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS	ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL
<p>A legislative provision enacted on 24 October 2025 introduced a blanket ban on protests in parts of Syntagma square in Athens. It purports to protect the integrity of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a national monument.³⁰</p> <p>Those found in breach of the provision will be punished with up to one year imprisonment or with a monetary fine unless the offence attracts a heavier penalty by another provision of criminal legislation.</p>	<p>HRC General Comment 37</p> <p>“Any restrictions on participation in peaceful assemblies should in principle be based on a differentiated or individualized assessment of the conduct of the individual and the assembly concerned. Blanket restrictions on participation in peaceful assemblies are presumptively disproportionate.”³¹</p>	<p>Disproportionate restrictions such as blanket bans violate the rights of organizers and participants in assemblies and are likely to dissuade others from exercising their rights in the future (the so-called ‘chilling effect’).</p> <p>Any restrictions related to the time, place or manner of holding an assembly must be determined on a case-by-case basis and be necessary and proportionate, and must not be applied in a discriminatory manner.³²</p>

²⁶ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 65.

²⁷ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para.17.

²⁸ CCPR/C/GRC/CO/3, para. 34.

²⁹ Meetings on 23 July 2024 and 10 September 2025.

³⁰ Law 5240/2025, Establishment and organization of the legal entity under public law named Civil Aviation Authority and other provisions, Article 39.

³¹ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 42.

³² CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 53.

2. POLICE SUBJECT PROTESTORS TO PREVENTIVE APPREHENSIONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF IDENTITY CHECKS, ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY, AND FAIL TO UPHOLD SAFEGUARDS DURING STOP AND

SEARCH/OR DEPRIVATION OF THEIR LIBERTY

Amnesty International has expressed concern about reports that Greek police frequently and systematically stop protesters, before, during and after demonstrations, and bring them to police stations for the purpose of identity checks.³³ EMIDIPA, lawyers and NGOs have also highlighted concerns about the lawfulness of mass and preventive apprehensions of protesters for the purpose of identity checks.³⁴

Amnesty International has verified two illustrative videos from Komotini and Athens which shows police officers warning peaceful protesters that they will be taken to police stations “for identity checks” if they do not disperse.³⁵ Official data indicate that the vast majority of individuals apprehended and transferred to police stations for identity verification in the context of protests are subsequently released without charge. According to figures drawn from Greek police statements a total of 842 individuals were apprehended ahead of or during nine major demonstrations in Athens and one in Thessaloniki between 28 February 2024 and 28 February 2026 and transferred to police stations for identity verification.³⁶ Of these, 144 were arrested.

This section documents how identity checks are being used as a tool to suppress peaceful protest, and potentially also as a means to punish participation and deter protesters from participating in peaceful assemblies.

2.1 STOPPING PROTESTERS AND DEPRIVING THEM OF THEIR LIBERTY FOR THE PURPOSE OF IDENTITY CHECKS WITHOUT REASONABLE SUSPICION

This section provides details of cases where protesters and other individuals have been transferred to police stations ahead, during and after demonstrations without reasonable suspicion contrary to international

³³ See, for example, Greece: Amnesty International member of staff arbitrarily deprived of liberty after raising concerns on stop and search operation, Public Statement, 21 December 2022 (AI Index: 25/3332/2022), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur25/6332/2022/en/>; Europe: Under Protected and Over Restricted: The state of the right to protest in 21 European countries.

³⁴ EMIDIPA 2023 Annual Report, <https://www.synigoros.gr/el/category/e8nikos-mhxanismos-dierynhshs-peristatikwn-av8airesias/post/emhdipa-or-ethsia-ek8esh-2023> p. 42; EMIDIPA 2020 Annual Report, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FmJNpww2eDRvUyD7qHiVhMwaUEpsXn8G/view>, and Hellenic League for Human Rights (HLHR), Police Brutality and Fundamental Human Rights: An Overview of Police Arbitrariness in Greece, https://www.hlhr.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/PB_ENG_e-book_F.pdf and [Κείμενο-θέσεων-αστυνομία-ΕΛΕΑΑ.pdf](https://www.hlhr.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/PB_ENG_e-book_F.pdf).

³⁵ In footage published in November 2025, a senior police officer tells peaceful students holding a banner in Komotini during the visit of the Greek Prime Minister in the city: “Go now...or you will be transferred to the police station for an identity check, close your banner now and leave”. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1528455681637374>; see also: footage from 5 March 2025 protest for Tempi in Athens, <https://twitter.com/i/status/1897436719978336661>.

³⁶ Sources: Statements by the Attika General Police Directorate on 28 February, 18 November 2024, 26 January 2025, 28 February 2025, 6 and 8 March 2025, 17 November 2025, 6 December 2025 and statements by the Attika General Police Directorate and Thessaloniki Police Directorate on 28 February 2026 (<https://bit.ly/4taK6TUJ>; <https://bit.ly/3QHiZTb>; <https://bit.ly/4d3ymwL>; <https://bit.ly/3QLdHWF>; <https://bit.ly/49bw1hX>; <https://bit.ly/3P2pmip>; <https://bit.ly/4w4wL2a>; <https://www.astynomia.gr/2024/02/28/28-02-2024-anakoinosi-g-e-d-attikis-schetika-me-simerines-sygkentroseis-poreies-sto-ke>; <https://bit.ly/4cNVtMXI> and <https://bit.ly/4cJMiwU>).

human rights standards and national legislation and aims to highlight the chilling effect that such practices have on the right to peaceful protest.

Law enforcement officials should not carry out any stops and searches in the context of assemblies, unless there is an objective and individualized, reasonable suspicion of a person committing a serious offence.³⁷ Generalized stop-and-search activities in the context of assemblies (for instance at checkpoints established for that purpose), as well as random stops or discriminatory stops targeting specific people because of who they are, are overly intrusive, will have a chilling effect on anyone taking part in the assembly and are a violation of the right to privacy.³⁸ Participation in, or organization of, a peaceful assembly does not constitute reasonable grounds for stopping and searching people.³⁹

When it comes to children, law enforcement officials should assess with great care whether there is a reasonable suspicion, and whether the situation is such that it indeed warrants a stop, an identity check and/or a search. And they must be particularly careful in the manner in which they carry out this activity.⁴⁰

Restrictions of peaceful protesters' freedom of movement, for the purpose of identity checks, must be as limited as possible. Otherwise, lengthy restrictions without lawful grounds can amount to arbitrary deprivation of liberty and can appear to have the sole aim of preventing protesters from exercising their right to participate in peaceful assemblies. Similarly, the apprehension and removal of protesters to police stations for the sole purpose of identity checks, is an unnecessary, disproportionate measure that directly unlawfully interferes with the exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, generates a chilling effect on the right of peaceful assembly and acts as a deterrent for potential protesters in future. It was also in many instances in clear violation of Article 74 para. 15 case ix of the Presidential Decree (PD) 141/1991 establishing that police can bring "[...] individuals to the police station for examination when they lack proof of identity or who, due to the place, time, circumstances and conduct, raise suspicion of conducting a criminal act. Persons brought to a police station should not remain there beyond the time that it is absolutely necessary for the purpose that they were brought in".⁴¹ Furthermore, EMIDIPA has highlighted that the provision has been open to arbitrary interpretation by the police.⁴²

Amnesty International interviewed fifteen individuals apprehended and transferred to police stations for the purpose of an identity check. One of the protesters interviewed was a minor at the time of the interview. All fifteen of the victims interviewed by Amnesty International who had been subjected to transfers to police stations for the purpose of identity checks ahead, during or after protests said that they cooperated fully with the police requests when stopped, and nearly all provided the authorities with all necessary documentation. Despite this, concerningly, ten of those interviewed went on to be deprived of their liberty from the time of their initial stop for a time ranging between three and ten hours. One individual was held for over an hour in the police station while three individuals were released shortly after their arrival at the police station once all identification procedures were completed. Some interviewees described police referring to "typical" or "preventive" identity checks, failing to provide a legal basis for their transfer, and/or not informing them of the police station to which they were being taken.

Twelve of the individuals interviewed were stopped ahead of a protest, one during protest, and two at the end of a protest. Those stopped ahead, during or after a protest were all held together with many or several other people also taken to the police station for an identity check. For seven of those who were on their way to take part in a protest, the action by the police to arbitrarily hold them at the police station and for a prolonged period (or indeed, at all) meant they were prevented from taking part in the demonstration. A female protester who was on her way to take part in a protest, was initially detained for five hours for the purposes of an identity check and subsequently she was charged for 'disobedience' and was held in pre-trial detention for four days. The organization believes that when people present documents during a stop-and-search, still taking them to a police station is an arbitrary interference with their right to freedom of

³⁷ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 83; HRC, Joint report SR, A/HRC/31/66, para. 43 and practical recommendation 49(g).

³⁸ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 10; ECtHR, Gillan and Quinton v. UK, App. 4158/05, 12 Jan. 2010, paras 76-87.

³⁹ Joint report of the Special Rapporteurs, UN Doc. A/HRC/31/66, 4 February 2016, para. 43

⁴⁰ Police and Children, Amnesty International Netherlands Police and Human Rights Programme, Thematic (Short) Paper No. 5.

⁴¹ See: https://www.kodiko.gr/nomologia/download_fek?fek=1991/a/fek_a_58_1991.pdf&t=8237125794ea8bfd69e3a0aae7f7c175; Written guidance issued by the Greek Ombudsperson (in his general mandate and his specific mandate as a National Mechanism for the Investigation of Arbitrary Incidents) and the Head of the Greek Police, sets out principles that apply to police officers conducting stop and search operations. See: https://old.synigoros.gr/resources/docs/por_16024_2002_da.pdf; Head of the Greek Police Circular 7100/22/4a/ 17.06.2005; also Comments of the Greek Ombudsman on Head of the Greek Police Circular 7100/22/4a/ 17.06.2005, Athens, 28 June 2005; and EMIDIPA 2020 Annual Report.

⁴² EMIDIPA has also maintained its concerns that this provision that concerns deprivation of liberty is placed in legislation concerning police duties, something that may create confusion regarding the protective purpose of these provisions and could lead to a continuous risk to fundamental rights. See: EMIDIPA 2023 Annual Report.

movement and of peaceful assembly so long as police do not provide reasonable doubts about the veracity of the documents presented or other criminal conduct.

Amnesty International interviewed **Konstantina Kartsiotis**, an activist on hunger strike, who in the early afternoon of 8 March 2024, was stopped and transferred by police to the General Attika Police Directorate (GADA) with her lawyer Panayiotis Antoniou prior to joining a protest for the 8 March Women's Day and for a controversial bill for the privatization of universities in the centre of Athens.

Kartsiotis said: “[...] We gave our identity cards and (they checked our bags). In my bag, I had tea and water [...] The protest had not even started. They asked the headquarters) and told us that we were going to be transferred to GADA. There I told them that there was a political reason behind it. My transfer to GADA was not by chance. At this point, other lawyers were present. Police did not care at all. I (said) I will do a sitting protest. They forced me to get into the police car.”⁴³

Her lawyer, **Panayiotis Antoniou**, said: “I gave my lawyer’s ID so that I would be checked. I did not have a bag with me or anything else. They checked everything and there was nothing incriminating [...] Meanwhile, [...] it was a weekday afternoon in the centre of Athens with open shops and people working [...] (The police) did not appear to investigate a specific offence for which we could have been suspects [...] It was apparent that they were conducting preventive identity checks ahead of the demonstration.”⁴⁴

Anna*, who was stopped with her partner **George*** ahead of the demonstration for the Polytechnic Uprising on 17 November 2024 in Athens shared her experience with Amnesty International.

Anna* recounted: “I asked them to verify our identity electronically [...] They did not tell us they would transfer us to the (police station). We were the last ones released [...] They simply wanted to hold us until the protest finished, to deter us from participating in the future [...]”⁴⁵

Prominent human rights lawyer **Anny Paparousou** was herself targeted for an identity check transfer to the police station, simply because she was carrying out her professional duties and providing legal support to individuals undergoing such checks.

On 6 December 2024, a group of peaceful protesters from the “Community of Squatted Prosfygika” and Anny Paparousou were taken to the Petrou Ralli Aliens’ Police Directorate for an identity check ahead of a protest commemorating the anniversary of the killing by a police officer of 15-year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos on 6 December 2008.⁴⁶ Paparousou stated that she was called by the protesters to provide legal support because they were stopped in central Athens before joining that evening’s protest and told that they would be preventatively transferred for an identity check to a police station.⁴⁷ Lawyers told Amnesty International that there was no ground for the protesters to be brought to the police station, as no one was in breach of the requirement to carry and show their identity and there was no reasonable suspicion of criminal activity.

As Paparousou described: “[...] I went there [to the street where the police had stopped them] and what I told the police officers, [...] that this situation is unlawful [...] that it is contrary to the right to freedom of peaceful assembly [...] Of course, they did not pay any attention to me [...] The police van came, and they started pulling the protesters and throwing them inside the van [...] When I objected, they said ‘Take her away’. [...] I told them that I will not enter; I am a lawyer and this situation is unlawful. I said all this and they pushed me into the [police] van and we left [...] They pushed me a lot [...] they used physical force, they (surrounded me) and they were grabbing me from all sides. It was a nightmare”.⁴⁸

⁴³ Interview March 2024; 4 September 2025.

⁴⁴ Interview 11 March 2024; 10 September 2025.

⁴⁵ Interview 19 November 2024; 1 February 2026; names changed to protect identity of the interviewee.

⁴⁶ “The Community of Squatted Prosfygika” is a self-organized neighbourhood which runs various self-organized welfare structures for its residents but also the population in Athens including the provision of free accommodation for people receiving treatment for cancer at a nearby hospital. On 27 April 2026, Amnesty International expressed concerns that 400 people living in the historic Prosfygika housing complex in Athens are at serious risk of forced eviction and called the Greek authorities to halt all plans that will result in the eviction of the community until the legal and procedural safeguards as articulated by international human rights standards are in place. See: <https://www.amnesty.gr/news/press/article/30730/i-diethnis-amnistia-kalei-na-pagosovn-ta-shedia-anagkastikis-exosis-tis>.

⁴⁷ According to news reports, tens of protesters were transferred to police stations for identity checks in Athens on 6 December 2024.

⁴⁸ Interview 7 December 2024; 3 September 2025.

Even journalists conducting their legitimate and essential work have also been targeted for these identity checks and transfers to police stations. As journalist **Marina Meintani** described to Amnesty International, she was covering a peaceful sit-in following a large demonstration for the Tempi rail tragedy in Thessaloniki on 7 March 2025 when she was apprehended with a group of protesters, four volunteers from a social medical centre (KIATHESS)⁴⁹ and some bystanders after midnight on 8 March 2025 and transferred to the Thessaloniki Police Headquarters for an identity check.⁵⁰

As Meintani describes: *“Two riot police groups arrived [...] and even though protesters left from the middle of the road and the sit in protest had ended, they came and encircled people, myself and the volunteers of KIATHESS [...] I told them that I was a journalist and they let me film, they did not take my mobile [...] They asked me my journalist’s identity with the journalist credentials and I gave it to them and that of the International Federation of Journalists. And from that point on, they started the transfers to the police station. My apprehension was unlawful”*.⁵¹

Following the protest for Tempi on 28 February 2026, the Greek Photojournalists’ Union (EFE) publicly denounced the practice of Greek police officers requiring photojournalists covering the demonstration to open their bags for inspection, undergo body searches, and even accompany them to police stations – despite the fact that they had already presented valid professional identification.⁵²

Amnesty International also documented four cases where just merely carrying tear-gas masks/other protective masks was treated as a basis for suspicion, absent any additional circumstances indicative of criminal activity. According to the UN HRC: “The carrying by participants of objects that are or could be viewed as weapons or of protective equipment such as gas masks or helmets is not necessarily sufficient to deem those participants’ conduct violent. That has to be determined on a case-by-case basis, dependent on, among other considerations, domestic regulation on the carrying of weapons, [...] local cultural practices, whether there is evidence of violent intent, and the risk of violence presented by the presence of such objects”.⁵³

For example, during a protest observation conducted on 17 November 2025 in Athens by the protest observers’ team of **Amnesty International’s Greek section**, members of the team including a member of staff were stopped for an identity check despite wearing their observers’ vests and providing a letter to the authorities informing them about being protest observers and two members of the team had their details taken by the police officer conducting the check.⁵⁴ The observers were stopped ahead of a demonstration and nothing suspicious was taking place in the vicinity. The police officers also told the members of the team who were carrying tear-gas masks as equipment for their protection in case tear gas was deployed by officials during the protest, that their having such masks constituted in their view a cause for them to be transferred to the police station for an identity check.

Michalis Zafeiropoulos, a male protester, was transferred for the purpose of an identity check to the General Attika Police Directorate (GADA) ahead of the demonstration for the second anniversary of the Tempi train crash tragedy on 28 February 2025.

Zafeiropoulos said: *“[...] It was very early, and it was the pre-gathering [...] There was no suspicion of an offence being committed [...] They stopped me in the street [...] for an identity check and despite having identity proof documents (my driver’s license) with me (they transferred me to the police station) [...] I was carrying ten masks for the protesters’ group I belonged and flags [...] (nothing we carried was unlawful) and upon release and when the procedure was completed, all my things were returned”*.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Thessaloniki Social Medical Center of Solidarity (KIATHESS).

⁵⁰ See statement of the Macedonia-Thrace Editors’ Union on the unjustified apprehension of Marina Meintani, at [Ένωση Συντακτών Μακεδονίας-Θράκης - ΕΣΗΕΜ-Θ](#).

⁵¹ Interviews, 13 March 2025 and 1 February 2026.

⁵² [Καταγγελία της ΕΦΕ για ελέγχους σε φωτορεπόρτερ από την αστυνομία](#) – Press Photo Union

⁵³ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 20. See also: para. 60.

⁵⁴ Amnesty International, Greek Section, Protest observation findings, 17 November 2025.

⁵⁵ Interview 17 March 2025.

In another case documented by Amnesty International even just a group of protestors questioning the police about the necessity of their transfer to the police station for the purpose of an identity check resulted in the group being charged with “disobedience” to police orders.⁵⁶

As **Dimitra*** told Amnesty International, she was among 18 peaceful protesters – many of them from the “Community of Squatted Prosygika” – stopped ahead of a demonstration for the Tempi rail tragedy in Athens on 6 September 2025. Police reportedly followed and halted their bus, encircled the group, and carried out selective identity checks. Nine English-speaking protesters received no interpretation and reportedly could not understand officers’ instructions to provide their identity documents.⁵⁷ According to their lawyer, a police officer provided a statement that the protesters were followed because they were “wearing black clothes and carrying rucksacks”.⁵⁸

Dimitra* described: “[...] We asked the reason for our apprehension for an identity check and the response we got by the officer in charge was that it was because of his experience [...] We did not know the reason, and we said that we would not go anywhere unless [they first told us] the reason”.

The group was taken to Petrou Ralli Aliens’ Police Directorate, held for approximately five hours, then transferred to GADA and informed they would be arrested. All 18 were charged with “disobedience” and detained for four days. Their trial was scheduled for September 2026.

2.2 UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE, DEGRADING TREATMENT AND FAILURE TO UPHOLD SAFEGUARDS DURING STOP AND SEARCH AND/OR DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY

The cases documented also highlight how the Greek authorities have failed to uphold their obligations and ensure the necessary safeguards during stop and search operations and during the deprivation of liberty of protesters apprehended for the purposes of identity checks. Those interviewed including lawyers representing individuals brought for identity checks to police stations spoke about unnecessary/degrading body searches; failure to guarantee the right to notify someone in the outside world; failure to guarantee access to a lawyer; unlawful use of force ahead of their transfer to the police station and/or during deprivation of liberty; denial of medical assistance; failure to provide sustenance; and substandard detention conditions.

The use of force must be subject to the strict application of the principle of necessity: in qualitative terms (the use of force if the legitimate objectives cannot be achieved without it), in quantitative terms (to use only the minimum force necessary to achieve the objective) and in temporal terms (the use of force must stop once the objective is achieved or can no longer be achieved).⁵⁹ Whenever the lawful use of force is unavoidable, law enforcement officials shall exercise restraint in such use and act in proportion to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved and minimize damage and injury, and respect and preserve human life.⁶⁰ Law enforcement officials must always take all necessary precautions to avoid the need to resort to the use of force.

Body searches of individuals deprived of their liberty must be necessary, reasonable and proportionate, and must be regulated by national law. Amnesty International believes that body searches conducted on individuals brought to a police station simply for an identity check have no legitimate objective or necessity. An ordinary pat-down search and request to empty ones’ pockets maybe justified before someone is placed in a police cell. Strip searches may only be justified if the item sought is of such a nature that it can be

⁵⁶ The group was charged for “disobedience” (Article 169 of the Greek Criminal Code (GCC) for allegedly refusing without resisting to proceed with all necessary actions when asked by police officers in order to undergo an identity check and to follow [the police] to the nearest police station for an identity check. They were also charged for refusal to be fingerprinted while in the police station.

⁵⁷ Interview 12 September 2025; name changed to protect identity of the interviewee.

⁵⁸ Interview 12 September 2025.

⁵⁹ Amnesty International, Dutch Section Police and Human Rights Programme, Use of Force, Guidelines for the Implementation of Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, August 2015, Guideline 1b, https://media.amnesty.org.uk/documents/use_of_force.pdf.

