



Athens, September 25, 2013

Press Release

The Greek Ombudsman calls for immediate and drastic measures against racist violence

The pronounced surge in racist violence, the impunity the perpetrators enjoy, and the overall negligence of the state authorities in charge of such matters undermine social cohesion and the foundations of the rule of law. These are the points the Greek Ombudsman emphasized in its special report released today. The report records the racist violence phenomenon from January 2012 to April 2013 and highlights the rapid escalation in the intensity and number of attacks throughout 2012, especially following the national elections. The Greek Ombudsman has detected a lack of action and/or reluctance by the state and especially by the police to combat decisively the racist attacks but also to investigate expeditiously and transparently accusations against police force members. Additionally, the manifestation of the phenomenon on school grounds and the manner in which the school administration deals with it are being recorded. Further, the institutional instruments provided by the relevant European experience and the legal framework in effect for combating racist violence are evaluated. In its conclusion, the report offers specific recommendations by the Greek Ombudsman. They are addressed to the ministries and advocate taking immediate and effective measures.

“The number and intensity of racist attacks and the negligence exhibited by the competent state authorities break up social cohesion and peace and undermine the value and foundations of the rule of law itself. What is more, they gravely defame the country with regard to the international public opinion,” stressed the Greek Ombudsman, Calliope Spanou, adding: “Democracy cannot tolerate and society cannot become accustomed to bigotry and racist crime.”

The Greek Ombudsman stresses that, between January 1, 2012 and April 30, 2013, the overall complaints for 281 racist attacks are simply the tip of the iceberg since the phenomenon assumed incendiary dimensions especially following the 2012 elections. The complaints include 71 incidents whose perpetrators are alleged as being linked to Golden Dawn; and 47 incidents in

which members of the security forces are alleged as having participated, thus abusing their duties.

In its report, the Independent Authority requests the competent authorities to:

- create a systematic, comprehensive way of recording racist violence incidents and publicize the findings regularly;
- investigate fully, transparently, and expeditiously complaints for racist behavior or participation in racist attacks by police officers;
- staff adequately the police units handling racist violence and establish a special process for the investigation of complaints;
- protect the victims of and witnesses to racist attacks;
- review police operation “Xenios Zeus” from the point of view of proportionality and abusiveness of police transfers, checks and controls conducted under;
- take measures in schools to systematically educate students on issues pertinent to human rights; and
- introduce modern and functional legislation

As of its establishment and operation in 1998, the Greek Ombudsman has been highlighting violations of the equality principle and recommending that the state eradicate discrimination as sighted frequently in Greek reality on the basis of ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, and/or age (see the Independent Authority’s annual reports posted on its www.synigoros.gr website and on the sub-websites on issues of equal treatment, immigration policy, the Roma, etc). Equal protection of human dignity on the basis of the Constitution and international legal rules, protection of rights, and combating discrimination constitute the fundamental tenets of the rule of law as well as the mission of the Greek Ombudsman.