

Mr Thorbjørn Jagland
Secretary General
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Cc: Directorate of Human Rights
Directorate of Political Advice
CPT Secretariat
Execution of Judgments Department

Brussels, 29 April 2014

Dear Secretary General,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS OFFICE

Ref: B1570

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S REPORTS ON PUSH-BACKS IN GREECE, AND POLICE ABUSE IN SPAIN AND GREECE

Amnesty International would like to draw your attention to the following enclosed reports. In these reports, we raise serious concerns about the persistent practice of push-backs in Greece, and police abuse in Spain and Greece.

Amnesty International today published its report "[Greece: Frontier of hope and fear: Migrants and refugees pushed back at Europe's borders](#)". It documents new evidence of collective expulsions of migrants and refugees, and allegations of ill-treatment by the Greek authorities in the Aegean and on the land border with Turkey. This is in direct violation of Greece's international obligations. Our research shows that the practice of push-backs is routine and widespread. We call on the Greek authorities to immediately put an end to pushing back refugees and migrants arriving at its borders; on the European Union to start legal proceedings against Greece for its failure to end this shameful practice; and on the European Border Agency, Frontex, to partially suspend its joint operations Poseidon Land and Sea in Greece.

On 24 April 2014, Amnesty International published another report "[Spain: The right to protest under threat](#)". It exposes violations by police against demonstrators, the lack of accountability for these violations, and the determination of the Spanish authorities to strengthen repressive legislation. The police routinely use excessive force to disperse peaceful demonstrations. The report also documents several incidents of ill-treatment of detainees in police custody, and the lack of adequate investigations into alleged human rights violations by law enforcement officials. We call on the Spanish authorities to review legislation and practices relating to public assemblies and demonstrations to ensure that the protestors' rights are protected in line with Spain's international obligations.

Finally, Amnesty International's report "[Greece: A law unto themselves: A culture of abuse and impunity in the Greek police](#)", published on 3 April 2014, exposes persistent human rights violations by law enforcement officials in Greece. This includes excessive use of force during demonstrations, ill-treatment of persons during arrest and/or detention, and discrimination against vulnerable groups. The report details the lack of accountability and the failure to conduct prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into complaints. It further focuses on the links between the Greek police and Golden Dawn resulting in impunity of attacks by far right extremists. The Greek authorities must address the long-standing culture of abuse and impunity, and create an independent and effective police complaints mechanism.

Amnesty International urges you to ensure that the Council of Europe raises allegations of push-backs and ill-treatment at Greece's border with Turkey with the Greek authorities. We further call on you to effectively address the issue of police violence and abuse in your dialogue with the Greek and Spanish authorities.

We thank you for your attention and remain at your disposal for any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Nicolas J. Beger
Director
Amnesty International European Institutions Office