⁶⁰ Use of Force: Guidelines for Implementation of the UN Basic Principles on The Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, Guideline 5.

hidden under the clothing and be undetectable through normal pat-down body searches. Such searches should therefore never be carried out as a routine measure but only if there are reasonable grounds for conducting them. Any body search, should be carried out: by a person of the same sex; when a transgender person is to be searched, the individual's request to be searched by a person of a particular gender should be respected.⁶¹ Strip searches should be carried out only when authorized by a superior officer and without the presence of any member of the opposite sex; in a place where the person being searched cannot be seen by anyone not required to be present; in a professional manner respecting the dignity of the person and reducing embarrassment to the minimum possible; in suitable hygienic conditions; under the authority (and possibly also the supervision) of a superior officer.⁶² Strip searches and invasive body searches carried out in a humiliating manner can constitute torture or other ill-treatment.⁶³

Article 96 paras. 3 and 4 of Presidential Decree 141/1991 provides that police can provide a body search only when there is a serious suspicion for the commission of a criminal offence or an absolute necessity; that a body search of a female is undertaken by a female officer; and that during the search, police must ensure that the person's personality is not insulted.⁶⁴ Article 97 of the same Presidential Decree provides that in their contact with minors, police should refrain from treatment that can humiliate them. Greek authorities are obliged under international human rights treaties to which they are party to ensure that, anyone who is arrested, detained or imprisoned must be informed of their right to notify or have the authorities notify someone in the outside world that they have been arrested and where they are being held.⁶⁵ International legal standards also provide that a person arrested or detained should have access to a lawyer as soon as they are deprived of their liberty.⁶⁶ In addition, children deprived of their liberty have the right to maintain contact with their family and to prompt access to legal and other appropriate assistance.⁶⁷ The authorities must ensure that persons deprived of their liberty have access to necessities and services that satisfy their basic needs, including adequate and appropriate food, washing and sanitary facilities, bedding, clothing and health care.⁶⁸ The prohibition of torture and other ill treatment is absolute under international law, and the Greek authorities have clear obligations to prevent and eradicate such acts and respect and protect people's right to be free from torture and ill treatment.⁶⁹

Five protesters and a female journalist speaking to Amnesty International described being subjected to unnecessary body searches before and/or after their transfer to a police station for the purpose of an identity check. Two female protesters said that they were searched over their clothes and one who was a minor reported that the female officers conducting the search lifted her top and searched her hair; one male protester said that police told him to remove some of his clothes while another male protester and the female journalist said that they were told to partially undress including pulling down or removing their underwear with the female journalist describing the experience as "humiliating". Four female interviewees said that they were searched by female police officers. According to the interviewees, no justification or legal basis was provided for such searches.

Antonis Antoniou, a university student, was transferred to a police station for the purpose of an identity check following a demonstration for the Tempi rail tragedy in Thessaloniki on 5 March 2025. Antoniou, who himself had been a survivor of the Tempi rail tragedy and had sustained severe injuries and undergone multiple surgeries, joined thousands of citizens in the protest demanding justice for the victims.⁷⁰

⁶¹ Amnesty International Fair Trial Manual, Second edition, 2014 (AI Index: POL 30/002/2014), p. 99 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/POL30/002/2014/en/>.

⁶² International Committee of the Red Cross: To serve and to protect – Human rights and humanitarian law for police and security forces, 2014, Second edition, pp. 308-309, <https://policehumanrightsresources.org/to-serve-and-to-protect-human-rights-and-humanitarian-law-for-police-and-security-forces>.

⁶³ Amnesty International Fair Trial Manual, p. 99.

⁶⁴ Legal analysts have noted that a body search should not be conducted in the context of a simple identity check and that this action requires a serious suspicion that the conduct of the person being searched can be linked with the commission of specific offences. See Nadia Bitheli, Identity check procedure, available at: <https://www.mcaounilaw.gr/%CE%BD%CE%B5%CE%B1/93-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%AF%CE%B1-%CE%B5%CE%BE%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%81%CE%AF%CE%B2%CF%89%CF%83%CE%B7%CF%82-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%B9%CF%87%CE%B5%CE%AF%CF%89%CE%BD>.

⁶⁵ Article 17(2)(d) of the Convention on Enforced Disappearance; Principle 16(1) of the Body of Principles; Rule 68 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (The Nelson Mandela Rules); CAT General Comment 2, §13.

⁶⁶ Guidelines 3 §43(b) and (d) and 4 §44(a) of the Principles on Legal Aid; See also: Human Rights Council resolution 13/19, UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/13/19 (2010) §6, HRC Concluding Observations: Georgia, UN Doc. CCPR/C/79/Add.75 (1997) §27, Jordan, UN Doc. CCPR/C/JOR/CO/4 (2010) §9.

⁶⁷ Articles 3 and 37 of UN Convention on Rights of a Child.

⁶⁸ CPT 2nd General Report, CPT/Inf (92) 3, §42.

⁶⁹ See also: the obligations set in Article 3 of Presidential Decree No. 254 of 2004, Code of Police Ethics, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/legal/decrees/hatlegbod/2004/en/76050>.

⁷⁰ Interview 28 April and 14 September 2025.

Antoniou said: “[...] We all provided our identity cards either in paper or electronic form. They placed us in a police van without informing us of the destination [...] They did a body search to all of us [...] In my case, they pulled down my trousers, checked my underwear, untied my hair, and inspected my beard. I was left wearing only a jumper. They asked me to remove my jumper, but when they lifted it to check what I have in my back, they saw heating pads and I told them that my neck pain has deteriorated because of the crash in Tempa. Attempts to use phones [...] were met with shouting”.

Journalist **Marina Meintani** described how two female police officers conducted a body search while she was held at the Thessaloniki Police Directorate: “[...] They ordered me to drop my trouser, remove my shoes [...] and my bra [...] They looked into my shoes and took the soles from inside [...] and searched my bra [...] Whoever is forced to take off their clothes in front of another person without having done something, this is a humiliation by itself [...] Those who apprehended me knew I was a journalist, and also those at the police station where the body search took place”.⁷¹

George* who was stopped with his partner **Anna*** ahead of a protest for the Polytechnic uprising in Athens on 17 November 2024 said: “[At the police station, during a body search] they told me to drop my trousers and underwear.”⁷²

Six interviewees said that they were asked to switch off their phones upon arrival to the police station or had their phones taken away and returned upon their release from the police station. One interviewee said that he had his phone taken away but was allowed to use it briefly to call and inform his family about his whereabouts.

For example, a female interviewee who was a minor at the time of her transfer to the police station for the purpose of an identity check described how she was unable to communicate with parents about her whereabouts once her phone was taken away at the police station.

Maria* (who at the time of the incident was 17 years old and a high-school student), described to Amnesty International how she was stopped by police along with another male student (16 years old) before the protest began on 17 November 2024 and were transferred to the Petrou Ralli Alien’s Police Directorate for an identity check, despite presenting identity cards.⁷³

Maria* said: “I contacted my mum, messaging her secretly [while in the police van] [...] [In the police station] I said to them that I am a minor and I said this to them many times. We hand them our mobiles and [...] and they put them in a plastic bag [...] We were waiting for six hours without our parents being informed [...] we had asked them to inform our parents [...]. My parents came to the station after receiving a message [from me while I was in the police van]. All the times, they asked the officers if I was inside, they responded to them that they did not know if we were inside. This went on for a long time [...] Eventually, around 7 p.m., they returned our phones, and told us ‘Now you can call your parents’”.

Five individuals held between three and ten hours reported that police delayed providing them with water or that they had to buy water, and one said that he was not provided with water at all. One female protester said that she had to pay for water during her four-day pre-trial detention. Nine individuals reported that they were not provided with a meal.

Konstantina Kartsiotis who was on hunger strike at the time of her detention by police on 8 March 2024 described: “We asked for water and the police guard said that there are no more water bottles and you can give 20 cents to buy from the GADA canteen [...] When you are in detention, you are in their hands. [The police officer] said: ‘There is water, you can use the toilet tap’. I told him: ‘What will you do if with the water you propose (I drink results) in me fainting?’ He laughed and said: ‘I will call [an ambulance]. Eventually, he brought me water”.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Interview 13 March 2025, 1 February 2026.

⁷² Interview 19 November 2024; name changed to protect identity of the interviewee.

⁷³ Interviews 23 November 2024; 12 August 2025; name changed to protect identity of the interviewee.

⁷⁴ Interview March 2024; 4 September 2025.

Five of the individuals interviewed by Amnesty International reported that the police used unlawful force against them and/or other members of their group ahead of transfer and/or during deprivation of liberty, while four reported denial of access to medical assistance to a member of their group.⁷⁵ One interviewee described substandard detention conditions.

For example, video shows several of the peaceful protesters taken to the Petrou Ralli Aliens' Police Directorate for an identity check on 6 December 2024 being grabbed forcefully by police and led to the police van. Video also shows **Anny Paparousou** who in her capacity as a lawyer was questioning the arrests, being suddenly pushed and apprehended by police and then pushed into the police van.⁷⁶

Protesters reported that at that point one of them was punched in the eye and that a female protester was punched in the chest, despite informing the police that she had serious heart problems.⁷⁷ Protesters and Paparousou asked for paramedics to be called and despite eyewitnesses informing the police that a paramedic had arrived, the police van drove away and protesters reported that as a result those in need of medical care were not being provided with medical assistance. The protesters also alleged that police pushed them and assaulted them with their hands and possibly their equipment while at the police station.

Further, **Dimitra***, a protester brought with seventeen more protesters for an identity check at Petrou Ralli on 6 September 2025 described: *"When the police van arrived [...] we held each other and [...] we asked the reason for our apprehension and [...] police threw [a male protester] on the ground and head locked a female protester"*.⁷⁸ She also described poor conditions in the police cell that she was detained with other female protesters and said: *"[...] The cells were in a really bad condition, they were very dirty [...] they gave us water [we had to pay for it] [...] The cell was full of bedbugs, me and another girl had an allergic reaction from the bites"*.

Lawyers interviewed by Amnesty International also reported that protesters undergoing identity checks were denied access to legal assistance while deprived of their liberty and that police justify such practice on the grounds that the individuals are not considered suspects of an offence. Amnesty International believes that holding a person for several hours at a police station and preventing them from going about their day or freely leaving, amounts to a deprivation of liberty and all persons deprived of their liberty are entitled to legal counsel and the authorities should not prevent such access.

2.3 CONCLUSION

In the several cases documented by Amnesty International individuals were transferred to police stations without reasonable suspicion of criminal activity and despite possessing identity documents or providing lawyer/journalist credentials when requested. In most cases, such transfers happened ahead of a demonstration. The police arbitrarily deprived of their liberty the individuals, sometimes en masse with many others, for up to ten hours from the moment that they were stopped and in some cases subjected them to unnecessary/degrading body searches. Seven of the individuals interviewed who were subjected to this were impeded by the police from ever joining the protest they had set out to attend that day. The information gathered, including the way police themselves refer to identity check transfers as "preventive"⁷⁹ and official police statistics, indicates that identity check transfers are being used by police as a means to prevent often large numbers of protestors from exercising their right to peaceful assembly.

Additionally, police subjecting them to arbitrary deprivation of liberty, unnecessary and potentially degrading body searches, denying sustenance and not allowing them to communicate with family/friends or lawyers indicate this is being used to also punish protesters for trying to exercise their right to freedom of peaceful assembly as well as dissuade them from trying to do so in the future. The deprivation of liberty by police of a

⁷⁵ Case of Anny Paparousou and the group of protesters transferred for identity checks ahead of the 6 December 2025.

⁷⁶ Footage on file with Amnesty International.

⁷⁷ Interviews 7 December 2024.

⁷⁸ Interview 12 September 2025.

⁷⁹ See: Statement of the Attika General Police Directorate dated 28 February 2025 available at: <https://www.astynomia.gr/2025/02/28/28-02-2025-anakoinosi-g-e-d-attikis-schetika-me-programmatismeni-sygkentrosi-diamartyrias-stin-plateia-syntagmatos-me-aformi-to-sidirodromiko-dystychima-sta-tebi/>.

female protester who was on hunger strike raised specific concerns in view of her vulnerable state of health as a result of her 19-day hunger strike. This pattern of police action targeting protestors could be perceived as punitive and, whether deliberately intended to or not, provoke a chilling effect on protest participation, particularly where charges of “disobedience” are laid against protesters for merely questioning the lawfulness of a police order to accompany them to the police station for an identity check.

These actions by the police raise serious concerns regarding numerous human rights, including the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, the right to be free from arbitrary arrest and detention, the right to be free from torture and other ill treatment, amongst other rights. Even in the case where a protester provided a document not recognized by law as formal identification, such as a driver’s license, their preventive transfer to a police station appears to have been a disproportionate and unnecessary measure.

The two cases documented by Amnesty International (where a lawyer providing legal assistance to protesters and a journalist covering demonstrations were both also detained by police under the guise of an identity check transfer) also give rise to specific human rights concerns in addition to those listed above, as their right to freely exercise their professions to either defend their client or document violations, were breached when they were taken to police stations for the alleged purpose of identity checks. Authorities must ensure that those providing legal assistance or are engaged in observing or reporting on protests are protected from reprisals, harassment, or other forms of interference.

Body searches carried out in the context of identity checks can breach international human rights standards, including the right to privacy and human dignity as they are unlikely to serve any legitimate purpose. Furthermore, the forced removal of clothing during such searches may amount to degrading treatment, prohibited by Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), particularly when not legally justified or required.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ EMIDIPA, 2024 Annual Report, p. 103, <https://www.synigoros.gr/el/category/e8nikos-mhxanismos-diervnhshs-peristatikwn-av8airesias/post/ethsia-ek8esh-or-emhdipa-2024>.

3. POLICE FREQUENTLY USE UNECESSARY OR EXCESSIVE FORCE IN THE POLICING OF DEMONSTRATIONS

International treaties to which Greece is party establish that assemblies should be presumed to be peaceful.⁸¹ The policing of assemblies should always seek to prevent the need to resort to force. As a rule, there is no room for the use of force in policing assemblies, except when dealing with individuals committing sufficiently serious offences.⁸² Even if an assembly is considered unlawful under domestic law, police should not resort to the use of force just because of its unlawfulness.⁸³ Only when there are other compelling reasons – for example regarding public safety and security or the prevention of crime and there are no alternatives – should police consider resorting to the use of force, as laid out in the UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement.⁸⁴

Weapons may only be used as a last resort in case of violence – never against peaceful protesters, bystanders or against people only passively resisting any orders. The use of any weapon must be preceded by a warning and people must be given sufficient time to comply with the order.⁸⁵ In most cases, less lethal weapons can only be used when there is an imminent threat to the public, “imminent threat” being defined by the OHCHR as a “threat that is reasonably expected to arise within a split second, or at most within a matter of several seconds”.⁸⁶ The use of weapons must at all times comply with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality.⁸⁷ It is important to underscore that participants of an assembly who engage in violence are no longer protected by the right to freedom of peaceful assembly but retain all other human rights including the right to life, to security of the person and to freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

⁸¹ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 17; Venice Commission Guidelines (2020), para. 142.

⁸² Use of Force: Guidelines for Implementation of the UN Basic Principles on The Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, Guideline No. 7.

⁸³ UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, 27 August to 7 September 1990, No. 13.

⁸⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement (UNOCHR, Guidance on LLW in Law Enforcement), https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/LLW_Guidance.pdf.

⁸⁵ Guidelines on the Right of Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, 2024 (AI Index: ACT 30/8426/2024), Guideline 14; UNOCHR, Guidance on LLW in Law Enforcement, para. 2.10.

⁸⁶ UNOCHR, Guidance on LLW in Law Enforcement, p.43.

⁸⁷ UNOCHR, Guidance on LLW in Law Enforcement, pp. 5, 14.

Weapons that are likely to affect a large number of people at a time, such as tear gas or water cannon may only be used in case of widespread violence that cannot be contained by addressing violent individuals alone.⁸⁸

National legislation on public outdoor assemblies provides that in the dispersal of assemblies, lawful means must be used, and they must be the most suitable, necessary, and proportionate to the occasion.⁸⁹ The legislation on public outdoor assemblies does not detail the means/weapons that should be used by Greek Police for the dispersal of demonstrations. Some reference on the weapons used by police in general in the exercise of their duties is referred in the 2004 Police Code of Ethics which provides that “[...] [t]he use of force shall always respect the principles of necessity, adequacy and proportionality. Police shall use the most moderate means possible by avoiding any unnecessary disturbance, cruelty or unjustifiable damage to property. Police shall not proceed to abusive use of chemicals and other available means, in particular those that are likely to harm public health. Police shall use firearms only in cases provided for by law and shall immediately report the incident.”⁹⁰

Information on less lethal weapons that may be used in a demonstration is presented in the 2021 Guidelines on the policing of demonstrations (National Plan for the Management of Public Outdoor Assemblies) which is not a binding document and refers to the use of shields, water cannon, chemical irritants and stun grenades. Amnesty International is concerned that the 2021 Guidelines allow the use of force in a wide range of situations during demonstrations and remain silent regarding the threshold of risk for which the different means, methods and weapons will be used.⁹¹

It appears that while detailed regulations on de-escalation seem to exist, they are not public, which makes their compliance with international human rights standards difficult to assess and seriously hampers police accountability for the handling of assemblies. According to Article 11 of Presidential Decree 73/2020, decisions by the competent Minister regulating the composition, tactics and in general the operational activities of the police in the framework of measures taken during public outdoor assemblies are not public due to their restricted character.⁹²

In meetings with the Greek Minister of Citizen Protection, the Chief of the Hellenic Police and other high-ranking officials, Amnesty International delegates have requested information on further details on the operational rules on the use of less lethal weapons such as stun grenades but the response was that such rules are confidential.⁹³

Law enforcement agencies need to have specific, publicly accessible rules and regulations in place for each weapon in accordance with the level of harm, including the risks involved with the use of each specific weapon.⁹⁴

Between March 2024 and May 2026, Amnesty International documented a series of incidents where Greek police used unnecessary or excessive force during peaceful demonstrations. In many of the documented demonstrations, clashes of varying scale occurred between police and groups of individuals. However, the overwhelming majority of participants were peaceful. These incidents included the unlawful use by police of less lethal weapons such as batons, stun grenades, chemical irritants and water cannon and unlawful use of force during arrest. The organization also documented two incidents of alleged ill-treatment in detention.⁹⁵

These were documented through interviews with 67 individuals who were witnesses and/or victims of human rights violations at the hands of the police, as well as via the analysis of digital evidence verified by Amnesty's Evidence Lab. Both, testimonies and digital evidence, converge in showing how Greek police used unnecessary or excessive force against entirely or largely peaceful protesters as well as photojournalists and journalists. The documented incidents concern seventeen demonstrations (one in Thessaloniki, one in Rhodes, one in Volos, one in Chania and thirteen in Athens). Some of the incidents documented happened

⁸⁸ Guidelines on the Right of Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, Guideline 14.4 and Guideline 14.6.

⁸⁹ PD 73/2020.

⁹⁰ See: [https://www.policinglaw.info/assets/downloads/2004_Code_of_Police_Ethics_\(Greece\).pdf](https://www.policinglaw.info/assets/downloads/2004_Code_of_Police_Ethics_(Greece).pdf).

⁹¹ Ministry of Citizen Protection, National Plan for the Management of Public Outdoor Assemblies, available at: <https://bit.ly/3svmMkF>. 15; see Sections 1, 3.1 and 10.2 of Guidelines.

⁹² While the Guidelines and legislation on assemblies provide some information of how de-escalation should take place, nevertheless on the basis of the above provision, one can assume that detailed decisions are not public.

⁹³ Meeting, 10 September 2025.

⁹⁴ Guidelines on the Right of Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, Guideline 14.1 and UNOCHR, Guidance on LLW in Law Enforcement, para. 4.4.1.

⁹⁵ In its 2024 Concluding Observations on Greece, the UN HRC expressed grave concerns about “reports of the use of excessive and deadly force by the police and other law enforcement officials, particularly against peaceful protesters and journalists, including the deployment of tear gas, chemical irritants, water cannons, and stun grenades, causing serious injuries” and called on Greece to ensure the prompt and thorough investigation of all allegations of excessive use of force and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials. See: CCPR/C/GRC/CO/3, 28 November 2024.

during the same demonstration.⁹⁶ The report presents incidents that took place during 15 of these demonstrations.

The testimonies provided and verified videos analysed by Amnesty International indicate that law enforcement repeatedly used unnecessary or excessive force against individuals who were peaceful or posed no apparent threat.

Out of the 67 people interviewed in relation to the policing of demonstrations for the period of 2024-2025, 17 including members of the press reported that they sustained injuries ranging from hearing loss, burn, head, jaw, neck and limb injuries or deterioration of existing health issues and some also suffered breathing difficulties as a result of chemical irritants. All 17 sought hospital treatment/or were transferred to the hospital; in two additional cases, people sought medical treatment for themselves or their children as a result of chemical irritants. Some other protesters reported injuries such as bruises caused by batons or kicks by police. One case of an individual injured was reported to Amnesty International by his lawyer and one featured in news reports. Some protesters also reported experiencing an ongoing mental health harm as a result of and in addition to their physical injuries.

The cases presented in the following sections are not exhaustive but illustrative of the pattern of violations documented by Amnesty International during the research for this report.

