



*Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus
Geneva*

NOTE VERBALE

Ref.: 24.11.006.018 (1000/1/1)

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and with regards to the latter's communication with reference AL CYP 1/2024 dated 14 February 2024, has the honour to provide herewith letter by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Dr. Constantinos Kombos, dated 15 April 2024, addressed to the the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, with the request to be forwarded to its destination.

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



Geneva, 18 April 2024

To the
Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights (ohchr-registry@un.org)
Geneva



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
The Minister

Ref.: 24.11.006.013

Nicosia, 15 April 2024

Ms. Mary Lawlor
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Ms. Cecilia M. Baillet
Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity

Mr. Morris Tdball-Binz
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

Mr. Gehad Madi
Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants

Honorables,

Further to your letter of 14 February 2024, I would like, at the outset, to express the appreciation of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus to your respective mandates. Advocating for human rights defenders, international solidarity, the human rights of migrants and eliminating extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions by consolidating international cooperation are indispensable especially during this period when the protection of human rights is at risk.

Taking this opportunity, I wish to reiterate that Cyprus unwaveringly supports human rights defenders, as they constitute an important component in our collective endeavor to protect human rights and prevent possible violations. Within this framework, Cyprus maintains a strong principled position in condemning any action targeting human rights defenders and civil society, including attacks, reprisals, harassment, intimidation, both online and offline. We very well understand the risks the human rights defenders are confronted with and we are committed in thoroughly investigating any possible attacks against them.

Safeguarding the rights of migrants by combatting racism and discrimination and promoting migrants' social integration is a key priority for Cyprus, whilst acknowledging that the current highly challenging times, exacerbated by the continuing migration pressures disproportionately affect Cyprus.



Notwithstanding the challenges, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is focused on protecting and promoting the rights of all, regardless of their origin or legal status. In this context, the active engagement of civil society and human rights defenders, especially to protect the rights of migrants, is vital.

In this vein, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs awarded, in 2022, the, highly acclaimed and respected, “Stella Soulioti Human Rights Award” to the organization “Cyprus Stop Trafficking”. The award was given in recognition to its role in protecting human trafficking victims, including migrants and awarded Certificates of Excellence to the organizations ‘Caritas Society Cyprus’ and to ‘Generation for Change CY’ in 2023, in recognition of their dedicated work in protecting the rights of migrants and asylum seekers in Cyprus. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus is also engaged in cooperating with civil society in a number of human rights policy areas, including human trafficking and protecting the rights of persons deprived of liberty.

With regard to the incidents enlisted in your aforementioned letter, and with reference to bomb explosion at the KISA offices in January 2024, I would like to underline - and as already provided for by your letter itself - that, the Cyprus Police promptly reacted. In particular, the Cyprus Police immediately initiated an investigation. According to the examinations carried out until now, no testimony was secured or evidence was found that would allow the Police to proceed with any arrests. The available Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) material was evaluated, and no particular evidence was detected. The investigation process is in progress and the results of the examination of evidence collected from the scene are pending. Taking into consideration the above, it is our view that Cyprus Police took all the necessary actions for a prompt, impartial, transparent and effective investigation of the incident at hand.

The case concerning the attack against KISA’s Director, Mr. Doros Polykarpou, in July 2020, was also investigated by the Cyprus Police. A criminal file was opened about offences of common assault and threat, with the case being submitted before the Nicosia District Court. At this stage, the case is under trial, with an appearance date set for 13 September 2024.

In relation to the arrest of KISA’s Director in August 2019, following the investigation of the case by the Police, a criminal file was opened regarding the offence of obstructing a law enforcement officer in the discharge of his official duties. The case was submitted before the Nicosia District Court which imposed a fine of €750.00 on KISA’s Director.



Regarding the entry by KISA's Director to the First Reception Center in Pournara in March 2022, the case was investigated by the Police and a file was opened for offences relating to illegal entry, nuisance, common assault, insult and conspiracy. Mr. Polykarpou was found to have illegally entered in the Center and taking pictures of the facilities and the areas inside the Center. He was then asked by security guards to leave, but he resisted. In their attempt to lead him to the exit, he pushed one of the security guards and hit the other one with his elbow. He was finally led to the exit with the help of other guards. The case is under trial.

Moreover, it is noted that public statements by Police during criminal investigations are regulated by a prescribed Code. Accordingly, no press releases are issued by the Police for cases where such press releases may affect the ongoing investigation or do not serve the public interest. In this regard, in cases involving, among others, rape, domestic violence, arson or explosive devices, no press releases are issued. However, when arrests are conducted in the context of cases under investigation involving arson or attempts to destroy property with explosives, the Police issues a Press Release, without mentioning details that might affect the investigative work. Press releases are also issued for criminal convictions of persons committing such offences.

Concerning the deregistration of KISA from the Non-Governmental Organizations' (NGO) registry of the Ministry of Interior, I would like to inform that the aforementioned NGO is one of the 2.200 NGOs that were deregistered in 2020, due to their failure to submit on time a substantiated application-request for registration, according to the Associations and Institutions and for other Related Matters Law of 2017 (104(I)/2017). Following the decision by the Ministry of Interior for deregistration, KISA filed a recourse to the Administrative Court of Cyprus with no. 25/2021, which was rejected on 10 June 2021. Upon the rejection by the Court, KISA proceeded with lodging an appeal against that decision, which is pending adjudication.

In closing, I wish to reaffirm that Cyprus applies due diligence in protecting an open civic space and promoting the participation of the civil society in a meaningful and inclusive manner without neglecting the application of the principles of the Rule of Law, which Cyprus fully supports.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Constantinos Kombos