

**2008 OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING**  
**Working Session 4: Rule of Law - Prevention of Torture**

**Statement of the Home of Macedonian Culture, Greece**

Thank you Mr Moderator.

We just heard the statement of the representative of Rainbow who gave us examples of harassment of the members of the Macedonian minority of Greece.

I would now like to add that the intimidation is not limited to members of the minority. Non-Macedonian activists who call for the recognition of minority rights are also harassed by the authorities.

Mr Panayote Dimitras, a university professor, long time campaigner for minority rights and current spokesperson of the Greek Helsinki monitor is currently the subject of such harassment.

In October 2007, a complaint was filed against Mr. Dimitras claiming that, with texts that he wrote on the Macedonian minority in Greece violated Article 138 paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code, which states: *“one who attempts by force or by threat of force to detach from the Greek State territory belonging to it or to include territory of the Greek State in another state shall be punished by death”*. Another article commutes death sentences to life sentences).

The Chief Prosecutor of the First Instance Court of Athens decided that the criminal complaint was not completely unfounded, and launched a related preliminary criminal investigation against Mr. Dimitras. A year later, the complaint is still in the phase of preliminary investigation, which according to the law should not last more than four months.

Mr Dimitras has already met the Public Prosecutor and has given his statement. If he is required to go to trial, the only possible sentence under the law is life imprisonment.

The Home of Macedonian Culture expresses its deep concern about this judicial harassment against Greek Helsinki Monitor and its members, which

seems to merely aim at sanctioning their human rights activities, in particular their activities against discrimination, anti-Semitism and minority rights in Greece.

The Home of Macedonian Culture therefore urges the Greek authorities to:

- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Dimitras and other activists.
- Put an end to all acts harassment, including at the judicial level, against Mr Dimitras, as well as all human rights defenders in Greece;
- Comply with the provisions of the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting.
- Comply with all the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in particular with Article 1, which provides that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”, as well as with the above-mentioned Article 12.2;

Thank you for your attention.