3.1 A POLICE DANGEROUS DEPLOYMENT OF STUN GRENADES RESULTS IN SERIOUS INJURIES

The term “stun grenades” – also known as a disorientation, distraction or pyrotechnic devices, “flash-bangs”, percussion or concussion grenades – covers various types of explosive grenades used in law enforcement and military contexts. They are designed to surprise and temporarily disorientate and blind people through intense exposure to sound and light, among other effects. They can be hand-thrown or fired from a launcher and emit loud noise and blinding light; some also emit smoke, chemical irritants and can generate temperatures of more than 3,000 degrees Celsius.⁹⁷ According to the published specifications of the type of stun grenade deployed by the Greek police, Rheinmetall’s NICO 2-Bang BTV, the device emits a sounds intensity of 170 decibels – louder than a jet engine at close quarters - and a light intensity of 3 million candela.⁹⁸

As the cases presented in this report demonstrate, stun grenades can cause considerable injury to people. The most common injuries associated with the use of stun grenades are burns, hearing loss or damage (e.g. tinnitus, eardrum rupture), as well as other blast and fragmentation injuries.⁹⁹ Stun grenades have also been known to start fires. Finally, they can cause secondary damage due to the risk of stampede, panic and resulting falls.¹⁰⁰

UN bodies and international human rights organizations have argued that stun grenades should not be used directly against people, be fired into crowds, or used for dispersal of public assembly.¹⁰¹ For the OSCE, explosive stun grenades should never be used for dispersal “even if deployed adjacent to a public assembly [...] stun grenades are likely (and perhaps intended) to cause panic”.¹⁰² The UN Special Rapporteur on the

⁹⁶ The demonstrations where such incidents were documented took place: 1) Thessaloniki, 28 February 2024; 2) Athens, 8 March 2024; 3) Athens, 31 October 2024; 4) Athens, 26 January 2025; 5) Athens, 28 February 2025; 6) Athens, 5 March 2025; 7) Athens, 7 March 2025; 8) Athens, 8 March 2025; 9) Athens, 29 March 2025; 10) Athens, 15 June 2025; 11) Rhodes, 28 July 2025; 12) Volos, 13 August 2025; 13) Athens, 7 October 2025; 14) Athens, 23 October 2025; 15) Athens, 31 October 2025; 16) Chania, 4 November 2025; 17) Athens, 6 December 2025. This report presents incidents documented in 15 out of the 17 demonstrations.

⁹⁷ OSCE/ODIHR, Omega Research Foundation, cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/4/7/491551_0.pdf, pp. 68-71.; Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations (INLCO), Lethal in Disguise, Disorientation Devices, [LID2-Disorientation-Devices.pdf](https://www.inlco.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AFR5357252016ENGLISH.pdf), p. 8.; PHR and INLCO, Lethal in Disguise, Disorientation Devices, [LID2-Disorientation-Devices.pdf](https://www.inlco.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AFR5357252016ENGLISH.pdf), p. 3.

⁹⁸ See: <https://www.talpo.it/files/rheinmetall-hand-grenades.pdf>.

⁹⁹ See: [Stun Grenades - Omega Research Foundation](https://www.omega-research.org/en/stun-grenades); UNOCHR, Guidance on LLW in Law Enforcement; INLCO, Deaths and maimings from explosive stun grenades launched by French law enforcement, <https://lethalindisguise.org/case-studies/france/>; Guide on Law Enforcement Equipment Most Commonly Used in the Policing of Assemblies, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/1/473439_0.pdf; Amnesty International: Under Protected and Over Restricted: The state of the right to protest in 21 European countries; PHR and INLCO, Health Impacts of Crowd-Control Weapons: Disorientation Devices, <https://phr.org/our-work/resources/health-impacts-of-crowd-control-weapons-disorientation-devices/>.

¹⁰⁰ See: [annex-ii-document-august-2023-18-09-23.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/wp-content/uploads/2023/18/09-23.pdf); UNOCHR, Guidance on LLW in Law Enforcement.

¹⁰¹ UNOCHR, Guidance on LLW in Law Enforcement, para. 6.1.4; PHR, Health Impacts of Crowd-Control Weapons: Disorientation Devices; Amnesty International, South Africa: Investigate excessive use of force against “fees must fall” protesters, <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AFR5357252016ENGLISH.pdf>; PHR and INLCO, Health Impacts of Crowd-Control Weapons: Disorientation Devices; <https://www.nrw.org/news/2016/08/01/armenia-excessive-police-force-protest>; PHR and INLCO, Health Impacts of Crowd-Control Weapons: Disorientation Devices.

¹⁰² OSCE/ODIHR, Omega Research Foundation, cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/4/7/491551_0.pdf, p. 70.

rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association has explicitly ruled out their use in the policing of assemblies, stating that weapons that are “overly harmful” should not be deployed in response to assemblies and that “Stun grenades [...] should never be used in the context of assemblies” – a prohibition supported by the International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations (INCLO).¹⁰³ Amnesty International also believes that stun grenades must never be used in the policing of assemblies due to their overly harmful and disorientating effects, and should be reserved only for high risk special operations, such as hostage situations.

Thirty individuals including protesters, several members of the press and a party leader interviewed by Amnesty International consistently described police dangerously deploying stun grenades against peaceful protesters and members of the press, in a direct trajectory toward individuals, above their heads, or at their feet and/or in dense crowds. Some protesters described a feeling of disorientation. Many of the individuals interviewed, as well as videos verified by Amnesty International, described/show stun grenades being deployed together with chemical irritants for the dispersal of crowds. Seven individuals said that stun grenades exploded in very close proximity to their feet and one of them said that a stun grenade burnt his shoe. In two protests, police reportedly used stun grenades and chemical irritants when children were present raising grave concerns about the safety and proportionality of these tactics.¹⁰⁴

In two videos filmed on 5 March 2025 during protests in Athens and verified by Amnesty International, stun grenades appear to be deployed without warning against people who were peaceful and did not appear to pose any threat. Videos also show Greek police unnecessary use of batons, as well as unlawful use of chemical irritants.¹⁰⁵ Videos from another protest in October 2025 also show police unlawfully using stun grenades following the dispersal of the protest next to a café where people were sitting down.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément Nyaletsossi Voule* A/HRC/50/42, para. 46; INCLO, Deaths and maimings from explosive stun grenades launched by French law enforcement <https://lethalindisguise.org/case-studies/france/>; Flagrant Deni, Grenades à effet de souffle en maintien de l'ordre : une spécificité française qui mutile et qui tue, [subm-global-trends-developments-cso-16-flagrant-deni.pdf](#).

¹⁰⁴ See also section on misuse of chemical irritants (case of parents-teachers protest below). Amnesty International has also received reports on deployment of chemical irritants and stun grenades in other types of gatherings where children were present. On 27 April 2025, riot police reportedly threw stun grenades, sprayed chemical irritants and hit some individuals during a social event organized in Strefi hill where families with their young children were present. Interviews with three women who participated in the event, April 2025. In one of the videos filmed during the event, police used handheld chemical irritants despite no imminent threat from protesters <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHbdCireRQw&t=67s> (2:52-3:08 min). The organization understands that a disciplinary investigation started into the incident.

¹⁰⁵ Footage shows young protesters in Syntagma square during the Tempi protest on 5 March 2025 shouting anti-police slogans. Then riot police out of the blue and without any violence from the side of the protesters starts chasing them and disperses them by deploying stun grenades and strikes some with batons at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2etQixssw8> (0:01-1:49 min); Other verified video from the same protest, shows unlawful use of handheld chemical irritants and stun grenades against peaceful crowd, see: <https://twitter.com/i/status/1897402603434308048>.

¹⁰⁶ Video viewed by Amnesty International shows police going to a café in the neighbourhood of Exarcheia and using chemical irritants and stun grenades while a disabled man who was reportedly sitting in the cafe is shown on the ground at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELZhX9fNt4U> (3:41-3:55 min). The incident reportedly happened following the dispersal of a protest with stun grenades in Athens on 31 October 2025. The footage shows riot police dispersing with stun grenades and beating with batons a group of protesters who do not appear to engage in any violence at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzeJ3FimbCA> (2:45-3:03 min). Footage from the same protest also shows a riot police officer kicking a female protester who is on the ground on the face (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_hUCq-b1BU). The protest was taking place to commemorate the anniversary of the death of anarchist Kyriakos Ximitiris, who died following a bomb explosion in a flat in October 2024.



☹↑ *Smoke from the stun grenade that police unlawfully used following the dispersal of the protest, next to a café where people were sitting, in October 2025. Screenshot from the YouTube video posted by Perseus999.*

As a result of the dangerous deployment of stun grenades, two photojournalists sustained head injuries and hearing loss/hearing problems in two protests in Athens, and one female protester sustained a burn and wound after being hit by what she believes was a stun grenade during a protest in Thessaloniki.

For example, on 26 January 2025, photojournalist **Marios Lolos**, former President of the Greek Press Photo Union (EFE), sustained hearing loss and a head injury after being hit by a stun grenade thrown by a police officer in Korai Square, Athens. Lolos was covering events after the end of a large Tempi rail tragedy demonstration. The stun grenade hit his head and exploded a short distance away.

Lolos said: “[...] I tried to cross to the other side [of the square] and while I was crossing, I saw [the stun grenade] when it was coming towards me, a cop was in front of me, and he threw it at me [...] in a direct trajectory [...] It hit the left side of (my head) and exploded next to me. If it had exploded in front of my head, and not a little bit later, we would not be speaking at the moment. [...] I was carrying my camera, and it was obvious that I was a journalist. I believe the riot police officer threw the stun grenade at me intentionally.”¹⁰⁷

A video verified by Amnesty International corroborates Lolos’ testimony.¹⁰⁸ It shows a riot police officer throwing a stun grenade in the direction of Lolos, in an upward, lofted trajectory. The grenade bounces off his head and then explodes near him, and he clutches his head and moves away. Given the pavement was largely empty with only a handful of members of press present, it suggests that the police officer deliberately targeted Lolos. Another photojournalist described to Amnesty International how just a few minutes before the incident, riot police threw a stun grenade at the feet of some of his colleagues.¹⁰⁹ A criminal investigation has been initiated into Lolos’ injury following the filing of a criminal complaint. Lolos has also filed a complaint with the Greek Ombudsman, which functions as the National Mechanism for the Investigation of Arbitrary Incidents by law enforcement officials. A disciplinary investigation was also initiated by the police.

¹⁰⁷ Interview 28 January and 26 August 2025. Amnesty International has seen a copy of the medical documents detailing Marios Lolos’ injury (on file).

¹⁰⁸ See: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=9669444596400839> (0:01-0:14 min).

¹⁰⁹ Interview March 2025.



☺ ↑ Riot police officer throwing a stun grenade in the direction of Lolos [in red sweater], in an upward, lofted trajectory. The grenade bounces off his head and then explodes near him, and he clutches his head and moves away. Screenshots from a Facebook video posted by Marios Lolos and recorded by Yiannis Kemos

In response to journalists' questions, the Greek Government's spokesperson claimed that the injuries occurred during police responding to what they allege were Molotov cocktail attacks by protestors, and denied any intention to harm a journalist or anyone.¹¹⁰ However, Lolos and journalist **Yiannis Kemos** state that they did not witness any Molotov cocktails being thrown at police at the scene.¹¹¹ Irrespective of the circumstances, stun grenades are inappropriate and dangerous devices for use in protests and must never be used in the policing of public assemblies.

On 28 February 2025, during one of the largest demonstrations in Greece's recent history, marking the second anniversary of the Tempi rail tragedy in Athens, protestors' testimonies, media reports and verified videos highlighted a series of incidents where police reportedly used unnecessary or excessive force including deploying stun grenades, chemical irritants, batons and water cannon against peaceful/or largely peaceful protestors and members of the press.¹¹² While the protest was marred by violent clashes, the overwhelming majority of protestors were peaceful.

¹¹⁰ See extracts of the response of Pavlos Marinakis, Greek Government Spokesperson to a question by journalist Chris Avramidis: "First of all, we express our support to the victim of this attack, which was obviously the result of police response to Molotov cocktails (thrown) at the police [...] There was obviously no willful misconduct not any intent from a police officer to injure a photojournalist or a citizen, or anyone". Source: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1020288543313445>.

¹¹¹ Interview with Yiannis Kemos, 28 January 2025.

¹¹² Amnesty International has interviewed 18 individuals including protestors and several members of the press who described experiencing and/or witnessing unnecessary or excessive use of force in the policing of the 28 February 2025 demonstration in Athens. The demonstration was one of the largest in Greece's contemporary history and took place in Syntagma square in front of the Greek Parliament. Due to its size, it spread to main streets in the Athens centre. Shortly after the end of the speeches of the relatives of the Tempi rail tragedy victims, violence broke out when groups of hooded individuals clashed with police in front of the Parliament and in surrounding streets. Peaceful protestors gradually tried to leave and returned few hours later back to Syntagma square. Protestors and members of the press reported, among other concerns: the reckless and unlawful use of stun grenades and chemical irritants against peaceful demonstrators, including families trying to flee the area of the violent clashes in Syntagma square and the deployment of water cannon, stun grenades, chemical irritants and police motorbikes to disperse peaceful protestors located near the Evangelismos tube station; the deployment of stun grenades, chemical irritants as well as the misuse of batons, against peaceful protestors who were attempting to return to Syntagma Square after the violent clashes had ended and the deployment of water cannons to disperse the peaceful protestors who had managed to return to Syntagma square; the dangerous deployment of stun grenades that resulted in a journalist being injured; and the deployment of stun grenades in the presence of small children. Video verified by Amnesty International corroborates testimonies. See analysis of footage in section on unlawful use of water cannon; other video from the square shows police officers chasing and hitting protestors on foot and using hand-held chemical irritant spray even though protestors are dispersing (<https://x.com/News247r/status/1895507699712016809>). In two videos, police are using excessive force against protestors (<https://x.com/konvret/status/1895567897684295790>; <https://x.com/redstreamnet/status/1895469504802800125>). The Attika General Police Directorate announced that during the 28 February 2025 protest, approximately 700 individuals used the large gathering to violently attack police outside Greek Parliament. According to the

Photojournalist **Orestis Panagiotou** sustained a head injury and suffered from tinnitus after a stun grenade thrown by a police officer struck him while he was covering clashes between groups of individuals and police in Syntagma Square that day. He was transferred to hospital, where doctors stitched the wound and conducted hearing tests.¹¹³

Panagiotou said: *“I was there to do my job [...] and a stun grenade was thrown and hit my head [...] and exploded next to me. [...] I started bleeding, lost my orientation, and some protesters helped me [...]”*. A preliminary disciplinary investigation started into the incident.

Amnesty International also interviewed **Stefanos Ganotis**, a teacher who described how police pushed him causing him to fall and then hit him and other protesters and threw stun grenades on the stairs of Athens' Orthodox Cathedral, causing panic among children who were present there.

Ganotis said: *“[...] There were people who were exiting the church who did not know what was happening including a mother with two children [...] and one of them started screaming [...] as a stun grenade exploded exactly on the stairs [of the Cathedral]”*.¹¹⁴

Similarly, cardiologist **Giorgos Vichas** stated: *“I was with children and women who were leaving towards the columns of Olympios Zeus. There were no clashes and nonetheless [the police] threw stun grenades at the families”*.¹¹⁵

On 6 December 2025, police used unnecessary or excessive force during the dispersal of a peaceful protest where the protesters were attempting to reach the Alexis Grigoropoulos memorial in the neighbourhood of Exarcheia. The protest took place to commemorate the anniversary of his killing by a Greek police special guard in 2008. A video verified by Amnesty International shows peaceful protesters chanting slogans in the corner of Panepistimiou and Emanuel Benaki streets. At minute 00:08 in the video, what sounds like the detonation of stun grenades can be heard. The video then shows stun grenades exploding in the midst of a dense, peaceful crowd.¹¹⁶ Two photojournalists and a journalist covering the event described to Amnesty International how the police suddenly attacked the peaceful protesters who were objecting to police not allowing them to go further.¹¹⁷

Amnesty International has been shown stun grenades gathered by protesters and viewed pictures of stun grenades taken following the dispersal of a demonstration/or other type of mobilization. Images analyzed by Amnesty International's weapon expert show Rheinmetall NICO 2-Bang BTV grenades, clearly marked as emitting a 170Db bang (at two meters), enough to cause permanent hearing damage.¹¹⁸ According to the Omega Research Foundation, an NGO with expertise in the design and use of less lethal weapons, these devices have a “very powerful, metal case, have caused deafness and burn injuries in the past, and are unsuitable for use by police or any security forces against assemblies”.¹¹⁹

statement, police employed “necessary measures” to contain and de-escalate the situation after ensuring that peaceful demonstrators were directed to safety. See: <https://www.astynomia.gr/2025/02/28/28-02-2025-anakoinosi-g-e-d-attikis-schetika-me-programmatismeni-syvkentrosi-diamartyrias-stin-plateia-syntagmatos-me-aformi-to-sidirodromiko-dystychima-sta-febi/>. In a meeting with the Greek authorities on 10 September 2025, representatives of the Greek police stated that in their concern was to ensure the safety of those gathered in view of the unprecedented number of the protest and their response to the clashes was designed to ensure that safety.

¹¹³ Interview 12 August 2025.

¹¹⁴ Interview 4 March 2025.

¹¹⁵ Interview 4 March 2025.

¹¹⁶ See: https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=824655490556175&_rdr; <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DR99phJFfDT/>; <https://twitter.com/i/status/1997379408068214981> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_u_17e9B6k&t=16s; and video on archive. In their statement, the Greek police said that a group of 400 people attacked public order police and that police forces following the attack used the absolutely necessary means to restore order and arrested 15 people participating in the attack. <https://www.astynomia.gr/2025/12/06/06-12-2025-anakoinosi-g-e-d-attikis-schetika-me-syvkentroiseis-kai-poreies-pou-pragmatopoiithikan-simera-06-12-2025-sti-mnimi-tou-alexandrou-grigoropoulou/>.

¹¹⁷ Interviews 7 and 8 December 2025.

¹¹⁸ See: <https://www.talpo.it/files/rheinmetall-hand-grenades.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ Communication with Omega Research Foundation, 21 October 2025.

Amnesty International also interviewed **Maria Stergiadou**, a municipal council worker and active member of KIATHESS who also participated in the 28 February Tempi protest, a year earlier, in 2024. Stergiadou sustained a serious wound with necrotic tissue on her right gluteus after being struck by what she believed to be a stun grenade.¹²⁰ The incident happened in front of the Thessaloniki train station. Stergiadou required extended medical treatment and has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Despite pleas for medical assistance by other members of KIATHESS, police reportedly ignored calls for an ambulance.

As Stergiadou told Amnesty International “[...] I see a man from the police unit targeting me with something that I could not see what it was [...] he was holding it with both hands, I see him targeting me and I look on the left and on the right [...] the [students] come and shout a slogan, they do not do anything else [...] and I turn my back and I hear a loud bang and I feel something pushing me and pain and a burning sensation [...] my hand has blood and my skin is exposed [...] I felt that I was burning, I felt pain, that I was collapsing.”¹²¹

Stergiadou filed a criminal complaint and a prosecutor opened a criminal investigation. A disciplinary investigation started into the incident. At the time of the writing, Stergiadou did not know of any progress regarding her case.

Stergiadou identified a video where she believes it was filmed approximately at the time that she sustained injuries. The verified video in front of the Thessaloniki train station shows police responding to objects thrown by some of the protesters with chemical irritants while a police officer is shown throwing a Tear Ball Multi Effect Grenade directly into the crowd while stun grenades are being used while the retreating protesters do not appear to engage in violence.¹²²



© ↑ Police officer throwing a Tear Ball Multi Effect Grenade directly into the crowd in February 2024 in Thessaloniki. Screenshot from the YouTube video posted by Thestival Gr.

Tear Ball Multi Effect Grenades combine kinetic impact of rubber fragments, the dispersion of chemical irritants as well as the stunning effect of the explosion. Grenades that disperse multiple kinetic impact projectiles carry an elevated risk of causing serious injuries – including eye injuries – and must be prohibited for use in law enforcement.

¹²⁰ Amnesty International has seen a copy of the medical documents detailing Maria Stergiadou's injury (on file).

¹²¹ Interview 15 March 2025 and 13 September 2025.

¹²² See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AvWUHKA_ik.

LIFE CHANGING OR SERIOUS INJURIES FROM POLICE MISUSE OF STUN GRENADES: PERPETRATORS GO UNPUNISHED, SURVIVORS FACE LONG PROCEEDINGS

In cases where protesters and members of the press have sustained life-changing or serious injuries from stun grenades, perpetrators have gone unpunished or victims are still waiting for the outcome of the investigations.

In November 2022, a court rejected the authorities' appeal against a first instance decision that found the Greek state responsible for the serious injury of journalist **Manolis Kypreos** by police in 2011. Kypreos lost his hearing in June 2011 while covering a demonstration in Athens after a police officer threw a stun grenade directly at him. However, no police officer was held accountable during the criminal and disciplinary investigations.¹²³

Danai Kotsioni, a lawyer and researcher, sustained a serious wound and burn on her left shin when a stun grenade reportedly exploded between her legs during the dispersal of a peaceful protest in Athens on 3 May 2022. She described the significant and ongoing impact of her injury on her physical health including scars and discoloration, ongoing pain in the area of her injury as well as her mental health.¹²⁴

Kotsioni said: *"I heard the noise from the stun grenade and people started running [...] As I tried to leave, I felt intense pain in my left shin and I look at my leg and I see my shoe, leg and dress full of blood [...] The stun grenade exploded among my feet and a fragment hit my leg [...] I travelled the world and by a matter of inches – if it had hit my leg with a direct hit, I could have lost my leg right in the heart of Athens".*¹²⁵

Kotsioni submitted a complaint to EMIDIPA. However, three and a half years later, she has not received any information on the progress of her case or whether any police officer has been held accountable. A lawsuit was also submitted to an administrative court requesting reparations and it remains pending.

