

Athens 11 June, 2013

Greek Transgender Support Association

(Court of first appeal no. 7646/2010 – Metropolitan District of Athens no. 19388)

<http://www.transgender-association.gr/>

transgender.support.association@gmail.com



PRESS RELEASE

Subject: “Transgender arrests in police crackdowns and unlawful detention of the defenders of their rights in Thessaloniki, Greece”

The Greek Transgender Support Association, recognized ngo for the support of the rights of the transgender community in Greece is appalled by and protests the arrests, on a daily basis, of transgender people in Thessaloniki, and the harassment of the defenders of their rights and especially the detention of their lawyer Electra Koutras.

According to submitted complaints, since 30/5/2013, transgender people are arrested and detained in the police station in daily police “sweep” operations, for at least 3-4 hours, on the pretext of their i.d. verification and their identification as sex workers. There, the transgender persons are forced to tolerate the humiliating behaviour of police officers.

According to the grievances, in one of the cases mentioned, the police stopped the car of three transgender women and arrested them without any justification. In all the cases the unacceptable and offensive behaviour of the police has been protested. In cases when transgender women complained, they were threatened to be sued for disrespect if they did not “comply”.

The fact that the arrests are made on a daily basis, in conjunction with the statements of several public figures and Greek Church representatives against the Thessaloniki Pride, makes us wonder whether transgender persons, being the most vulnerable group of the LGBT community, victims of social exclusion and intolerance, have become “easy targets”.

Following similar police operations in Athens and pointless arrests, all arrested transgender women who sought the help of Greek Transgender Support Association, were found to be innocent by the court, while the court accepted the defence argument that the incidence of the identity of a transgender person with her presence in a specific location does not mean that the person practices sexual work, let alone that she “harasses” the passerbies. On the contrary, the reference of the individual to trial,

just on the basis of the above coincidence, signifies the criminalisation of gender identity; this is not to be tolerated in a well-governed democratic society.

In addition to the above, Electra Koutras, the attorney of Greek Transgender Support Association held a meeting to inform and support the transgender people of Thessaloniki. Shortly after the meeting, she was informed that one of the transgender persons was arrested for the third time in four days. Ms Koutras went to the Police Station to defend the person in custody.

She was initially denied access into the Police Department, although she presented her lawyer's i.d. and announced that she represented the person in custody. She had to demand immediate police action for the refusal of prisoner communication with her attorney; this forced the officer on duty to allow the communication. According to the complaint of Ms. Koutras, after she received threats for "flagrante delicto", she was taken to detention, illegally.

After she was released, she went to another police station (due to the refusal in the first to record the lawsuit), and proceeded to submit a complaint against the officer on duty and the present policemen for a variety of offences.

Greek Transgender Support Association states that it will resort to the courts, as well as to international organisations and to seek the condemnation of the Greek State which is responsible for the brutal violation of the human rights of transgender people and the rights of their defenders; and for the sheer violation of every concept of justice.

Greek Transgender Support Association asks for:

- The immediate ending of the Greek Police atrocities against transgender people and the defenders of their rights.
- The exemplary punishment of the responsible police officers who abolished with their practices every sense of law and justice.
- The revision of Presidential Decree for the establishment of Units against Racism in order to add gender identity as a fundamental protection.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Greek Transgender Support Association
Zan Moreas 17, Koukaki, Athens, 11741, Greece
<http://www.transgender-association.gr/>
transgender.support.association@gmail.com