

AI INDEX: EUR 25/38/98
15 JUNE 1998

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Greece

Possible adoption of Eva Androustopoulou as prisoner of conscience

The trial of Eva Androustopoulou is due to take place on 18 June. Amnesty International called upon the Greek authorities not to imprison Eva Androustopoulou in February when her trial was initially scheduled. Amnesty International will adopt her as a prisoner of conscience and will call for her immediate and unconditional release should she be imprisoned.

Eva Androustopoulou is accused of "*making frequent references...to Buddhism and to the religious beliefs of the Orient*" during a German language class she gave at a private school in Komotini, northern Greece, in May 1995.

The charges against Eva Androustopoulou have been brought under Article 4 of Law 1363/1938, which makes it an offence to "*attempt directly or indirectly to intrude on the religious beliefs of a person of a different religious persuasion...with the aim of undermining those beliefs*". If found guilty, Eva Androustopoulou, who is not herself a Buddhist, faces a term of imprisonment of between 10 days and five years, and a fine of between 1,000 and 50,000 drachmas.

Amnesty International believes that the prosecution of Eva Androustopoulou on charges of proselytism represents a violation of Article 9 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention) and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which guarantee the right to "freedom of thought, conscience and religion".

The trial of Eva Androustopoulou is the first trial for proselytism since the European Court of Human Rights delivered its judgment on the Kokkinakis case in May 1993. The European Court ruled that the conviction of Jehovah's Witness Minos Kokkinakis for attempting to convert an Orthodox Christian woman during a visit to her home violated Article 9 of the European Convention.

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