Giorgos Mavros, a PhD student at the University of Thessaloniki, described to Amnesty International how he sustained a series of serious injuries including a head injury, a perforated eardrum with bleeding, hearing loss and wounds and burns to his right hand, arm and shoulder following the explosion of a stun grenade that hit him on the side of his head.¹²⁶ Mavros said that on the 10 May 2022 he had gone to the University to attend a class where he met with people who had just assisted students suffering from breathing difficulties to get out of the Sciences Department building after police threw chemical irritants inside the building. Mavros then participated in a peaceful student protest outside the Rectorate building to protest about unlawful use of force by the police that day. He described how police dispersed the peaceful protesters with stun grenades, batons and chemical irritants when an individual was involved in an altercation with the police. Video shows a minor provocation by the individual concerned towards the police and then police responding by using batons and stun grenades against the peaceful assembly.¹²⁷

As Mavros described: *"[...] I do not know how many stun grenades were deployed at that moment. The crowd was moving backwards. In front of me, people were falling and there was an imminent risk of people being trampled. In order not to worsen the situation and cause a crowd crush, I moved quickly but calmly towards the rear. At that time, I was at a considerable distance from the police. As I had just gone down the steps (of the yard) of the Rectorate building, I suddenly felt a strong impact and an explosion [...] The sensation was as if I had been struck by a large iron bar. [A stun grenade] hit me and exploded directly to my head [...] Immediately afterwards, everything I touched was covered in blood and ash."*¹²⁸

¹²³ Europe: Under Protected and Over Restricted: The state of the right to protest in 21 European countries, p. 146; <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/new-greek-government-must-address-routine-police-violence>; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/eur250012012en.pdf>.

¹²⁴ Medical certificate on file.

¹²⁵ Interview, 12 September 2025.

¹²⁶ Medical certificates on file.

¹²⁷ Video on file.

¹²⁸ Interview 7 April 2026.

Another video shows what appears to be smoke from the stun grenade explosions at the stairs of the yard of the Rectory building. Mavros told Amnesty International that it was at that point that he was injured.¹²⁹

Mavros spoke about the ongoing impact of the incident and injuries on his mental health. He filed a criminal complaint against unknown perpetrators and three riot police officers. A disciplinary investigation also started into the incident.



☺↑ One of the stun grenades thrown at protesters during a student protest at the University of Thessaloniki on 10 May 2022. Screenshot from a video shared with Amnesty International (recorded by journalist Chris Avramidis)

In September 2025, a prosecutor rejected the complaint as unsubstantiated. The reasoning finds the use of force against the students as lawful and cites clashes that took place between individuals and the police on that day. According to Mavros, the ruling follows erroneous reasoning as it is based on testimonies and pictures about two reported clashes with the police and links them with the incident where he was injured. Mavros pointed out that the places where these two reported clashes took place (the University's Philosophy Department and the courtyard of the Biology Department) are different areas to the place where he was injured (the Rectorate building courtyard).¹³⁰

The ruling also argues that police responded to an attack by an individual and then the students who were gathered outside the Rectorate building and found the force used lawful. The reasoning risks legitimizing unlawful force against a peaceful protest, and could encourage deployment of stun grenades during assemblies, in reckless disregard of the duty of the police to minimize harm.¹³¹ Mavros filed an appeal against the ruling.

On 26 May 2022, during a protest at Aristoteion University in Thessaloniki against the ongoing police presence on campus, **Giannis Dousakis**, a student, was struck by a stun grenade fired by a police officer and sustained severe injuries including fracture of the upper jaw, partial tooth avulsion of many teeth, cheek displacement and partial hearing loss.

Dousakis described a peaceful demonstration and said: "[...] I felt something metal striking me [...] It hit me on my jaw and then exploded somewhere near my stomach and my feet [...] It did not explode on my face. If it [happened] I believe it would have been lethal [...] And my vision got blurred [...] and

¹²⁹ Video on file.

¹³⁰ The Biology Department is part of the Science Department but located in a different building next to the Science Department building.

¹³¹ Document on file.

*there was noise in my head [...] I was really feeling, I was [going to lose my consciousness] at that point”.*¹³²

Videos analysed by Amnesty International shows Dousakis standing next to the group of students holding a banner. Protesters are chanting when the group holding a banner starts marching towards the police. When some protesters tried to cross the police line, police responded with disproportionate and excessive force including the use of stun grenades.¹³³

Dousakis told Amnesty International that he has undergone multiple painful procedures since and continues to experience serious physical and mental health impacts. He filed a criminal complaint, and a PDE was launched. At the time of writing, he had not been informed of the outcome of that investigation.¹³⁴

In September 2025, a prosecutorial decision dismissed the criminal complaint. The ruling acknowledged that Dousakis was hit by the grenade but deemed the police’s use of force lawful, citing exceptional reasons such as the protesters making a step towards the police and previous attacks on police on campus. This reasoning also risks legitimizing unlawful force, and could encourage deployment of stun grenades during assemblies, in reckless disregard of the duty of the police to minimize harm.¹³⁵ Amnesty International has been informed that following an appeal against the prosecutor’s decision, the criminal investigation has reopened.



☺↑ *Smoke from stun grenade thrown by the police officers into the crowd of protesters at Aristoteleion University in Thessaloniki on 26 May 2022. Screenshot from a private video shared with Amnesty International.*

On 5 March 2023, photojournalist **Konstantinos Zilos** suffered a second degree burn in the left lower stomach area after being struck by a stun grenade fired by riot police while covering a demonstration on the Tempi rail tragedy in Athens.¹³⁶

Zilos described: *“At the level of the Propylaea, while I was documenting the incidents and while the police forces were firing chemicals and flashbang grenades towards the demonstrators, one of these devices exploded and was propelled directly onto my body. This happened while I was taking*

¹³² Interview 12 December 2025. Giannis Dousakis also reported that he was struck on the neck with a baton by a police officer during the dispersal of a peaceful student protest on 10 May 2022 in front of the Rectory building at the University of Thessaloniki. Giannis Dousakis said that he sought medical treatment for his injury and breathing difficulties he experienced from the chemical irritants and that he had to wear a neck brace as a result.

¹³³ Videos on file.

¹³⁴ Eight months later, Giannis Dousakis was charged with some other protester with allegedly disturbing public peace and attempting to injure police. during the protest, charges that he fully denies.

¹³⁵ Document on file.

¹³⁶ Medical document on file. Interview with Konstantinos Zilos, 4 May 2023; 14 December 2025 and 17 March 2026.

photographs, specifically on the left side of my abdominal area. My jacket was burned – it was quite thick, a motorcycle jacket – as well as the clothes I was wearing underneath, and I sustained a second-degree burn.”

Zilos filed a criminal complaint few days after the incident and he reports that there has been no progress so far and a complaint before an administrative court for compensation.

On 16 March 2023, journalist **Nikos Christofakis** suffered 55% hearing loss in both ears while covering another demonstration on the Tempi rail tragedy in Athens when police reportedly threw stun grenades at him and another colleague at head level.¹³⁷

Christofakis said: *“Some minor clashes started [between some protesters and the police] where Hotel Grand Bretagne is. [Members of the press] were behind and it was visible who we were and we were at a distance [...] Some riot police units arrived and [...] threw two stun grenades towards our faces [...] I do not know what would happen, if we did not wear masks”.*

Christofakis filed a criminal complaint and in March 2026, he was informed that the criminal case was archived as the perpetrator could not be found.

Amnesty International has expressed its serious concerns about the dangerous effects of stun grenades in the policing of assemblies in meetings with the Minister of Citizen Protection, the Chief of the Hellenic Police and other senior officials. In his response during one of the meetings the Minister of Citizen Protection has informed Amnesty International that he would ask for instructions to be disseminated to law enforcement officials for their appropriate use.¹³⁸

3.2 POLICE USE BATONS, OTHER BEATINGS AND KICKINGS IN WAYS WHICH ARE UNLAWFUL, DANGEROUS AND PUNITIVE

International standards require authorities to ensure that the use of batons – striking self-defence weapons (or for defence of another person) – must be preceded by a clear warning, and in any case must never be used to disperse a peaceful assembly. The UN Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons for Law Enforcement further require that baton strikes should only be used “against individuals who are either inflicting or threatening to inflict injury on a law enforcement official or a member of the public”; they also state that only limbs such as arms and legs can be targeted.¹³⁹ So-called “baton charges”, with police running after people to hit whoever gets within reach, are an unlawful use of force and must be prohibited. Batons may only be used in a targeted response to violent people or against a threat of imminent violence. The use of a baton to carry out an arrest can only be lawful if the person is resisting with considerable violence and there are no other less harmful means available to achieve the objective. Under no circumstances should a baton be used against a person already brought under control, or as punishment after violent behavior has been committed.¹⁴⁰

Testimonies and verified video evidence analysed by Amnesty International demonstrated that Greek police used unlawful force as they struck peaceful protesters; engaged in so-called “baton charges”, with police running after people to hit whoever was within reach; and used batons against persons already brought under control. Several protesters and a member of the press interviewed by Amnesty International sustained head and other injuries as a result of police using batons against them.

The following are illustrative examples highlighting these types of violations by the police against protesters:

¹³⁷ Interview with Nikos Christofakis, 5 May 2023; follow-up communications also 30 May 2024, 14 December 2025 and 31 March 2026. Medical document on file.

¹³⁸ Meeting 23 July 2024.

¹³⁹ See: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/LLW_Guidance.pdf.

¹⁴⁰ See: Batons and other Handheld Kinetic Impact Weapons, An Amnesty International Position Paper, 2022, available at: <https://policehumanrightsresources.org/content/uploads/2022/07/Position-paper-striking-weapons-final.pdf?x23918/>.

On 8 March 2024, Greek police used unnecessary or excessive force to disperse largely peaceful protesters in Syntagma Square, Athens. Police sprayed protesters with excessive quantities of chemical irritants, hit them repeatedly with batons and used stun grenades to disperse the protest while clashes took place with some protesters.¹⁴¹ Testimonies and video evidence highlight how police then used batons to strike a group of retreating students on their heads and bodies while they were holding banners. In one case, a picture shows a police officer using his baton the wrong way round to strike the protesters with the handle that is made of harder material, which is an extremely dangerous way of use and appears to be intentionally inflicting greater harm than necessary. The police also sprayed tear gas and forced students against railings despite an obvious risk of fall.¹⁴² Eight students and a journalist were injured and transferred to the hospital.¹⁴³



📷↑ *Police officer using his baton the wrong way round to strike the protesters with the handle which is made of harder material, which is an extremely dangerous way of using it, and appears to be intentionally inflicting greater harm than necessary. Screenshot from a video recorded by journalist Spiros Chalikias.*

Amnesty International interviewed **Giorgos**, a student, who sustained a head wound as a consequence of the police hitting him repeatedly with his baton, leaving Giorgos requiring stitches, with an injury and bruises on his neck and a broken finger from trying to shield himself.

As Giorgos describes: “[...] [this police officer] hit me repeatedly on the head [and] beyond the head wound when I had raised my hands to cover myself, [my finger] broke at the end [...] I was hanging from the railings and from the jackets of the other protesters [...] I had to wear a neck brace for a month”.¹⁴⁴

Giorgos told Amnesty International that he was never called to testify for a disciplinary investigation that started into the incident.

In a video showing scenes described by Giorgos in an interview and verified by Amnesty International, at least ten police officers are seen striking a group of protesters on the upper body while the protesters are pressed against railings and attempt to protect themselves by covering their heads with their hands.¹⁴⁵ Some protesters are observed using flag sticks in an attempt to fend off the officers. Baton strikes to the head or neck carry an inherent risk of serious injury. The use of force in this incident appears unnecessary and disproportionate and therefore constitutes a violation of international standards on the use of less lethal weapons in assemblies.

¹⁴¹ Video shows protesters gathered peacefully and chanting slogans while facing the police in front of the Parliament and then police spraying protesters with chemical irritants and some protesters violently clashing with the police and throwing Molotov cocktails while the vast majority of protesters backtrack without appearing to engage in any violence. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANfrwTnxRxM> (0:01-3:30 min). Other video shows police repeatedly hitting the students with batons and spraying them with chemical irritants. See: <https://x.com/i/status/1766132221029544095> (0:04 min onward).

¹⁴² See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANfrwTnxRxM> (4:10-4:40 min and 4:58-5:07 min).

¹⁴³ The Greek Police stated that approximately 50 masked individuals attacked officers with Molotov cocktails and stones near the Monument of the Unknown Soldier, prompting police to act to prevent damage and de-escalate tensions.

¹⁴⁴ Interviews 13 March 2024 and 28 April 2026. Medical certificate on file.

¹⁴⁵ See: <https://www.instagram.com/p/C4QcXsToFUs/>.

Kostantinos Prasopoulos, a student who sustained a head injury requiring stitches after being hit by police shared with Amnesty International how: “[...] We reached the railings and [...] I see them beating us ferociously [...] At some point I saw another student falling from the railings to an acrylic glass [roof below] [...] We were placing our hands in front of us to avoid the beatings and amidst the panic I felt something on my head that I did not pay much attention, I saw blood”.¹⁴⁶

Journalist and member of the Athens Daily Newspaper Journalists’ Union (ESIEA), **Spiros Chalikias**, described in detail how he was struck with a baton by a police officer when he attempted to photograph two protesters who were being beaten by police officers and were at serious risk of falling over the railings, and subsequently how he received a series of kicks from police officers while he was lying on the pavement, which led him towards the steps of Syntagma Square where a photojournalist stopped his fall. Chalikias suffered a concussion and a knee injury and required hospital treatment.

Chalikias described: “[...] And at that moment, when I am low and taking photos from below [...] [a police officer] comes from my right and hits me [with a baton] on the right side of my forehead, on top of my mask [...] I fall backwards [...] and I shout to him, ‘What are you doing? I’m a journalist,’ and he slams me again, in the same spot, slightly further over [...] I fell, and as I was falling, I felt a burning pain in my leg as well, because he either kicked me or stepped on me [...] From that point on, the only thing I can hear and understand is shouting and clear blows landing on me”.¹⁴⁷

Amnesty International understands that a disciplinary investigation has started into the incident.

On 7 March 2025, following an evening rally in Athens for Tempi rail tragedy, reports emerged of police using unlawful force against members of the political group Anametrisis. Three protesters described that they had to leave Syntagma Square after a water cannon appeared and that when they reached the area near Propylaea, police misused batons, shields, stun grenades and chemical irritants against their group. One of them reported an injury and a second reported a series of bruises. One verified video from the incident does show police officers chasing protesters who are fleeing and hitting them in the back with batons, while surrounded by thick clouds of smoke.¹⁴⁸

Anna*, a female protester who was with the group in the rally in Athens that evening reported that she sustained a rupture on her elbow and arm as a result of police violence which required medical treatment.

As Anna* describes: “[...] I fell on the ground and then [riot police] came and they hit me with a shield on the head and then I lay completely on the ground and placed my arm on my head [...] and then two officers beat me up for five seconds [...] I was hit four times on my right arm which I had above my head and once on my right leg”.¹⁴⁹

Several protesters reportedly required hospital treatment for injuries such as broken or fractured limbs, head and leg injuries due to police violence including batons and kicks during a protest in solidarity with Palestinians in Athens on 7 October 2025 and while in detention.¹⁵⁰ Video evidence verified by Amnesty International confirms that the riot police had used unnecessary or excessive use of force including misuse of batons: one video for instance shows police officers purposefully trying to make a protester fall; after that unsuccessful attempt, three officers turn to another peaceful protester and repeatedly beat him with batons, then another officer hits another protester with a baton, the protester falls and the officer hits him again with a baton while the protester is seen laying on the ground.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Interview 13 March 2024. Both students required hospital treatment.

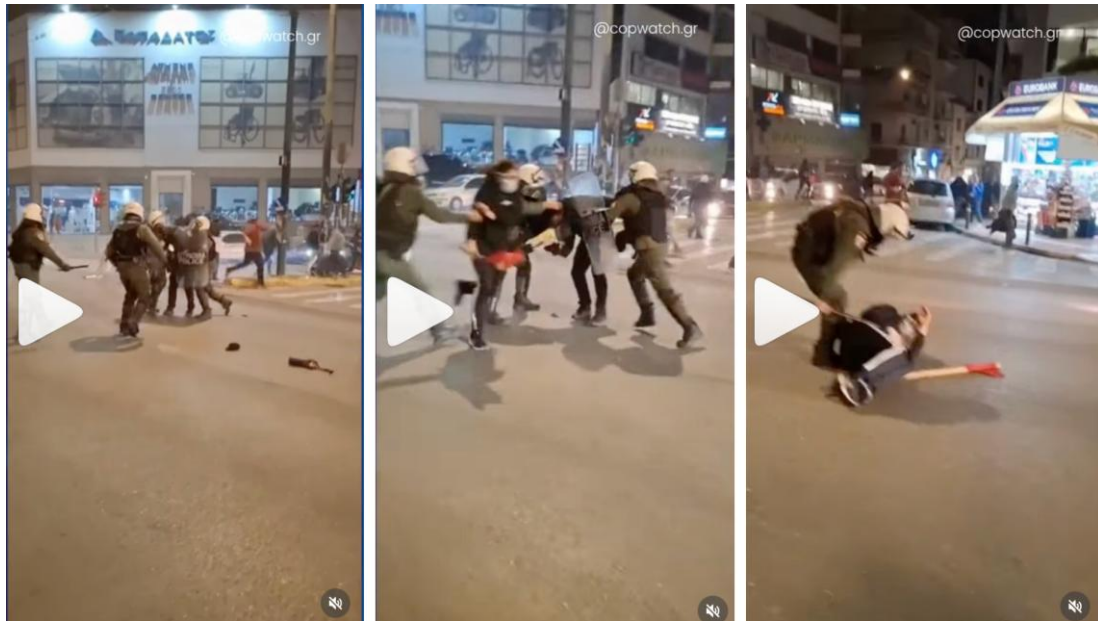
¹⁴⁷ Interview, 11 March 2024 and 26 March 2026. Footage shows Spiros Chalikias lying on the ground while another photojournalist tries to assist him at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANfrwTnxRxM> (4:45-4:56 min).

¹⁴⁸ See: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1777311723119090> (0:55-1:15 min).

¹⁴⁹ Interview 21 March 2025. Name changed to protect the identity of the interviewee.

¹⁵⁰ See: section on unlawful use of force and other human rights violations during arrest/and or detention.

¹⁵¹ See: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DPibBBOAD40/>; see also: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DPHJScKDDaf/>.



© ↑ Video evidence shows riot police using batons in an unnecessary or excessive manner during a protest in Athens on 7 October 2025, including instances showing police officers purposefully trying to make a protester fall. Screenshots from an Instagram video posted by The Press Project International and Cops Watch Greece.

For example, **Nikos***, a lawyer in his thirties go, said: “[...] I did not manage to reach Panormou street and between three and four police officers started beating me, [I told them ‘I am not resisting’] [...] They beat me with their batons, elbows and hands”.¹⁵²

Nikolas*, another protester described how he sustained an injury on his forehead that required stitches after being hit by a police officer: “[...] A riot police officer came and hit me with his baton on my forehead and at that point I fell on the ground. I stood up and after two steps I fell again, he had hit me with great force, it was like I did not feel my legs”.¹⁵³

Also, **K.S.**, a male protester and member of the “Community of Squatted Prosfygika”, described: “[...] When we tried to leave to get away from all [...] the tear gas [...] they closed us in, in a spot in front of an apartment building, and [they started hitting us] [...] And after our arrest, we were there in handcuffs, effectively detained [...] they attacked the people who showed solidarity and continued to beat us”.¹⁵⁴

In a corroborating video, a police officer is heard ordering for protesters to be arrested and ordering the arrest of a group of protesters who are encircled by police in front of an apartment building; and police is shown hitting repeatedly with their batons the group who do not appear to pose any threat.¹⁵⁵ **K.S.** also reported that he sustained a complete ligament tear in the front of his knee and a meniscus tear and had to undergo surgery after a police officer kicked him on the back of his leg, behind the knee after his apprehension.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Eighteen protesters were reportedly arrested and transferred to the General Attika Police Directorate and another police station. Most of them were held for several days. Interview October 2025. Name changed to protect identity of the interviewee. Nikos* has been charged for alleged violence against a state employee and weapon possession, charges that he fully denies.

¹⁵³ Interview 20 March 2026. Name changed to protect identity of the interviewee.

¹⁵⁴ Interview 30 October 2025. Initials used to protect identity of the interviewee.

¹⁵⁵ See: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DPHJScKDDaf/>.

¹⁵⁶ K.S. faces several felony and misdemeanour charges including violence against a state employee and weapon possession, charges that he fully denies.

On 6 December 2025, during a protest commemorating the death of Alexis Grigoropoulos, **K., a 35-year-old artist**, reported being repeatedly struck with batons by police. K. described an organized and unprovoked attack by police against a large group of demonstrators with the use of chemical irritants, batons and shields. He sustained an injury to his elbow that required hospital treatment.¹⁵⁷

K said: “[...] I was holding with one hand my girlfriend who started having a panic attack and with the other hand I was rebutting baton strikes from police”.¹⁵⁸

Additional video evidence shot at the same protest but of a different incident verified by Amnesty International shows police repeatedly striking with their batons a group of protesters who had dispersed following the use of stun grenades and then apprehending one protester and repeatedly striking the individual with batons despite him being immobilized and not resisting. While the video shows that some protesters engaged in minor scuffles with the police, the police response appears violent, dangerous, excessive, and grossly disproportionate.¹⁵⁹ In addition, repeatedly striking an immobilized protester with batons constitutes unlawful use of force and may amount to torture or other ill treatment.

