



**Permanent Mission of Greece  
to the Office of the United Nations  
and other International Organizations  
in Geneva**

No.: 6170.7A/AS 907

**VERBAL NOTE**

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and, with reference to the Joint Communication sent by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, dated 12 April 2019, regarding the cases of Mr Slavko Mangovski and Ms Trendafilka Sandeva, and, as instructed by the Government of the Hellenic Republic, has the honour to forward, attached hereto, the latter's reply.

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.



To:  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais Wilson  
Rue des Paquis 52  
1201 Geneva

At the outset it should be underlined that the persons concerned were forbidden to enter the Greek territory for having engaged in activities which threaten Greece's national security. Such activities are contrary to the Greek law as well as to the letter and the spirit of, and the values enshrined in, the relevant binding and non – binding international human rights documents.

Under the applicable international law, it is a matter for the States, at least in principle, to decide who they will admit to their territory and to impose conditions on the entry of foreign nationals. The persons wishing to travel to a foreign country may not extricate themselves from the obligation to comply with the relevant domestic legislation simply by availing themselves of other human rights, such as the rights to freedom of expression or freedom of assembly, or by merely claiming that they are "human rights defenders".

It is significant in this respect to note that the travel ban, in relation to the rights of human rights defenders, is mainly contemplated from the point of view of the latter's right to leave their own country and not their wish to enter a foreign country.

In any case, the denial of the competent Greek authorities to allow the entry into the country of the persons concerned is not arbitrary, but is provided by, and is in full conformity with, domestic and EU law, pursues a legitimate aim, i.e. the protection of national security, and is proportional to the aim pursued. Persons denied entry into the country have the right to appeal the decision of the competent Greek authorities, according to the procedure laid down in the relevant Greek legislation.

The above persons are associated with nationalistic organizations with a revisionist and irredentist agenda. The activities carried out by these persons could also fall into the category of activities "potentially harmful" to Greece's international relations, particularly as regards our bilateral relations with the neighbouring Republic of North Macedonia, especially during the present time, following the entry into force of the Prespa Agreement and the resulting efforts to promote peace, stability, cooperation and friendship between the two countries and their peoples.

With regard to references to the protection of "minority rights", we would like to recall our firm position that there is no such thing as a "macedonian minority" in Greece. There is only a very limited number of people in Greece that, in addition to the greek language, also speak a slavic idiom. These are Greek citizens that enjoy the full spectrum of rights, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Hellenic Republic, a member-state of the European Union.

The members of groups not officially recognized as "minorities", fully enjoy their human rights and freedoms under the relevant international treaties. They participate in the economic, social, public and cultural life of the country and are free to organize festivities and cultural events, to undertake any kind of related activities and to express themselves as they wish.

In light of the above and given that the real nature of the activities carried out by the above persons is not related to the defense of human rights, we would like to assure the distinguished Special Rapporteurs that Greece will continue to support their mandates, fully respecting and implementing the existing constitutional and legal framework which ensures that human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate work, in line with the applicable universal and regional human rights treaties, as well as other relevant international instruments.