3.3 POLICE MISUSE OF CHEMICAL IRRITANTS AND WATER CANNON AGAINST PROTESTERS

Greek authorities have international legal obligations to ensure law enforcement equipment with indiscriminate effects – such as tear gas and water cannon – are not used unless necessary and proportionate in circumstances of widespread violence against persons and when it is no longer possible to contain the violence by dealing with the individuals engaged in violence alone. Further, law enforcement officers must ensure that tear gas grenades are never fired directly at people and are only used in the open space, where it is easy for people to leave. The use of any weapon against children must be avoided. Tear gas is likely to have a greater effect on children with a risk of more severe consequences for their health. Affected children should proactively be given medical attention.¹⁶⁰ Police should never use tear gas to disperse peaceful protesters. Further, handheld chemical irritants may only be used to overcome violent resistance but not against persons who are only passively resisting. Its use against people who are peaceful or already under control may amount to ill-treatment or in some circumstances even torture.¹⁶¹ High-capacity hand-held chemical irritant dispensers, such as the type used by Greek police in these protests should be subjected to the same standard and threshold as tear gas grenades: to be used only in case of widespread violence against persons that cannot be controlled by dealing with violent individuals alone and they must never be used in enclosed spaces.

Water cannon in high pressure mode may only be used in case of widespread violence against persons that cannot be addressed any more by targeting violent individuals alone.¹⁶² In such circumstances, the deployment of water cannon must be limited to the purpose of implementing an order to disperse. Isolated acts of violence do not justify such a use of water cannon, since it has a high risk of affecting bystanders and peaceful protesters alike. In high-pressure mode, police should never target people at close range or aim directly at people’s heads or faces. Water cannon may never be used or aimed at individuals who are restrained or unable to move.¹⁶³

Testimonies provided to Amnesty International by 36 individuals including four members of the press and videos verified by Amnesty International demonstrate cases where police have misused chemical irritants; some testimonies and videos also demonstrate cases where police have unlawfully used water cannon to disperse protesters that do not appear to pose any threat. Some of those interviewed said that they suffered breathing difficulties, a burning sensation in the mouth and throat or fainting sensation as a result of misuse of chemical irritants and in one case chemical irritants were used in a confined space; two individuals sought hospital treatment for breathing difficulties and other injuries and one for problems with her eyesight; in one case chemical irritants were used while children were also among those participating in a protest, leading to

¹⁵⁷ See section on misuse of stun grenades.

¹⁵⁸ Interview 17 December 2025. Initial used to protect anonymity of interviewee. Medical certificate on file with Amnesty International.

¹⁵⁹ Footage on archive with Amnesty International; <https://x.com/flashgofficial/status/1997379408068214981> (0:29 and 0:48 min); <https://www.instagram.com/reels/DR99phJfDTI/>; also <https://twitter.com/i/status/1997379408068214981> and <https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=824655490556175&rdr>.

¹⁶⁰ See: <https://www.amnesty.nl/content/uploads/2024/03/Tear-gas.pdf?x66444>.

¹⁶¹ Amnesty International: 30 Rules for the use of chemical irritants in law enforcement at: <https://bit.ly/46o5xZk>.

¹⁶² UNOCHR, Guidance on LLW in Law Enforcement, para. 7.7.2.

¹⁶³ OSCE-ODIHR, HR Handbook on Policing Assemblies, p. 78.

them requiring first aid treatment. Those interviewed also described police misuse of batons and stun grenades.

The following cases documented by Amnesty International are illustrative of the police using chemical irritants, water cannon as well as other less lethal weapons such as batons, as well as stun grenades against protestors in ways which violated their human rights and the guidance pertaining to their use.

On 31 October 2024, police used chemical irritants and struck retreating **seasonal firefighters** with batons inside the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection during the dispersal of a sit-in protest by firefighters about the competent Minister's reported refusal to meet with them to discuss concerns about the non-renewal of their contracts.¹⁶⁴ Video footage shows clouds of tear gas in an enclosed space in violation of international standards that tear gas may only be used where people have opportunity to disperse and should not be deployed in confined spaces or where routes of escape are blocked.¹⁶⁵

Five firefighters interviewed by Amnesty International described how police deployed both chemical irritants and batons in ways that could have endangered health and lives of protesters, despite the fact that an agreement had been reached between the police and protesters that they would leave peacefully.¹⁶⁶



☺ ↑ Clouds of tear gas inside the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection. Screenshot from a YouTube video posted by SKAI.gr

Panagiotis*, a seasonal firefighter said: *“The seasonal firefighters, sitting on the ground, were shouting ‘no, guys, no, guys,’ calmly, ‘easy, guys, quietly, guys. No, please.’ and then [the public order police] began beating us – relentlessly – on the head, the ribs, the back [...] At the same time, chemical irritants were deployed in an enclosed space with escalators”*.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Video reviewed by Amnesty International shows police officers overturning a desk and pushing it towards the firefighters who are inside the Ministry and then pushing them with their shields at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=Euscw_vTOM (0:01-0:28 min). Some minor scuffles appear to break between few firefighters and the police but protesters appear in their vast majority peaceful at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIEaYrmFTAQ> (0:02-0:03 min); video also shows police officers hitting protesters with batons to disperse the crowd towards the Ministry's exit and one can discern a cloud of tear gas at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIEaYrmFTAQ> (0:23-0:35 min); public video but also video held by Amnesty International on archive show chemical irritants and a water cannon being used to disperse protesters who are outside the Ministry and who are already in retreat at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIEaYrmFTAQ> (2:00 min onward). According to a statement by the Greek Police, the protesting firefighters were given a deadline to exit the Ministry which they failed to do so, caused property damage and attacked police forces by throwing objects at them. The statement also mentioned that, once the firefighters were removed from the building, they remained outside and disrupted traffic. See: <https://bit.ly/472mkkk>.

¹⁶⁵ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIEaYrmFTAQ> (0:23-0:35 min and 4:05-4:06 min).

¹⁶⁶ Interviews with two male firefighters, 13 November 2024; Interview with one male firefighter, 19 November 2024; Interview with male firefighter, 17 November 2025; Interview with male firefighter, 19 November 2025.

¹⁶⁷ Interview 13 November 2024.

Achilleas*, a seasonal firefighter, described how he suffered from breathing difficulties as a result of chemical irritants and head and jaw injuries after he was reportedly struck with a baton by police inside the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection.¹⁶⁸

Achilleas* described: *“They threw chemical irritants at us and the time we stood up, I stand up and they hit me with a baton and for about thirty to forty meters that I was trying to get out from the corridor and we were pushing each other to get out, they [hit] me again with a baton many times. My arms were full of bruises, my backpack protected me [from more injuries]. I could not breathe from the chemical irritants”*.

Zoe Konstantopoulou, leader of the political party Course to Freedom, MP and lawyer of the firefighters reported that three firefighters and journalist Giorgos Androutsos required hospital treatment for injuries and breathing difficulties sustained by unlawful use of force including misuse of chemical irritants by the police. Zoe Konstantopoulou said that she had to intervene and protest to the Minister of Citizen Protection to achieve the transfer of those injured from GADA to the hospital and that one of them had to be hospitalized for few days.¹⁶⁹

At a large protest for Tempi in Athens on 26 January 2025, **Magda Kaloriti**, a costume designer, was sprayed on the face and body with chemical irritants directly by a police officer.¹⁷⁰

Magda said: *“[...] I did not do anything and at some point, a police officer comes and makes a threatening move to make me leave. I did not leave as I had no reason to go and he raises the handheld chemical irritant device and sprays it on my face [...] Suddenly my face started burning [...] and I could not see anything, I could not open eyes, I felt like choking, I was lucky I was wearing lenses”*.¹⁷¹

Magda continued to experience problems with her vision as a result of the incident and went to a public hospital to be examined. Magda filed a criminal complaint against the police officer concerned. In view of the material viewed, the use of hand-held chemical irritant dispenser in such case is not only unlawful but also punitive and may amount to torture or other ill-treatment.

Kiki, a freelance photojournalist described how she fainted when police used chemical irritants against peaceful protesters at the end of a peaceful protest in solidarity with Palestinians on 15 June 2025.¹⁷²

Kiki recounted: *“[...] A stun grenade exploded near my feet, [police] had already sprayed with chemical irritants and at that point [...] I could not take a breath because of the chemical irritants and some people came to help me to go to another place and during my transfer I fainted [...] When I recovered, I could not open my eyes”*.¹⁷³

On 13 August 2025, few hundred protesters gathered peacefully in Volos to express solidarity with Palestinians and oppose the arrival of an Israeli-flagged cruise ship. Videos shows riot police officers deploying chemical irritants and stun grenades against peaceful protesters standing outside the port exit and spraying chemical irritants from extremely close range.¹⁷⁴

Among those affected was **Giannis Maggos**, a retired high-school teacher seeking justice for his son Vasileios – a previous victim of police violence.

¹⁶⁸ Interview 17 November 2025 and 14 April 2026, Achilleas* required hospital treatment. Medical document on file. Achilleas* also alleged that a police officer punched him, a second seasonal firefighter and a journalist in the stomach following their arrest. In an article that he wrote, journalist Giorgos Androutsos from Rizospastis newspaper spoke about being arbitrarily and violently arrested while covering the events. See: <https://www.rizospastis.gr/page.do?id=19851&publDate=5%2F11%2F2024&pageNo=13>; [Mapping Media Freedom: Greece: Journalist Giorgos Androutsos assaulted and arrested by riot police while filming police violence at demonstration \(2024-10-31\)](#).

¹⁶⁹ Interview 25 May 2025, 8 and 9 May 2026.

¹⁷⁰ Pictures that had been provided to Amnesty International show a riot police officer spraying Magda Kaloriti with chemical irritants on the face and body from around a meter's distance (pictures on archive). Also: [τεμπη αστυνομικη βια - Search / X](#).

¹⁷¹ Interview September 2025 and 21 March 2026.

¹⁷² See footage during the protest where riot police attempts to disperse protesters who simply seem to retreat by using their batons and by spraying them with chemical irritants (0:07-0:15 min); later that evening the footage shows riot police spraying with chemical irritants some young protesters who simply chant some slogans in solidarity with Palestine (5:46-6:02 min); Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Ggcgr4v3Mk>.

¹⁷³ Interview 27 June 2025.

¹⁷⁴ Video 1 shows riot police dispersing peaceful protesters with chemical irritants and stun grenades; Video 2 shows riot police dispersing peaceful protesters including Giannis Maggos with chemical irritants and stun grenades. See [βόλος: Διαμαρτυρία πολιτών για το ισραηλινό κρουαζιερόπλοιο](#).

Maggos stated: “[...] A public order police officer without provocation sprayed me with chemical irritants on my face from half a meter away. Immediately, I felt a burning in my lungs and thought I would faint because I could not breathe [...] While I was bent over, because I could not breathe, a stun grenade exploded next to my feet”.¹⁷⁵



📹 ↑ Riot police officers deploying chemical irritants and stun grenades against peaceful protesters standing outside the port of Volos in August 2025. Screenshot from the Facebook video posted by magnesianews.gr.

On 23 October 2025, police in Athens used unnecessary force to disperse a peaceful protest organized by teachers, parents, and primary school children outside the Primary and Secondary Education Directorate.¹⁷⁶ The demonstration was prompted by a Ministry of Education decision to merge 30 classes across various primary schools in Athens.¹⁷⁷

Four female protesters said that the incident caused a lot of distress to the children and parents had to seek medical assistance for their children for breathing difficulties and burning sensation in their eyes.¹⁷⁸

Boyka Boneva, President of the Parent’s Association of the 36th Primary School, said: “[...] We asked to speak to the Director of the [...] Education Directorate and we faced tear gas, stun grenades and police batons [...] Tear gas was thrown towards the direction of the children [...] They were hitting the parents with batons in front of the children’s eyes”.¹⁷⁹

Amnesty International verified videos that shows peaceful protesters chanting slogans.¹⁸⁰ In other videos, police is deploying stun grenades against the protesters who do not engage in any violence;¹⁸¹ using batons to strike protesters in the upper parts of the body¹⁸²; protesters are expressing their outrage, as a

¹⁷⁵ Interview 16 August 2025.

¹⁷⁶ Μεταξουργείο: 7χρονο παιδί στο νοσοκομείο Τα ΜΑΤ έπνιξαν» στα χημικά παιδιά, εκπαιδευτικούς & γονείς; Βία, χημικά και χτυπήματα σε μαθητές και εκπαιδευτικούς | Είθνος; Άγρια καταστολή κατά γονιών και εκπαιδευτικών - Διαδήλωναν ενάντια στις συγχωνεύσεις τμημάτων. According to the Greek police, a group of protesters attempted four times to enter the premises of the Directorate, pushing and hitting officers and throwing bottles and sticks for approximately fifteen minutes. Police reported that they prevented entry by using their shields and subsequently employed what they described as “necessary means” to de-escalate the situation. A disciplinary investigation has been launched to determine the circumstances of the incident. See: <https://www.astynomia.gr/2025/10/23/23-10-2025-anakinosi-g-e-d-attikis-schetika-me-programmatismeni-sygkentrosi-diamartyrias-peripou-100-atomon-exo-apo-ti-dieftynsi-protovathmias-kai-defterovathmias-ekpaideftis-a-athinas/>.

¹⁷⁷ Interviews 6, 11 16 and 28 November 2025.

¹⁷⁸ See medical document referring one of the children to the hospital for further tests here: Οργή για την ντροπιαστική επίθεση των ΜΑΤ - Παιδιά μεταφέρθηκαν σε Κέντρο Υγείας | ΕΦΣΥΝ.

¹⁷⁹ Interview 11 November 2025.

¹⁸⁰ See: <https://x.com/i/status/1981272433609916431>.

¹⁸¹ See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXxkU_1pyV4 (0:07-0:09 min).

¹⁸² Video on file with Amnesty International.

police officer is shown spraying some protesters with chemical irritants despite the fact that they had remained peaceful.¹⁸³

Three videos filmed from different angles alongside the Leof Vasilisis Amalias Street show water cannon unlawfully used against protesters who are already retreating and pose no threat to the police officers during the demonstrations for the Tempi rail tragedy on 28 February 2025.¹⁸⁴ This comes in violation of the UN Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, which clearly state that water cannon “should only be used in situations of serious public disorder where there is a significant likelihood of loss of life, serious injury or the widespread destruction of property”.¹⁸⁵

Journalist **Kostas Papantoniou** described to Amnesty International how police used water cannon to spray water jets directly at journalists and photojournalists covering the protest at Syntagma square, including himself.¹⁸⁶ Video evidence corroborates his accounts. In one video verified by Amnesty International Greek police can be seen firing water jets in the directions of journalists who are standing on the side of the street, far away and in an opposite direction of protesters who have already dispersed, suggesting the use of water cannon has a punitive purpose.¹⁸⁷



©↑ *Greek police firing water jets in the directions of journalists who are standing on the side of the street, far away and in an opposite direction of protesters who have already dispersed. Screenshot from YouTube video posted by Η ΑΥΓΗ Εφημερίδα της Αριστεράς (recorded by journalist Kostas Papantoniou)*

¹⁸³ See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXxkU_1pyV4 (0:30-0:34 min).

¹⁸⁴ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PtGBZ5DFfg> ; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jiri2d_NSo
https://x.com/chris_avramidis/status/1895480669037604880

¹⁸⁵ See: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/LLW_Guidance.pdf.

¹⁸⁶ Interview 5 March 2025. In their statement, Greek police justified the use of water cannons by noting that groups that gradually started returning back to Syntagma square threw a multitude of objects and as their actions could have caused injuries to protesters and to deter further attacks police used water cannons. See: <https://www.astynomia.gr/2025/02/28/28-02-2025-anakoinosi-g-e-d-attikis-schetika-me-programmatismeni-sygkentrosi-diamartyrias-stin-plateia-syntagmatos-me-aformi-to-sidirodromiko-dystychema-sta-tebli/>.

¹⁸⁷ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PtGBZ5DFfg>.

3.4 SPECIFIC CONCERNS ABOUT UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE BY POLICE MOTORBIKE UNITS

During the research for this report, specific concerns were raised a number of times by interviewees, both protesters and the leader of a political party, regarding the dangerous and unlawful use of force specifically by police motorbike units. Some cases have been documented where they rammed protesters/drove their motorbikes towards protesters or drove around striking protesters with batons as they passed by at speed resulting in some sustaining injuries.

Zoe Konstantopoulou, leader of the political party Course to Freedom, MP and lawyer witnessed and experienced unlawful use of force by officers of the DRASIS motorbike unit following the dispersal of a firefighter's sit-in in the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection on 31 October 2024. Konstantopoulou described seeing police motorbikes coming towards the protesters, driving directly towards a firefighter next to her and then police deploying without warning stun grenades including one that exploded next to her feet. She said that police threw the firefighter down and then numerous policemen with special uniforms, equipment and boots encircled, hit and kicked him. She described how she repeatedly asked police to release the firefighter who was lying on the ground helpless and that she invoked her capacity as a lawyer to speak to him and assist him as his attorney and yet police denied all communication and took the injured firefighter away, carrying him on their hands, as he was almost unconscious.

Konstantopoulou also reported that when she later went through the events with him, he reported that, while on the ground and being kicked and hit by the police, he was also subjected to police moves which caused him suffocation and fainting and he said that they were deliberately shutting his nose and mouth.¹⁸⁸



© ↑ *Stun grenades used close to Zoe Konstantopoulou and protesters. Screenshot from a YouTube video posted by PlefsiEleftherias.*

A video shows a police officer from the DRASIS police unit riding his motorbike towards a crowded area, and too close to a firefighter who does not appear to pose any threat; the motorbike seems to drive over his foot.¹⁸⁹ Then some individuals push the motorbike out of the way and police suddenly throw stun grenades without warning at the feet of the protesters and other persons present, including Konstantopoulou.¹⁹⁰ Police then proceed to violently arrest the protester who does not appear to resist.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Interview 25 May 2025 and 8 and 9 May 2026.

¹⁸⁹ DRASIS is a motorbike police unit of the Greek police established in November 2019 for the purpose of managing serious incidents.

¹⁹⁰ See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRCy_P6ZuG0 (0:08-0:10 min).

¹⁹¹ See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRCy_P6ZuG0 (0:08-0:10 min).

Dimitris*, a male protester who participated in the protest for Tempì on 28 February 2025 described: “[...] And a riot police unit appears from the side of Hilton hotel and thirty to forty police motorbikes appeared shouting and attacking (the protesters). They [were] driving with speed towards people [...] The motorbikes followed us shouting and swearing at us [...] A friend injured his shoulder [...] A person near me was hit with a baton [policemen] told us: ‘Go home bitches!’”¹⁹²

Footage from the 5 March 2025 protest for Tempì also shows officers from the DRASIS motorbike unit ramming two protesters with their motorbikes, causing them to fall to the ground.¹⁹³

Anastassia Politi, an actress and theatre director residing in France, participated in a demonstration in solidarity with Palestinians on 7 October 2025. She described how she was seriously injured as a result of unlawful force used by police officers on motorcycles, resulting in a broken arm, a broken rib, an injury to her left knee and shin and light head injuries, Politi also explained the ongoing and severe impact of the injury on her health and her work, as she was unable to return to France where she is employed as an actress in a theatre, ultimately causing her to lose her job.

Politi said: “[...] At some point, more people started running and we saw police motorcycles – each with two officers on them, one at the back holding a baton – coming towards us through the crowd [...] I managed to step onto the pavement at the very last moment so the motorcycle wouldn’t run me over [...] but I still felt the bike passing extremely close behind me and at the same time a very strong blow to my back. I believe that the officer sitting in the back hit me on the upper left side of my back with a baton. I was thrown onto the pavement, literally leaping over the March to Gaza Greece banner that we were holding with other protesters, and I ‘hit the ground like a watermelon,’ which caused me to suffer serious injuries [...] I hit my jaw and head, my chest, my arms and knees [...] and I was left on the ground unable to move [...] Two or three people (also participating in the protest) picked me up, took me to the café right there, and then to KAT Hospital and later to the Red Cross (Hospital). It was truly shocking [...] I broke my right arm and I have injuries to my left knee and shin, mild head injuries [...] and a broken rib [...] All night long at the Red Cross, protesters were arriving with injuries to the head, limbs, and elsewhere”.¹⁹⁴

3.5 UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DURING ARREST AND/OR IN DETENTION

On the basis of interviews with protesters, lawyers and reviewing pertinent footage of the events in question, Amnesty International has also documented cases of unlawful use of force by police against protesters who clearly did not resist or pose any threat during their arrest. Amnesty International has also received allegations that some protesters have been subjected to treatment amounting to torture or other ill-treatment while in detention.

Amnesty International was informed that some protesters underwent a strip search in detention which – if not justified in the circumstances or not carried out in an appropriate manner – may amount to degrading treatment and be in breach of international and national legal standards on the treatment of detainees.¹⁹⁵ Additionally, some protesters reported that police denied and/or delayed providing them with access to medical assistance despite them and/or other people in their group being injured.

¹⁹² Interview 5 March 2025. Name changed to protect the identity of the interviewee.

¹⁹³ See footage in questions raised about the incident by journalist Christos Avramidis during a press briefing by the Greek government spokesperson on 10 March 2025 at: <https://x.com/i/status/1899114335982817429> (0:10-0:22 min).

¹⁹⁴ Interview 28 October 2025 and email correspondence 24 March 2026.

¹⁹⁵ Under Greek law (Articles 257 and 199 of the Greek Code of Criminal Procedure), the police or an investigating authority can only carry out a body search in very limited situations. A body search can happen only if there are serious reasons showing it is necessary to help uncover the truth in a case. Any body search must be done in a way that respects the person, avoids unnecessary embarrassment, and protects privacy. Additionally, no one has to undergo a body examination in a way that violates human dignity. See also Amnesty International Fair Trial Manual, Second edition, 2014 (AI Index: POL 30/002/2014), p. 119; International Committee of the Red Cross: To serve and to protect – Human rights and humanitarian law for police and security forces, pp. 308-309.

For example, Amnesty International interviewed **Nikos*** a 20-year-old student who reported an attack by a police officer during his arrest after the end of a protest for Tempi in Thessaloniki on 28 February 2024. He sustained a concussion which required hospitalization for three days, a laceration on his nose and was diagnosed with PTSD.¹⁹⁶

Nikos* said: “[the police officer] comes above me and places his hands on my throat and at this point my breath stopped and [I] say to myself ‘This is it’ [...] And then he was holding me again, and I tell him ‘What are you doing? You are going to kill me!’, and he headbutts me and because I was lying on the ground and had my head slightly elevated, my head bangs on the ground”.¹⁹⁷

Alexis*, his brother, also a university student, said: “I saw [the police officer] throwing [my brother] on the ground [...] I saw him trying to choke my brother”.¹⁹⁸

Nikos* filed a criminal complaint for attempted homicide. A disciplinary investigation also started into the incident. He has not yet been informed by the police or judicial authorities in relation to the outcome of the two investigations.

Nikos* also said that a plain-clothed officer assaulted him after finding a kubotan-type keyring in his pouch during the body search at the Thessaloniki Police Directorate.¹⁹⁹ According to Nikos*, the officer taunted him saying – “Do you know where this is used? Want me to show you?” – and when he refused, the officer allegedly struck him repeatedly on the ribs and hands, pressing the object against his shoulder.

The two students also said that at the police station they were forced to sit in a row of chairs facing the wall and banned from speaking to each other or another detained student and that they were subjected to body searches requiring full removal of clothing.

Marios*, the third student, also provided a similar account and said: “While we were inside the police station, as the officers forced us to remove all our clothes, the staff member deliberately engaged in a form of dialogue meant to intimidate me. The most blatant threat was when he told me that he would take me to a room [somewhere inside] and show me what it is like to feel pain. I assumed many things and was, understandably, frightened.”

Marios* also reported that he was subjected to unnecessary and abusive use of force prior and during his arrest. He said: “The police officer hit me with his shield and my bag fell on the ground [...] and a second and a third [police officer came] and they were spraying chemical irritants on my thigh [...] I must have received at least ten baton strikes”.²⁰⁰

Lawyer **Konstantina Katsia** who was allowed to speak to the three students a few hours after their arrest described the situation: “Personally, I witnessed the three of them sitting there without any reasonable cause, staring straight at the wall with the entrance door behind them, silent and frightened, in a large basement hall of the Thessaloniki Police Directorate building.”²⁰¹

In January 2026, a court in Thessaloniki unanimously acquitted the three students from a series of misdemeanor charges they faced following their arrest.

¹⁹⁶ Medical certificate on file.

¹⁹⁷ Interview 11 October 2025. Name changed to protect the identity of the interviewee. Footage of the incident shows a police officer that wears his helmet grabbing Nikos* - who does not appear to pose any threat or resist - pushing him towards a car and then on the ground and placing his hand on his throat, headbutting him and then banging his head on the ground. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeXtk8vSGU0> (0:01-0:36 min).

¹⁹⁸ Interview 11 October 2025. Name changed to protect the identity of the interviewee.

¹⁹⁹ A kubotan is a self-defence keychain object.

²⁰⁰ Interviews 20 March 2025 and 23 March 2026, Name changed to protect the identity of the interviewee. Video shows the student who appears peaceful and simply saying something to a police officer, being pushed by the officer with his shield and then he is being violently arrested by police. See: [Το χρονικό της αστυνομικής βίας στην πορεία για το έγκλημα των Τεμπών - 28/2/24, Θεσσαλονίκη - YouTube](#) (6:46-7:35 min).

²⁰¹ Interview 23 March 2026.

On 28 July 2025, a group of people participated in a peaceful protest to show solidarity with Palestinians and to protest the arrival of an Israeli cruise ship to the port of Rhodes.²⁰² **Evangelia M. Panai**, a politician and hotel owner who had gone to participate in the protest described how she was forcefully apprehended by police and coastguard outside the entry of the port simply for holding a small paper with the call 'Stop Genocide'. She said that the treatment she was subjected to by police during her apprehension – a clearly unnecessary and excessive use of force – resulted in significant deterioration of problems with her spine which required ongoing medical treatment.

As Panai described: *"I did not manage [to hold the paper] that was writing 'Stop Genocide' more than two to three minutes and I saw with the corner of my eye a police car arriving and stopping and police officer jumping outside and coming towards my direction and from the opposite side of the street in the entry of the port some uniformed coastguard officers and plain clothed officers came in front of me and grabbed the paper from my hands and tore it and altogether started pushing me towards the other side of the road where the police car had stopped without any explanation about the reasons of my arrest and pushed me forcefully inside the car. I placed my hands on the top of the car and they continued to push me with all their strength and one of them grabbed me from the head and pulled it very fast and suddenly [...] despite the fact that I was shouting at them that I have big problems with my spine".²⁰³*

Video evidence shows law enforcement officers pushing Panai forcefully into a police vehicle and one officer grabbing her from the back and pulling her head backwards.²⁰⁴ At the same protest on 28 July 2025, it is worth noting that there were also widely reported images circulated in the media which appear to show the police using dangerous restraining techniques against a protester. Pictures published at the time show one plain clothed coastguard officer kneeling on the neck of an immobilized male protester who is on the ground in Rhodes port.²⁰⁵

Following the dispersal of the peaceful assembly, fifteen protesters including Panai were transferred to the police station. Seven were subsequently released and eight were detained and faced various charges. Some were charged under antiracism legislation. Amnesty International called for an investigation into police actions and expressed concerns and highlighted the abusive application of antiracism provisions.²⁰⁶

Panai was charged with alleged violence to the police, accusations she fully denies and highlights that she faced unlawful force. She reported very poor and non-hygienic conditions in the police holding cell shared with other protesters. She described very dirty mattresses, a very dirty toilet with no natural or artificial light and a sink with no-drain resulting in water falling on her feet and on the floor every time she washed her hands. Panai also reported failure by the police to provide food and water – necessitating reliance on supplies brought by individuals gathered in solidarity outside the station; and denial by the police to transfer her to a hospital despite her repeated requests during detention citing that there was no police car available.

Michalis Giannakopoulos, Panai's lawyer, told Amnesty International that he was not allowed to speak with her in a separate room but he was only able to communicate with her through a very small window of the door of the cell and that despite his protests about the lack of confidential communication with his client, police responded to him: "This is the usual practice and this is how we do it here".²⁰⁷

²⁰² Video seen shows riot police pushing the peaceful protesters who chant slogans in solidarity with Palestine and suddenly restraining one male protester. See: <https://youtu.be/DwNSDqWSQcQ>. Another video analysed by Amnesty International shows police officers shoving protesters and using shields to push them (video available on file with Amnesty International). According to the Greek police, police units repeatedly instructed those present to disperse, but they did not comply and that during dispersal some individuals attempted to push through the police cordon, resisted officers, and used physical force. The statement also noted that several people refused to present identification documents or follow subsequent instructions to leave the area. The statement asserted that only the minimum force necessary to restrain individuals was used. See: <https://bit.ly/3ZMuXMz>.

²⁰³ Interview 29 March 2026.

²⁰⁴ See: <https://www.facebook.com/100001527347257/videos/759504760351262/>.

²⁰⁵ See pictures in: [Μήνυση διαδηλωτή στη Ρόδο για αστυνομική βία: «Γονάτισε στον λαμό μου» | ΕΦΣΥΝ](#); and [Ρόδος: Πάτησε διαδηλωτή στον λαμό - Άνδρες χωρίς διακριτικά ακινητοποιούν πολίτες \(Video\) - Documenta](#).

²⁰⁶ See: <https://t.co/oCANZKLaYI> / X;

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/western-central-and-south-eastern-europe/greece/report-greece>.

²⁰⁷ Interview 1 May 2026.

Vaso, a secondary school teacher, told Amnesty International that she sustained a neck injury a result of her violent apprehension by police when she tried to assist another female protester that police tried to apprehend during the dispersal of a peaceful protest in solidarity with Palestinians on 4 November 2025.²⁰⁸ The protesters had gathered to protest against the arrival of an Israeli cruise ship in the port of Souda in Chania on 4 November 2025.²⁰⁹ Vaso shared with Amnesty International how her sister, who has a heart condition, was also violently apprehended when she tried to reach her.²¹⁰

Amnesty International has been informed that a **Palestinian protester** sustained fracture of the left tibia after allegedly being hit violently with a baton by a police officer in an elevator of GADA and that the police delayed taking him to hospital for several hours despite him being injured.²¹¹ Another officer allegedly held the protester immobilized, and a third and fourth police officer encouraged his ill-treatment. The protester had been arrested and detained as he was exiting a metro and going to his house following the end of a demonstration in solidarity with Palestinians on 7 October 2025. Two other protesters who were also apprehended following the dispersal of the demonstration also told Amnesty International that it took police several hours to transfer those protesters who had sustained serious injuries to the hospital.

²⁰⁸ Medical certificate on file. Vaso was charged among others for resisting police, charges she fully denies. Interview 23 December 2025.

²⁰⁹ Video shows Vaso peacefully waving a Palestine flag alongside the police; police chasing the protesters after an object was thrown at the bus carrying the tourists; the deployment of stun grenades and a riot police officer casually spraying chemical irritants in the faces of two peaceful female protesters for no discernible reason. Then the footage shows police using unnecessary force against Vaso who does not appear to resist and holds her hands in apparent surrender as she is wrestled to the ground and handcuffed. Vaso is subsequently shown shouting at the police that her sister who is apprehended next to her suffers from a heart problem. Police do not appear to make any allowance for that fact that the protester has a heart condition and make no attempts to calm the situation down. See: <https://youtu.be/ZzwTDEUimE>.

²¹⁰ Interview 23 December 2025.

²¹¹ Interview with lawyer of Palestinian refugee, 28 October 2025.

4. CRIMINALIZATION OF PEACEFUL PROTESTERS

Over the past three years, Amnesty International has documented cases of peaceful protesters being criminalized simply for exercising their right to peaceful assembly and include: the case of two Amnesty International female activists arrested after the dispersal of a demonstration; and criminalization for alleged participation in banned protests or for civil disobedience actions.

4.1 PROSECUTION OF TWO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ACTIVISTS

In May 2023, Amnesty International expressed concerns over the prosecution of two of its activists in Greece, Areti Androni and Penny Verganelaki. Their trial has been repeatedly postponed and is scheduled to begin in September 2026. If convicted, they could face prison sentences of up to five years.

The activists were arrested on 4 November 2022 during a protest in Athens against the construction of a metro station in Exarcheia Square and the redevelopment of Strefi Hill. According to testimonies from the two activists, the protest was dispersed by police before it had even started, and they were subjected to unnecessary and abusive force. The testimony provided by the two activists described how after the dispersal of the protest by the police, they ran seeking safety from the tear gas. However, when they were some 10 minutes walking distance from the site of the protest, they, along with a few others, were suddenly encircled by police. The police then subjected the activists to large quantities of chemical irritants despite them not posing any threat of any kind and this being contrary to the rules about how such chemicals should be used. They also described how the police beat a number of other protesters as they were being arrested, noting that none of the protesters resisted arrest at this time. They further recounted that during their detention by the police, and despite their repeated requests to have legal assistance, a lawyer was not allowed to see them until early the next morning.

They categorically and strongly deny all charges, which include disturbing public peace, using force against police, and damaging property. Thirteen more protesters were arrested at the same time.

Amnesty International emphasized that the two activists must be presumed innocent. Liability must be based on individual actions and supported by compelling evidence, not mere presence at a protest. Amnesty International is also concerned about the application of the provision on “disturbance of the public peace” to the two activists in view of its potential incompatibility with international human rights standards.

4.2 CRIMINAL CODE PROVISION THAT CAN LEAD TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF PEACEFUL PROTESTERS

LEGISLATION IN GREECE

Article 189 para. 1 of the Greek Criminal Code punishes, the participation of an individual in a gathered crowd which acting in concert commits violence against persons or property or unlawfully enters homes of others, shops or other immovable property. It attracts a prison sentence of up to three years or a fine.²¹²

ASSESSMENT OF GREECE'S COMPLIANCE WITH IHRL

The provision on “disturbance of public peace” is incompatible with international human rights law. The provision criminalizes entirely peaceful protesters who find themselves amongst or in the vicinity of others who use violence.

Peaceful protesters should be able to continue exercising their right of peaceful assembly and it is the duty of law enforcement officials to differentiate between those who remain peaceful and those who do not and to facilitate and protect the former. Isolated acts of violence by a few participants do not make the whole assembly non-peaceful.²¹³ Every protester exercises their right to freedom of peaceful assembly individually.²¹⁴ Therefore, if some assembly participants engage in violent behaviour, the peaceful participants should not be prevented from exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly.²¹⁵

Arresting people based solely on their peaceful participation in an assembly is a violation of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

4.3 CRIMINALIZATION OF PEACEFUL PROTESTERS FOLLOWING SYMBOLIC ACTION AGAINST BLANKET BANS

On 14 November 2025, 23 members of the anarchist collective Rouvikonas were arbitrarily arrested after unfurling a banner in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Video Footage from the incident shows police using batons against the peaceful protesters. All 23 were detained at GADA and charged under legislation imposing a blanket ban on protests in parts of Syntagma Square, as well as with violence against police officers and insubordination for refusing fingerprinting. On 15 November, an Athens court found all 23 guilty of breaching the protest ban and sentenced them to nine months in prison, suspended on appeal. They were acquitted of other charges but ordered to pay €600 each in judicial expenses. The court acknowledged mitigating circumstances, noting the absence of “lowly motives.”

Criminal or administrative charges and sanctions, on acts that break a domestic law which contravenes international human rights law and standards are usually considered unnecessary and disproportionate.

²¹² Article 189 of the Greek Criminal Code more specifically stipulates: 1. Any person who participates in a gathered crowd that, acting with combined force, commits acts of violence against persons or property, or unlawfully invades others' homes, shops, or other immovable property, shall be punished with imprisonment of up to three years or a fine; 2. If the above acts, as well as acts of damage to another's property, are committed with the aim of obstructing the publication and free circulation of newspapers, magazines, or books, imprisonment of at least three months shall be imposed; 3. Instigators of the disturbance who hold a leading role within the crowd shall be punished with imprisonment of at least three months. The same penalty shall apply to those who commit acts of violence during the disturbance; 4. Anyone who, without disturbing the public peace, arbitrarily prevents or seriously disrupts a lawful collective event with the aim of cancelling it, shall be punished with imprisonment of up to two years or a fine.

²¹³ CCPR/C/GC/37, para 19.

²¹⁴ HRC, Joint SR Report on Assembly Management, A/HRC/31/66, para. 20, 39.

²¹⁵ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para 17; HRC, Special Rapporteur Report on Assembly & Association, A/HRC/20/27, para. 25; OSCE-ODIHR, HR Handbook on Policing Assemblies, 2016, p. 17.

Instead of arresting, prosecuting and sanctioning those involved in such acts, Greece should repeal the legislative provision introducing the pre-emptive blanket ban on protests in areas of Syntagma square as it criminalizes conduct protected under the right of peaceful assembly. In the short term, while waiting for these legal reforms to be completed, prosecutorial authorities should adopt internal guidelines to discourage the prosecution of these offences.

4.4 CRIMINALIZATION OF PEACEFUL PROTESTERS PARTICIPATING IN A BANNED PROTEST

In cases documented by Amnesty International, several individuals were arbitrarily arrested and charged simply on the basis of their participation in a banned protest.

On 3 February 2024, ten protesters participating in a peaceful anti-war demonstration in Rigillis Square were arrested and charged with alleged “disobedience” and breach of the legislation on assemblies under Article 169 of the Greek Criminal Code and Law 4703/2020. The protest was organized by OR.M.A (“Organization Militant Anti-Fascism”), on the anniversary of the 1995-1996 Greece-Türkiye Imia military crisis.²¹⁶

Nikos Kouroupas, a member of OR.M.A and one of the individuals detained that day, told Amnesty International that police approached the peaceful protesters just when they had opened a banner with the slogan “No to Imperialist Interventions. Victory to Palestine” and took them to GADA in the Department of State Protection. There, they were informed that they would be charged and were detained for 24 hours.²¹⁷ The charges against the peaceful protesters were based on a police decision issued in the evening of 2 February 2024, introducing a 24 hour ban on all protests taking place in central areas of Athens on 3 February 2024.²¹⁸ Specifically, the decision prohibited a gathering organized for the evening of 3 February 2024 by far-right party Golden Dawn.²¹⁹ The decision also prohibited counterdemonstrations.

Kouroupas highlighted that the gathering organized by OR.M.A was announced on 16 January 2024, it was taking place in the early afternoon and it was an anti-war demonstration and not a counterdemonstration. On 29 April 2025, an Athens court unanimously acquitted all ten individuals.²²⁰ In an interview with Amnesty International Kouroupas shared that in his view: “*Our acquittal constitutes a direct challenge of the legislation restricting protests*”.

On 1 November 2025, thirteen individuals were arrested in a park in central Athens and charged for disobedience and a breach of the law on assemblies for alleged participation in a banned counterdemonstration in solidarity with Palestine.²²¹ The charges against the individuals were based on a decision issued on 31 October 2025 by the Director of the Athens Police Directorate. The decision banned a protest called for the afternoon of 1 November 2025 in the park in front of the Athens Concert Hall by the “Assembly in Solidarity of the Palestinian Resistance” to oppose the reception of the new US Ambassador. During the same day and around the same time, a gathering was organized in front of the Athens Concert Hall by the ‘Association of Friendship between Greece and Israel’ in support of the arrival of the new US Ambassador.²²²

²¹⁶ Imia, a pair of uninhabited islets in the eastern Aegean Sea became the object of a sovereignty dispute and a near military confrontation between Greece and Turkey in January 1996.

²¹⁷ Interview November 2024 and September 2025.

²¹⁸ [ΑΠΟΦΑΣΗ-ΑΠΑΓΟΡΕΥΣΗΣ-signed.pdf](#).

²¹⁹ In March 2026, an Appeals Court in Athens confirmed a 2020 first instance ruling and found seven senior members of Golden Dawn guilty of directing a criminal organization, while a total of 42 defendants were convicted of membership in a criminal organization. The court also found Giorgos Roupakias guilty of intentional homicide for the 2013 killing of anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas, while 15 additional defendants were convicted as accomplices. Five defendants were found guilty of attempted homicide in relation to the 2012 attack against Egyptian fishermen in Keratsini. See also [Greece: Golden Dawn verdicts send ‘clear message’ on racism and hate speech | Amnesty International UK](#).

²²⁰ Political organizations, trade unions and social actors issued announcements in support of the protesters while their representatives testified in the trial. Amnesty International observers attended the trial.

²²¹ Some of the individuals arrested also face charges for refusal to provide fingerprints and providing false information.

²²² The decision for the ban cited as grounds a “looming danger for public security due to the possible commission of serious crimes” and a serious threat to disrupt the socio-economic life of the area.

In the case file against the thirteen individuals, police stated that they were asked to leave the area where the gathering of the 'Association of Friendship between Greece and Israel' was taking place but they remained there chanting slogans in solidarity with Palestinians and throwing leaflets. Speaking to Amnesty International, lawyer Ioanna Sioupouli representing some of the individuals said: *"All thirteen were not participating in the protest at the time of their arrest, and two of them were simply sitting on a bench of the park where the other gathering was taking place."*²²³

While the arrested people claim they were not part of a protest, Amnesty International considers the arrest of all thirteen in any case to be arbitrary. The organization views the Athens Police Director's decision as a disproportionate interference with the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression and therefore not a sufficient base to justify an arrest. It urges that all charges be immediately dropped. Peaceful counter demonstrations enjoy the same protections under international human rights law as any other peaceful assembly. Authorities must ensure that they respect and facilitate such demonstrations while at the same time ensuring that the assemblies they are opposing can continue without disruption and protect participants of both assemblies from any attacks by the respective counter protesters.²²⁴

²²³ Interview 18 November 2025.

²²⁴ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 26.

5. PERSISTENT IMPUNITY FOR POLICE BREACHES AGAINST PROTESTORS

Amnesty International's previous reports identified systemic failings leading to impunity for law enforcement officials committing human rights violations in the context of protests, including the failure by the police or judicial authorities to conduct prompt, thorough, effective and impartial investigations and to bring perpetrators to justice.²²⁵

Amnesty International's research as well as academic and national NGO research into the Greek authorities' compliance with their obligations under international human rights law to ensure accountability for human rights violations by law enforcement officials have identified a long-standing culture of impunity.²²⁶

Regarding violations in the context of protests, Amnesty International knows only of few cases where perpetrators of unlawful use of force in the policing of demonstrations have been held accountable in court at first or second instance or referred to trial.

For example, in 2015, a court found guilty at second instance a police officer for hitting photojournalist Tatiana Bolari during an anti-austerity demonstration in Athens in 2011.²²⁷ Also in August 2025, two senior police officers were referred to trial for unlawfully obstructing a lawful protest and attempted serious bodily harm against at least 10 lawyers participating in a protest in March 2021.²²⁸

In few cases where injured protesters and members of the press were able to get reparations, they did not necessarily obtain justice. Despite administrative courts confirming state responsibility for grave injuries inflicted by police against psychologist Yiannis Kafkas and photojournalist Marios Lolos during anti-

²²⁵ Amnesty International/International Helsinki Federation, Greece: In the Shadow of Impunity: Ill-treatment and the misuse of firearms (Index: EUR 25/022/2002); Amnesty International, Greece: Alleged Abuses in the Policing of Demonstrations (AI Index: EUR 25/001/2009), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR25/022/2002/en/>; Amnesty International, 'Police Violence in Greece: Not just 'Isolated Incidents'', (AI Index: EUR 25/005/2012), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR25/005/2012/en/>; and A Law unto Themselves: A Culture of Abuse and Impunity in the Greek Police (AI Index: EUR 25/005/2014), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/eur250052014en.pdf>. In a number of cases, Greece has been found in breach of the substantive limb of Article 2 ECHR due to lethal use of arms by law enforcement agents violation and of the substantive limb of Article 3 of ECHR due to ill-treatment by law enforcement agents as well as in breach of their procedural limb due to lack of effective investigations into death or ill-treatment in the context of law enforcement operations. In some cases, Greece also has been found in breach of the Convention on account of the failure to investigate whether discrimination played a role in the ill-treatment. See: <https://rm.coe.int/091259488029dd24>.

²²⁶ See: Amnesty Reports above; Anastasia Tsoukala, Anastassia Tsoukala (2025), *Police Brutality in Greece: The Rotten Tree*. Oxford: Peter Lang. Communication from an NGO (Greek Helsinki Monitor) (19/01/2026) in the Sidiropoulos and Papakostas group, Alkhatib and Others group and A.R.E. v. Greece (Applications No. 33349/10, 3566/16, 15783/21), DH-DD (2026)163, 29 January 2026.; HLHR, Police Brutality and Fundamental Rights: An overview of police arbitrariness in Greece at: https://www.hlhr.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/PB_ENG_e-book_F.pdf.

²²⁷ See: https://www.efsyn.gr/ellada/dikaiosyni/30571_i-dikaiosi-tis-tatianas-mpolari.

²²⁸ Amnesty International has documented the case in its 2021 Report, Greece: Freedom of Assembly at risk and unlawful use of force in the era of Covid-19.

austerity demonstrations in 2011 and 2012 justice remains elusive, as no officer has been held accountable following disciplinary and criminal investigations.²²⁹

Kafkas told Amnesty International: “I hoped that after the rulings of the administrative courts, criminal proceedings would reopen and the perpetrators would be brought to justice. It has been fifteen years, and it has not happened and the offences will soon be time-barred. I do not feel I have obtained justice”.²³⁰

Even in relation to administrative proceedings, closure remains difficult as Kafkas highlighted that he is still awaiting a third instance hearing on his case before an administrative court following repeated postponements of the hearing.

In addition, in November 2025, a second instance court in Athens overturned the 2024 first instance conviction of a police officer for causing “bodily injury by negligence” to photojournalist Orestis Panagiotou. Panagiotou sustained a fractured foot after being hit directly, at close range and with high pressure by a water cannon jet causing him to fall while covering a firefighters’ demonstration in November 2021.²³¹ In October 2024, the Athens First Instance Administrative Court awarded compensation to Panagiotou for his injuries.

Victims of unlawful use of force and lawyers spoke about barriers to accessing legal proceedings including the length and cost of proceedings, counter proceedings against them by the police for alleged offences committed during demonstrations, the fear of being targeted in future demonstrations and the fear that impunity will prevail as deterrent factors in filing a complaint.

STATISTICS AND FINDINGS RELATING TO ACCOUNTABILITY OF POLICE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Findings by EMIDIPA (the national police complaints mechanism) and research by experts and NGOs highlight flaws in disciplinary investigations and the very low number of police officers held accountable in disciplinary and criminal proceedings in cases concerning allegations of human rights violations by law enforcement officials.

Out of the total 103 alleged police misconduct cases reviewed by EMIDIPA in 2024, only 14 disciplinary investigations were deemed complete. In 83 cases, disciplinary investigations were found to have procedural shortcomings, inadequate justifications, or deficient investigations; eight cases referred to the Minister of Citizen Protection were later archived as in most of them the disciplinary investigations were found not in compliance to EMIDIPA’s recommendations.²³² Greek authorities also informed Amnesty International that between January 2024 and August 2025, Greek police started 23 disciplinary investigations in relation to allegations of police violence. Out of those, six were completed and forwarded to EMIDIPA for review.²³³

In a 2026 submission on the execution of ECtHR rulings concerning human rights violations by law enforcement officials in Greece, Panayote Dimitras, Executive Director of the NGO Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) drawing on data provided by the Greek authorities – concluded that convictions for cases of human rights violations by law enforcement officials were rare and highlighted the lenient sentences and disciplinary sanctions imposed.²³⁴

Dimitras presented statistics provided by the Greek authorities in response to parliamentary questions. Specifically, between 2019 and 14 November 2025, the Greek police started 713 disciplinary investigations into the allegations of use of force by law enforcement officials. Out of those, 308 were completed. In these cases, 287 were archived as no disciplinary responsibility was found; in 21 cases, lower disciplinary sanctions were imposed. According to Dimitras, information provided by the Ministry of Justice showed that between 2019 and November 2025, prosecutors around the country investigated 181 cases concerning human rights violations and other serious offences by law enforcement officials. Out of those only 27 led to trials and only in seven cases there was a

²²⁹ See: Police Violence in Greece: Not just ‘Isolated Incidents’; also <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur25/4207/2021/en/>.

²³⁰ Interview 17 April 2026.

²³¹ See: Europe: Under Protected and Over Restricted: The state of the right to protest in 21 European countries, p. 114.

²³² EMIDIPA, 2024 Annual Report (<https://www.synigoros.gr/en/category/e8nikos-mhxanismos-diarevnhshs-peristatikwn-av8airesias/post/annual-report-2024-or-national-mechanism-for-the-investigation-of-arbitrary-incidents>, p. 23). Law 4662/2020 gave EMIDIPA the power to refer a file of a disciplinary investigation to the competent Minister in cases where the disciplinary body took a decision that did not provide a justified deviation from the Mechanism’s findings.

²³³ Meeting with Minister of Citizen Protection, Chief of the Hellenic Police and other high-ranking officials, 10 September 2025.

²³⁴ Communication from an NGO (Greek Helsinki Monitor) (19/01/2026) in the Sidiropoulos and Papakostas group, Alkhatib and Others group and A.R.E. v. Greece (Applications No. 33349/10, 3566/16, 15783/21), DH-DD(2026)163, 29 January /2026.

conviction. Out of the 60 cases investigated for allegations of torture committed by law enforcement officials, only four were referred to trial and there was only one conviction.²³⁵

According to academic expert Anastasia Tsoukala, in 47% of the 51 documented cases in her research concerning cases of unlawful use of force against protesters, Greek police failed to initiate disciplinary investigation; 27 were investigated and out of the seven disciplinary investigations that were completed, only one had led to sanctions.²³⁶ Anastasia Tsoukala identified among others reluctance of victims that belong to certain groups to file complaints for ideological/political reasons, and cases where prosecutorial authorities ‘showed a worrying inaction’ despite the seriousness of the offences committed. Out of all cases, only one criminal investigation was completed but resulted in the case being archived.

According to Tsoukala, in 22 out of 30 documented cases involving human rights violations such as identity checks, harassment or unlawful use of force against members of the press – mostly during demonstrations – Greek police failed to initiate disciplinary investigations, or the investigation was not substantive.²³⁷ In addition, no disciplinary investigations were initiated in nine of the cases supported by corroborating footage. Regarding criminal investigations, Tsoukala identified the reluctance of police officers to wear insignia as a key factor leading to impunity. In two cases, police officers were referred to trial.²³⁸

5.1 POLICE FAIL TO ENSURE VISIBILITY OF INDIVIDUAL IDENTIFICATION BADGES

To facilitate accountability and to comply with international standards on policing, law enforcement officials should always display a visible and easily recognizable form of identification during assemblies, and clear command structures should be in place.²³⁹ In Greece, public order police officers are obliged to display their identification numbers on their helmets.²⁴⁰ These numbers are displayed on the back of helmets.²⁴¹

During three protest observations conducted on 8 March 2025 in Athens and Thessaloniki and 17 November 2025 in Athens, Amnesty International has observed cases where public order police officers were not displaying their identification numbers or cases where the numbers were written with a black marker and were smudged and/or very small and thus not clearly visible. Journalists and photojournalists as well as protesters interviewed for the purpose of this research corroborated these findings.

5.2 CONCERNS REGARDING ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS AND PROCEDURES

In 2019, reforms introduced in the Police Force Disciplinary Code provided that criminal proceedings do not suspend disciplinary proceedings with the exception of cases where there has been an indictment.²⁴² However, Greece’s police complaint mechanism (EMIDIPA) expressed persistent concerns over the provision’s proper implementation.²⁴³ In 2024, Greece broadened the possibility to suspend disciplinary proceedings from the earliest stages of a criminal investigation, and EMIDIPA flagged that this could normalize the suspension of the disciplinary procedure and erode significantly the principle of independence.²⁴⁴ The Mechanism also criticized the narrow reading of rules regarding the information that

²³⁵ Communication from an NGO (Greek Helsinki Monitor) (19/01/2026) in the Sidiropoulos and Papakostas group, Alkhatib and Others group and A.R.E. v. Greece (Applications No. 33349/10, 3566/16, 15783/21), DH-DD(2026)163, 29 January /2026.

²³⁶ The cases documented concerned the period of 2019 to 2022.

²³⁷ The documented cases concern the period 2017-2022.

²³⁸ Anastasia Tsoukala (2025), *Police Brutality in Greece: The Rotten Tree*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

²³⁹ CCPR, GC 37, Peaceful Assembly, CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 89.

²⁴⁰ See: decision of the Chief of the Hellenic Police 7012/6/103 – αζ of 29 March 2021 amending Decision 7012/6/103 of 2009 (GOG 1426/B/16-7-2009), <https://bit.ly/3lUD0Xh>.

²⁴¹ Y.A.T and Y.M.E.T are two specialized public order police units tasked with the management of protests and in particularly any instance of violence.

²⁴² Presidential Decree 120/2008; Article 1 para. 3 of PD 111/2019; EMIDIPA 2021 Annual Report ([https://www.synigoros.gr/en/category/e8nikos-mhxanisos-dierevnhshs-peristatikwn-av8airesias/post/special-report-or-national-mechanism-for-the-investigation-of-arbitrary-incidents-\(emidipa\)](https://www.synigoros.gr/en/category/e8nikos-mhxanisos-dierevnhshs-peristatikwn-av8airesias/post/special-report-or-national-mechanism-for-the-investigation-of-arbitrary-incidents-(emidipa))), p. 112.

²⁴³ EMIDIPA 2021 Annual Report p. 112) and 2022 Annual Report (t/special-report-or-national-mechanism-for-the-investigation-of-arbitrary-incidents-(emidipa)-2022, pp. 87-88).

²⁴⁴ EMIDIPA, 2024 Annual Report, p. 183.

victims of unlawful use of force can receive on the outcomes of their complaints.²⁴⁵ EMIDIPA noted positive legislative reforms introduced in 2024 including: the compulsory suspension of officers now applies when they face disciplinary or criminal prosecution for offences such as torture, unlawful force, or arbitrary detention; and the expansion of categories of disciplinary investigations assigned to a police officer with no administrative dependency with the officer under investigation.²⁴⁶

In Greece, police usually default to preliminary administrative inquiries (PDE) rather than sworn administrative inquiries (EDE) in serious cases of unlawful use of force. A PDE is a type of disciplinary inquiry that is conducted in cases where the commission of a specific disciplinary offence is merely considered probable or where no clear indication exists in order to establish if such offence has been committed. It is either carried out by a superior or senior officer of the person under examination.²⁴⁷ If a PDE concludes that the facts of the case constitute a disciplinary offence attracting a higher disciplinary penalty, an EDE is ordered. An EDE is a type of disciplinary inquiry where a disciplinary indictment is launched, and it is carried out when the available information provides clear indications of the commission of a disciplinary offence that carries a major disciplinary penalty. In both types of disciplinary inquiries, when a case concerns allegations of torture, it is assigned to an officer of a Directorate other than the one to which the police officers involved are administratively subordinate. In cases concerning use of weapons in the performance of duty, allegations of ill-treatment, abuse, racist or 'other extreme behaviour', a PDE is assigned to an officer with no administrative dependency with the police officer under investigation.²⁴⁸

In its 2024 Report, EMIDIPA reiterated that the choice of a Preliminary Administrative Inquiry over a Sworn Administrative Inquiry when strong evidence exists "essentially amounts to their devaluation by the disciplinary bodies".²⁴⁹ For example, the case of photojournalist Marios Lolos (injured by a stun grenade in 2025) was examined via a PDE despite its seriousness and corroborating evidence.

Further, in a meeting with Amnesty International in September 2025, the Greek Ombudsman and EMIDIPA's staff it was noted that EMIDIPA has insufficient staff and resources to conduct more of its own investigations.²⁵⁰ In April 2024, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers called on Greece to support the Mechanism by providing the necessary staff and implementing its recommendations.²⁵¹ In the same meeting, it was also highlighted that the mechanism's effectiveness and accountability in the policing of demonstrations would be enhanced if EMIDIPA staff would be allowed to be present in the operations' room when demonstrations took place.²⁵² The Mechanism also 'has no power to compel action and can only make recommendations to the police' and can inform individuals filing a complaint on the outcome of his findings only when disciplinary proceedings are completed.²⁵³

THE CASE OF VASILEIOS MAGGOS

The case of 26-year-old Vasileios Maggos highlights systemic flaws in the investigation of cases of unlawful use of force.²⁵⁴ On 16 June 2020, 26-year-old Vasileios Maggos described from his hospital bed his severe ill-treatment by police in Volos two days before. In his public post on social media, Vasileios Maggos described being beaten by police outside the Volos courthouse on 14 June 2020.²⁵⁵

Video evidence verified by Amnesty International captures the police beating Vasileios Maggos outside the Volos courthouse. It shows Vasileios Maggos on the ground, when a group of police officers rushes to reach him.²⁵⁶ Frame-by-frame analysis of the video evidence shows four police officers surrounding Vasileios Maggos while he is lying on the ground. One officer in black uniform, holding a baton, strikes him while Vasileios Maggos attempts to shield himself with his hands. The video evidence shows that he

²⁴⁵ EMIDIPA 2021 Annual Report, p. 140.

²⁴⁶ EMIDIPA 2024 Annual Report, pp. 240-241.

²⁴⁷ Article 24 para. 1 of Presidential Decree 120/2008 which Regulates the Disciplinary Law applicable to Police Personnel as amended by Presidential Decree 61/2024.

²⁴⁸ Article 24 para. 2 of Presidential Decree 120/2008 as amended by Presidential Decree 61/2024.

²⁴⁹ EMIDIPA 2024 Annual Report, p. 194. In March 2026, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers noted in relation to the execution of a group of cases concerning ill-treatment by law enforcement officials that certain previously identified shortcomings in disciplinary investigations persist, including the limited use of Sworn Administrative Investigations. CM/Del/Dec(2026)1553/H46-19 - 1553rd meeting (9-11 March 2026) (DH) - H46-19 Sidiropoulos and Papakostas and Alkhatib and Others groups v. Greece (Applications Nos. 33349/10, 3566/16), 11 March 2026.

²⁵⁰ Meeting 9 September 2025.

²⁵¹ See: <https://bit.ly/3V8aDcT>.

²⁵² Meeting 9 September 2025.

²⁵³ See: [168096610d \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/168096610d).

²⁵⁴ Amnesty International has reviewed a series of documents kindly shared by the family of Vasileios Maggos (on file).

²⁵⁵ Documents kindly shared by the family of Vasileios Maggos (on file).

²⁵⁶ Videos available on file with Amnesty International.

is struck at least three times with the baton. A second police officer in black uniform, positioned on the other side of Vasileios Maggos, is also seen kicking Vasileios Maggos at least once towards his lower body, as well as using his baton to strike him. A third police officer in black uniform can be seen approaching Vasileios Maggos and kicks him while he is still on the ground, after which the two officers begin to move away. A fourth police officer wearing a white helmet and green shirt runs up and appears to make contact with Vasileios Maggos with his right foot before stepping back. At least ten other police officers are visible in the surrounding area where they appear to be directing the protesters away from the street. In the second frame of the video evidence, three police officers are restraining Vasileios Maggos and putting his hands behind the back.



©↑ Screenshot from private video showing the police beating of Vasileios Maggos outside the Volos courthouse.

In his public post Vasileios Maggos also stated that police hit him and used homophobic slurs against him while he was in the police vehicle and that he was subjected to ill-treatment including being beaten by a police officer while being held by some other police officers during his deprivation of liberty at the Magnesia Police Directorate. Vasileios Maggos said that police denied his requests to transfer him to the hospital and to be provided with water and that at some point police made him drink water from a water cooler that produced water drop by drop.

Vasileios Maggos was hospitalized for multiple rib fractures as well as injuries to his liver and gallbladder. Vasileios Maggos passed away less than a month later with the cause of death cited as brain and pulmonary oedema caused by substance use.

According to the findings of the forensic pathologist appointed by the family of Vasileios Maggos: “[...] *the injuries, their location, and the mechanism by which they were determined to have been caused posed an extremely serious risk to the life*” of Vasileios Maggos and concluded that he “[...] *sustained a serious bodily harm caused by a blunt instrument, which was inflicted in a manner consistent with the reported account*”.

According to the report, while no organic causal link could be found between the physical assault and the injuries inflicted on Vasileios Maggos on 14 June 2020 and his death, a potential psychological link was a factor that could not be excluded and merited further investigation given the descriptions of his family that he refrained and made an effort to stop substance use at the time that he was attacked.²⁵⁷ Additionally, according to an expert psychiatrist witness statement which was shared with Amnesty International, the expert assessed that “[...] *there is a direct and causal link between the physical and psychological torture*” of Vasileios Maggos and his death.²⁵⁸

Despite a trial against six officers for torture and other charges which started in April and the first instance conviction of three of them for ‘dangerous bodily harm’ in relation to Vasileios Maggos’ ill-treatment outside the Volos courthouse, initial and supplementary disciplinary investigations into the case have been marred by significant omissions and deficiencies and failure to take into account EMIDIPA’s recommendations.²⁵⁹ EMIDIPA flagged failures to collect or take into account eyewitness testimonies, obtain and review CCTV footage, and examine possible discriminatory motives. The Mechanism also cited unjustifiable narrowing of the scope of the inquiry, possible unlawful disclosure of medical data and forwarding incomplete files to the prosecutor.²⁶⁰ The six officers were reportedly referred by their Service to a first instance disciplinary court with the question of whether they should face the penalty of being removed from the police force.

Giannis Maggos, Vasileios Maggos’ father, and Anny Paparoussou, the family’s lawyer, expressed concern over prolonged proceedings including repeated postponements of the second criminal trial and the family’s inability to participate as civil party on the ground that Vasileios Maggos had not filed a formal complaint before his death.²⁶¹ They also expressed their concerns that following the commencement of the second trial, their requests to upgrade the charges to ‘torture that caused the death of Vasileios Maggos and to permit the family to participate as a civil party were rejected by the court.’²⁶²

²⁵⁷ Documentation kindly provided by the family of Vasileios Maggos.

²⁵⁸ Few weeks after the incident, Vasileios Maggos also sought mental health support from the mental health unit of the Achillopouleion General Hospital. An attestation from the hospital states among others that “he arrived with intense painful anxiety and depressive episodes. The episodes follow and incident of ill-treatment for which he was hospitalized in Volos General Hospital”. Documentation kindly provided by the family of Vasileios Maggos.

²⁵⁹ The six officers have also been indicted for dangerous bodily harm, exposure to danger and arbitrary deprivation of liberty. The ruling was issued in February 2025 by the single-member Misdemeanours Court in Volos. The appeal trial was postponed for September 2026.

²⁶⁰ EDIMIDA, Annual Reports, 2021, pp. 58-60, 2022, pp. 45-56, 2023, (<https://www.synigoros.gr/en/category/e8nikos-mhxanismos-dierevnhshs-peristatikwn-av8airesias/post/annual-report-or%20national%20mechanism%20for%20the%20investigation%20of%20arbitrary%20incidents%202023>, pp. 73-74) and 2024, pp. 80-89.

²⁶¹ Interview with Giannis Maggos 16 August 2025; Interview with lawyer Anny Paparoussou, 3 September 2025.

²⁶² Follow-up communication with Giannis Maggos and Anny Paparoussou, April 2026.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Amnesty International's research reveals a persistent and worrying pattern of serious human rights violations in the policing of demonstrations in Greece that violate the right to peaceful protest. National legislation regulating the right to peaceful assembly continues to breach Greece's international human rights commitments and the introduction of a blanket ban on protests in certain parts of Syntagma square, a location linked with the exercise of the right to peaceful protest, sends a strong signal that Greek authorities want to further restrict the exercise of the right. These actions by the Greek authorities are increasing the gap rather than bringing it into greater compliance with international human rights standards and pertinent recommendations including by the UN HRC.

Serious concerns also remain about the ongoing practice of the Greek police of stop-and-searching peaceful protesters ahead, during and after protests and bringing them to police stations for identity checks despite the absence of grounds to do so. This practice appears to be used as a means to prevent often large numbers of protesters from exercising their right to peaceful assembly. In the cases documented those interviewed were arbitrary deprived of their liberty and experienced a breach of fundamental guarantees such as the right to communicate with their family or a lawyer, denial of sustenance and unnecessary and potentially degrading body searches. This indicates a practice that is potentially punitive and has a deterring effect on protesters from participating in peaceful assemblies. These conclusions point to the urgent need for the Greek police to end the practice of depriving peaceful protesters of their liberty for identity checks without reasonable suspicion in order to ensure that the enjoyment of the right to peaceful assembly remains unhindered.

Amnesty International's findings based on an array of testimonies as well as verified videos also show worrying patterns of unlawful force by police during the policing of the documented peaceful demonstrations between 2024 and 2025 including unlawful, dangerous and punitive use of batons, misuse of chemical irritants and water cannon, unlawful use of force by police motorbikes and unlawful use of force during arrest and/or detention. Of particular concern is the dangerous deployment of stun grenades which results in serious injuries and their harmful consequences on the lives, physical and mental health of injured protesters and members of the press. In the cases documented, victims face a long wait to obtain justice which in some of the documented cases has already led to perpetrators not being identified or judicial rulings that risk legitimizing unlawful use of force against peaceful protesters. In view of the above, Amnesty International calls the Greek authorities to prohibit the use of stun grenades for the policing of public assemblies.

The cases of criminalization of peaceful protesters for alleged participation in banned protests or for a breach of a blanket ban and the case of criminalization of two Amnesty International activists add to a worrying picture of the state of the right to protest in Greece and can have a significant chilling effect on the exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Persistent impunity for police for abuses against protesters and members of the press as highlighted by cases documented by Amnesty International and statistics and research by academic experts, EMIDIPA and NGOs undermine further the protection of the right to protest and also the faith of those affected in the effectiveness of criminal and disciplinary investigations. The ongoing failure of public order police to displaying their identification numbers or display visible identification numbers is a significant factor to lack of accountability that requires more measures from the side of the Greek authorities in order to be addressed. Measures also to strengthen Greece's police complaint

mechanism are essential including the allocation of sufficient funding and resources and powers to make binding recommendations.

The Greek authorities must take the action necessary to move away from punitive and repressive policing and towards respecting and facilitating the right to peaceful assembly. Amnesty International urges the Greek authorities to acknowledge the breadth and seriousness of these violations and take urgent measures to ensure accountability and respect and protect the right to peaceful protest.

ON LEGISLATION REFORMS

Amnesty International urges the Greek Minister of Citizen Protection to introduce reforms in Law 4703/2020 and its implementing legislation to fully protect, respect and facilitate the right to peaceful assembly, in accordance with international human rights law and standards by:

- Reducing the types of assembly that are subject to mandatory notification requirements under domestic law and to expand the range of assemblies that may proceed without mandatory notification, whether or not notification is then volunteered. If at all, apply the notification regime only to assemblies that are likely to have a relevant impact on others.
- Repeal the provision allowing to disperse an assembly merely for failure to notify and stop this in practice; failure to notify must not be used as ground to prohibit assemblies in practice.
- Seek to accommodate counterdemonstrations and repeal the provision that allows for their prohibition merely because of being a counterdemonstration.
- Clearly and explicitly establish in law a presumption in favour of holding peaceful assemblies.
- Repealing the provision introducing the liability of assembly organizers for the violent behaviour of others.

Amnesty International also urges the Greek Minister of Citizen Protection to:

- Repeal the provision introducing blanket bans on protests in parts of Syntagma square.
- Eliminate police powers that are not based on the standards of reasonable suspicion, and otherwise not compliant with international human rights law, and ensure that police actions can only be exercised based on a suspicion that is founded on objective criteria. For that reason, the organization urges the Minister of Citizen Protection to introduce in legislation a provision regarding ID checks that is based explicitly on the standard of individualized reasonable suspicion and international human rights standards.

ON THE FACILITATION OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLIES

Amnesty International calls for the Greek Minister of Citizen Protection and the Chief of the Hellenic Police to completely review the policing approach for peaceful assemblies and in particular ensure that police:

- Have a facilitative approach towards assemblies, including counter demonstrations, through supportive measures and the display of a high degree of tolerance.
- Refrain from any intimidation or harassment of protesters, journalists and human rights defenders, including unnecessary identity stops and searches, or any other behaviour that can have a chilling effect on those who wish to assemble peacefully.
- Do not disperse an assembly merely because of organizers failure to notify or because of being otherwise considered unlawful under domestic law.
- Do not disperse an assembly because of isolated acts of violence.
- In their response to any violent behaviour, clearly distinguish between those who behave peacefully and those who engage in violence and protect all those who are not engaged in violence.

REGARDING VIOLATIONS CONNECTED TO IDENTITY CHECKS

Amnesty International calls for the Greek Police to:

- End the practice of depriving peaceful protesters of their liberty for identity checks without reasonable suspicion of criminal behaviour.
- Ensure that people deprived of their liberty on any grounds have fundamental guarantees such as access to a lawyer, the right to notify someone in the outside world, and access to medical assistance.
- Body searches should not be carried out routinely or preemptively. They should only be conducted when duly justified by objectively verifiable, individualized concerns relating to the safety of these persons or others or suspicion of a criminal offence. Body searches should always be carried out in a non-degrading and non-humiliating manner. Strip searches should only be carried out in exceptional circumstances, be subject to the order by a superior and should only be allowed if the item sought is of such a nature that it can be hidden under the clothing and be undetectable through normal pat-down body searches. They must always be conducted in the least denigrating and humiliating way possible and in a private place where the person being searched cannot be seen by anyone not required to be present.²⁶³

ON VIOLATIONS OF THE USE OF FORCE, INCLUDING THE MISUSE OF STUN GRENADES, TEAR GAS, HANDHELD CHEMICAL IRRITANTS AND BATONS

Amnesty International calls for the Minister of Citizen Protection and the Chief of the Hellenic Police to:

- Ensure that regulations for law enforcement on the use of force should include details on appropriate weapons for use in particular circumstances, compliant with and citing international human rights and OSCE guidelines, the ECHR, the UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms. Use the Amnesty International Guidelines on the Implementation of the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials as a benchmark to review their operational framework on the use of force and as guidance for the full implementation and respect of the UN Basic Principles.²⁶⁴ Such regulations should be made public. Specific operational purposes, thresholds of dangers that must be met, as well as precautions to be taken and prohibitions should be clearly defined for each type of weapon separately. Such rules must be transparent and public.
- Ensure that law enforcement officials only use force when strictly necessary and proportionate to achieve a legitimate objective, even in times of emergency. Law enforcement officials should not resort to the use of force just because an assembly is considered unlawful.
- Prohibit the firing of tear gas grenades at individuals.
- Prohibit the use of stun grenades in the policing of public assemblies.
- Grenades that disperse multiple kinetic impact projectiles such as Tear Ball Multi Effect Grenades carry an elevated risk of causing serious injuries and must be prohibited for use in law enforcement.
- Ensure that devices that have wide area effects and a high potential of harm, such as tear gas or water cannon, may only be used in situations of more generalized violence for the purpose of dispersing a crowd, and only when all other means have failed to contain the violence. They must not be used when people are in a confined space or where roads or other routes of escape are blocked.
- Ensure that hand-held chemical irritants, such as pepper spray, are only used to the minimum extent necessary against individuals in self-defence or in the defence of others against physical violence; hand-held chemical irritants must never be used on restrained individuals.

²⁶³ International Committee of the Red Cross: To serve and to protect – Human rights and humanitarian law for police and security forces, pp. 308-309.

²⁶⁴ Use of Force: Guidelines for the Implementation of the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. <https://policehumanrightsresources.org/use-of-force-guidelines-for-implementation-of-the-un-basic-principles-on-the-use-of-force-and-firearms-by-law-enforcement-officials>.

- Confine the use of high-capacity handheld chemical irritant devices to the dispersal of crowds in situations of generalized violence against persons that it is not possible to contain by addressing violent individuals alone. High-capacity hand-held devices must never be used in enclosed spaces.
- Ensure that instructions are given and training is provided in order for law enforcement officials to use chemical irritants correctly in order to mitigate the risk of unnecessary or arbitrary injury or other harm.
- As a rule, the use of a baton in an even more dangerous manner likely to cause serious injury or even death (such as strikes to the head, neck, spine, throat or groin area) should be prohibited, except in the extreme situation of a threat of serious injury or even death that cannot be addressed with less harmful means.
- Explicitly prohibit so called 'baton charges'.
- Ensure that law enforcement officials are properly instructed and provided with strict human rights-based scenario training in order to use batons correctly and thus mitigate the risk of excessive or unnecessary use of force causing unwarranted injury.
- Reflect the above principles in the Guidelines on the management of demonstrations and other operational rules and ensure that they are detailed regarding the threshold of risk for which different means, methods and weapons will be used in cases of resort to force and that they are publicly available.

ON CRIMINALIZATION OF PEACEFUL PROTESTORS

Amnesty International calls for the competent police and judicial authorities to:

- Ensure that liability for any alleged offences is based on individual actions and supported by compelling evidence, not mere presence at a protest.
- Refrain from criminalizing acts that break a domestic law which contravenes international human rights law and standards such as the blanket ban on protests. While waiting for legal reforms to be completed, prosecutorial authorities should adopt internal guidelines to discourage the prosecution of these offences.

Amnesty International calls for the competent judicial authorities to:

- Drop charges against individuals criminalized for their perceived participation in a prohibited protest

ON ACCOUNTABILITY

- Amnesty International calls on the Greek Minister of Citizen Protection, the Chief of the Hellenic Police, the competent judicial authorities and EMIDIPA to ensure that all allegations of human rights violations by law enforcement officials including excessive use of force, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are subject to prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations. Accountability must involve not only the immediately acting law enforcement officials, but also any commanding or superior officer: for any unlawful orders they may have given, for any failure to stop or prevent human rights violations by law enforcement officials under their command or control, as well as for any failure to take required precautionary measures in the operational planning.
- An investigation should be mandatory in all instances when there was violence, when police resorted to the use of force and when there were people injured or otherwise harmed during the assembly. This should also include a review of the overall policing approach, as well as related policies and instructions and also serve as an effective lessons-learned process.
- Amnesty International calls on the Greek government to explicitly enshrine in law the right of participants, journalists and monitors to use film, audio devices and photography to record law enforcement officials.
- Amnesty International calls on the Greek police to ensure that all public order police display easily visible individual identification, with penalties for failing to do so. In particular, public order police

officers should wear identification not only on their helmets but also on other parts of their gear and which are clearly visible.

- Amnesty International urges the Greek police to conduct more frequently and where appropriate Sworn Administrative Investigations instead of simple inquiries.²⁶⁵ In cases of serious allegations accompanied with some evidence, police must obligatorily start such investigations.
- Amnesty International urges the Greek Minister of Citizen Protection and the Greek Police to introduce reforms in order to ensure that victims and/or their families have access to the content of disciplinary investigations into law enforcement officials accused of human rights violations. The outcome of a complaint should be made known to them promptly and without them having to apply for the provision of such information.
- Amnesty International calls on the Greek Minister of Citizen Protection, the Minister of Justice and the Greek Police to collect and publish regular, uniform and comprehensive statistics on complaints about misconduct, including human rights violations, by law enforcement officials. These figures should include information on the number of complaints of ill-treatment, the steps taken in response to each complaint, the outcome of any criminal and disciplinary investigations, statistics on allegations of discrimination, including racist abuse, and statistics and/or data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, nationality and other protected grounds.
- Amnesty International calls on the Greek government to take steps including amending relevant legislation in order to ensure that the police oversight mechanism is empowered, among other things, with:
 - Powers to make binding recommendations for prosecution, disciplinary sanctions, reparations and policy reviews. The authorities should be required to provide reasoned responses where findings require it.
 - Sufficient funding and resources, allocated by the legislature and made public.
 - Access to information for victims of human rights violations by law enforcement officials concerning the progress and outcome of their complaint to EMIDIPA once the findings of EMIDIPA are completed.
 - The ability to be present in police control rooms where operations during demonstrations are being managed.

ON SAFEGUARDS FOR INDIVIDUALS IN CUSTODY

Amnesty International calls on the Greek Minister of Citizen Protection and the Greek Police to take steps in order to ensure that:

- All persons deprived of their liberty have access to a lawyer from the beginning of their arrival to the police station and are provided with prompt access to medical assistance.
- CCTV cameras are installed in detention areas and relevant footage is retained for a period of three months.
- Every detained person in police stations is held in humane conditions including access to basic necessities including food and water at no extra charge, access to clean facilities and other basic conditions. Drinking water should be available to every person in detention whenever he or she needs it.²⁶⁶
- There is compliance with the obligation to prevent, eradicate and punish acts of torture or other ill-treatment,

²⁶⁵ See: [SIDIROPOULOS AND PAPAKOSTAS v. Greece](#).

²⁶⁶ United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (The Nelson Mandela Rules).

ON IMPLEMENTATION OF UN TREATY MONITORING BODIES AND COUNCIL OF EUROPE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS RECOMMENDATIONS

Amnesty International calls on the Greek authorities to comply with, without delay, and implement existing UN Treaty Monitoring Bodies recommendations including those specifically regarding the right to peaceful assembly and the prevention and eradication of torture or other ill-treatment. In particular, to take concrete and immediate steps toward complying with and implementing the recommendations by the UN HRC in its Concluding observations in 2024.²⁶⁷ Specifically, to take necessary steps to:

- “Amend Law No. 4703/2020 with a view to ensuring that all individuals fully enjoy their right to freedom of assembly, including the right of spontaneous assembly, and that any restrictions imposed are in compliance with the strict requirements of Article 21 of the Covenant;”
- “Ensure that all allegations of excessive use of force and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials are promptly and thoroughly investigated by an independent authority, that alleged perpetrators are prosecuted and, if found to be responsible, are appropriately punished and that victims and/or their families receive adequate compensation;”
- “Provide the Ombudsman’s Office with adequate resources to ensure timely and effective investigations into allegations of excessive use of force by the police and other law enforcement officials;”
- “Take measures to prevent and eliminate the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, including by enhancing training programmes focusing on the Covenant, the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, the United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement and on de-escalation techniques.”

Amnesty International calls on the Greek authorities to extend an invitation to the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association to conduct country visits to Greece.

Amnesty International calls on the Greek authorities to implement the binding judgments of the European Court of Human Rights in the Sidiropoulos and Papakostas Group of cases concerning ill-treatment by law enforcement agents and the lack of effective investigations in this regard, including into discriminatory attitudes by the law enforcement agents. In that respect, Greece should comply with the decision of the Committee of Ministers of March 2026 which noted the “long-standing and complex problem of ill-treatment by law-enforcement agents, as serious concerns continue to be raised in this regard, including by the Greek Ombudsman”, and in particular requested from the Greek authorities to:²⁶⁸

- “Submit information on the implementation of procedural safeguards, as recommended by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), in order to prevent similar substantive violations of Article 3 ECHR” .
- Submit “information regarding access to a doctor and the practical application of procedural safeguards to suspects from the outset of deprivation of liberty” .
- “Explore all possible avenues of further action to ensure that criminal investigations are sufficiently thorough and conducted in a fully Convention-compliant manner, including through large scale trainings and awareness raising of prosecutors and judges” .
- “Provide information on the implementation of the outstanding recommendations issued” by EMIDIPA.
- “Submit their evaluation of the general measures necessary in response to the Panayotopoulos and Others judgment concerning also the failure to investigate discriminatory motives on the part of the law enforcement agents” .

²⁶⁷ UN HRC, Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Greece, UN Doc No. CCPR/C/GRC/CO/3, 28 November 2024, paras. 17 and 35.

²⁶⁸ CM/Del/Dec (2026)1553/H46-19 - 1553rd meeting (9-11 March 2026) (DH) - H46-19 Sidiropoulos and Papakostas and Alkhatib and Others groups v. Greece (Applications Nos. 33349/10, 3566/16), 11 March 2026, [https://search.coe.int/cm/eng#f\(%22CoEIdentifier%22:%2209125948802aca97%22,%22sort%22:%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22\)](https://search.coe.int/cm/eng#f(%22CoEIdentifier%22:%2209125948802aca97%22,%22sort%22:%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22)).

ANNEX

On 12 May 2026 Amnesty International sent a letter to the Minister of Citizen Protection, the Chief of the Hellenic Police, the Deputy Minister of Citizen Protection and the General Secretary for Public Order containing a summary of the findings, key human rights concerns, cases and recommendations for their consideration and providing them an opportunity to respond in advance of the publication of the report.

Below is an unofficial translation of the official response by the International Police Cooperation Division of the Greek Police Headquarters received on 28 May 2026.

“Dear Sir/Madam,

Further to your message below, we hereby provide you with the response of the Greek Police Headquarters for your information.

“A. a) For the Greek Police, the protection of constitutionally guaranteed individual and social rights of citizens, as well as the facilitation of their exercise, within the framework of the prevailing constitutional order, constitutes a fundamental and non-negotiable priority.

b) The mission of the Greek Police includes:

- i. the protection of the State,
- ii. public security,
- iii. general and traffic policing,
- iv. community policing, and
- v. policing of foreigners and border protection.

Additionally, the exercise of general and traffic policing responsibilities includes, inter alia, ensuring social peace and the protection of citizens, as well as maintaining order in public spaces and during public gatherings and assemblies, and safeguarding the individual and collective rights of citizens during such events (Article 5 of Law 5187/2025 (A 48)).

c) In order to ensure the exercise of the right of peaceful assembly in public outdoor spaces, in accordance with Article 11 of the Constitution and Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), in such a way that public security is not exposed to serious risk and the socio-economic life of a given area is not disproportionately disrupted, Law 4703/2020 (Government Gazette 131/2020) was adopted by the Greek State.

Subsequently, Presidential Decree 73/2020 was issued to regulate more specific matters, including the adoption of public order, security and traffic measures by the Greek Police during such assemblies, and further specifying the applicable rules and procedures and, in general, arranging the necessary details with the aim to implement the provisions of Law 4703/2020.

d) On the basis of the aforementioned new institutional framework, the *National Plan for the Management of Public Outdoor Assemblies* was issued and published on 21 January 2021, concerning the presence of the Greek Police at public outdoor assemblies. This plan outlines and highlights the key elements of the provisions of the above legislation and defines the necessary operational actions required to be undertaken by the Directors/Commanders of the competent involved Services, in order to respond promptly and effectively to the significant obligations arising therefrom.

B. a) In the context of the declared commitment of the political and natural Leadership to zero tolerance in matters of human rights violations, orders have been issued and circulated to all Services involved in such

cases, reminding the personnel of the Greek Police of the main provisions from which derive the obligation to protect life and respect human dignity, the prohibition of discrimination, torture and any inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the protection of citizens' rights, and the general conduct of police officers towards citizens, emphasizing that these fundamental principles constitute a matter of primary importance for the Greek Police Headquarters.

b) It is noted that, under the legal framework governing the control and handling of incidents of police misconduct, whenever there is any information indicating a violation of the above principles and values, the Administration takes effective action to investigate it, by conducting an administrative inquiry (sworn or preliminary), as provided for by the applicable disciplinary law (Presidential Decree 120/2008, as amended and in force), and, where appropriate, strict disciplinary sanctions are imposed on those responsible, in order to prevent any sense of impunity; sanctions for unlawful conduct are imposed with the greatest possible speed.

c) Under Chapter D (Articles 56 et seq.) of Law 4443/2016, which entered into force on 9 June 2017 (Article 77 of the same law), the Independent Authority "Greek Ombudsman" was designated as the *National Mechanism for the Investigation of Arbitrary Incidents* within the Law Enforcement Forces and Detention Facilities staff (EMIDIPA). EMIDIPA constitutes the main external control mechanism for police misconduct.

The above law was amended by Article 188 of Law 4662/2020, according to which the Greek Ombudsman, in his capacity as EMIDIPA, is competent to collect, record, assess, investigate or further refer for disciplinary proceedings to the competent authorities, complaints concerning acts, actions or omissions of uniformed personnel of the Greek Police (as well as of the Greek Coast Guard, the Fire Service and prison staff), which occurred in the performance of their duties or through abuse of their authority and concern:

- i. torture and other violations of human dignity within the meaning of Article 137A of the Criminal Code,
- ii. intentional unlawful violations against life or physical integrity or health or of personal or sexual freedom,
- iii. unlawful use of a firearm, and
- iv. unlawful conduct where there are indications of a racist motive or other forms of discriminatory treatment based on race, colour, national or ethnic origin, descent, religious or other beliefs, disability or chronic condition, age, family or social status, sexual orientation, gender identity or characteristics.

It is further noted that, in the aforementioned cases, the Independent Authority "Greek Ombudsman" is informed, in the context of its competence as the National Mechanism for the Investigation of Arbitrary Incidents, pursuant to Article 56(1) of Law 4443/2016, as amended by Article 188 of Law 4662/2020, and at a subsequent stage in order to strengthen and ensure the "principle of transparency", the case file is transmitted to the above Authority for review, in accordance with paragraph 8, subparagraph (f) of the relevant order of the Chief of Police."

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PROTESTS ARE NOT BATTLEFIELDS

PATTERNS OF UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE BY POLICE AND IMPUNITY IN GREECE

Despite repeated assurances by the Greek authorities that the right to freedom of assembly is guaranteed, there is a troubling pattern of punitive protest policing and abusive use of force. National legislation on protests remains contrary to international human rights standards, identity checks are being used as a tool to suppress peaceful protests and a series of incidents of unlawful or excessive use of force including dangerous deployment of stun grenades has been documented in the policing of demonstrations. Cases of peaceful protesters being criminalized simply for exercising their right to peaceful assembly persist and concerns remain about a long-standing culture of impunity. Greek authorities must take the action necessary to move away from punitive and repressive policing and take measures including reforming legislation on protests in order to align it with the country's international human rights commitments; ending the practice of depriving peaceful protesters of their liberty for identity checks without reasonable suspicion of criminal behaviour; prohibiting the use of stun grenades in the policing of demonstrations; ensuring that public order police display easily visible individual identification, with penalties for failing to do so; and ensuring that the police oversight mechanism is allocated with sufficient funding and resources.