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10 April 2012

### Re: Periodic Review of Greece

Dear Committee Members,

We write in advance of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (“the Committee”) upcoming periodic review of Greece, to highlight areas of concern we hope will inform your consideration of the Greek government’s (“the government”) compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (“the Convention”). This submission contains information on Greece’s treatment of children with disabilities and unaccompanied migrant children that are inconsistent with Articles 2, 3, 6, 9, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36 and 37 of the Convention, and highlights concrete steps the Greek government should be asked to take to address the concerns identified.

Human Rights Watch has closely monitored the human rights situation in Greece and, in particular, the treatment of migrants over the past four years. The Children’s Rights Division of Human Rights Watch has documented violations against unaccompanied migrant children and has produced reports and other documents describing its research findings. For fuller analyses, please see Human Rights Watch reports [\*The EU’s Dirty Hands: Frontex Involvement in Ill-Treatment of Migrant Detainees in Greece\*](#); [\*No Refuge: Migrants in Greece\*](#); [\*Left to Survive: Systematic Failure to Protect Unaccompanied Migrant Children in Greece\*](#); and [\*Stuck in a Revolving Door: Iraqis and Other Asylum Seekers and Migrants at the Greece/Turkey Entrance to the European Union\*](#).

Human Rights Watch has also monitored the treatment of persons with disabilities at the Children's Care Center ("the center") of Lechaina over the past year (<http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/06/27/greece-olympic-host-failing-disabilities>) although we have not conducted independent research in the center itself.

This submission is based on ongoing monitoring of the human rights situation in Greece, with particular attention to the situation of children with disabilities and unaccompanied migrant children.

### **A. Children with disabilities**

Human Rights Watch has been monitoring the treatment of children with disabilities at the Children's Care Center ("the center") situated in Lechaina (Ilias Prefecture) over the past year and a half and has raised concerns with the Ministry of Health and the Ombudsman through phone calls and a letter sent in June 2011.<sup>1</sup>

According to reports by the Greek Deputy Ombudsman for the Rights of the Child, Mr. Giorgos Moschos; the Inspection Body for Health Services and Welfare; and volunteers for the Youth in Action Program, the residents in this children's care center, which also hosts adults, are living in dire conditions that violate their human rights and breach Greece's obligations under international law.

At the time of the first visit to the center by the Ombudsman's team, in September 2009, it housed 79 residents with disabilities including cerebral palsy, Down's Syndrome, developmental delays, autism and mobility problems. Residents ranged in age from 6 to 38 years. Fifteen residents were under the age of 18.

In March 2011, the Deputy Ombudsman published an extensive report, the result of ongoing investigations and several visits to the center, on the living and care conditions of the residents living there.<sup>2</sup> The Deputy Ombudsman's report noted an insufficient number of doctors and nurses; systematic sedation; and practices such as tying children and adults with developmental disabilities to their beds to reduce self-harm and the use of wooden cage beds. In addition, the Deputy Ombudsman observed that persons with different chronic diseases and disabilities in the Center do not receive regular monitoring of their health status as needed.

According to the Deputy Ombudsman's Report, the Inspection Body for Health Services and Welfare issued audit reports in 2007 and 2009 following visits to the center. The reports

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<sup>1</sup>European Disability Forum – Human Rights Watch, *Open Letter to Mr. Loverdos, Greek Minister of Health, regarding the living and care conditions at the Children's Care Center of Lechaina*, 14 June 2011.

<sup>2</sup>Greek Ombudsman - Cycle for Children's Rights, *Operating Conditions of the Unit for Social Care for children with disabilities "Children's Care Center of Lechaina"*, March 2011.

contained recommendations to the administration of the care center, to the regional health authority and to the Ministry of Health.

According to the Deputy Ombudsman's March 2011 report, the recommendations had not been implemented. In its reports, reproduced by the Deputy Ombudsman, the Inspection Body found that the care center did not have the required qualified personnel, despite the need for continued surveillance of the patients.<sup>3</sup> The Inspection Body also found deprivation of care, psychological support and physiotherapy and concluded that the residents did not appear to be given regular medical or rehabilitation services.

Furthermore, most children in the center are deprived of their right to education, as provided under Greek law. After an intervention from the Ombudsman's Office in 2010, two children with developmental disabilities resident in the center joined the elementary school of Lechaina and have successfully integrated with their classmates. However, when these children return from school, they are put into wooden cage beds as are other children in the center. The center staff has justified this on the grounds that staff shortages mean it is necessary to protect the children from harming themselves.

A lack of available places in other institutions or in community care means that residents remain in the care center when they become adults and in most cases remain there all their lives. The housing of adults in a center meant for children violates Greek law.

According to a January 2012 briefing Human Rights Watch received from the Ombudsman's office after his last visit to the center, in November 2011, it appears that there have been improvements in staffing and material conditions, including repainting, new furniture, and around 15 new permanent and temporary staff. According to the information we received from the Ombudsman's office, the manager of the center has a pending request with the Ministry of Health for additional permanent staff. Furthermore, a small space has been modified for recreation of two young girls with autism who are physically mobile and who in the past, after school, were usually restricted in cage-beds. However, it appears that practices that had been justified by reference to staff shortages, such as tying children to their beds, the use of cage beds for other patients as well as routine sedation have continued.

Human Rights Watch is also deeply concerned about reported deaths and allegations of abuse in the care center, including news reports of a 15-year-old boy found dead by asphyxiation in May 2006. The findings of an administrative investigation by the Inspection Body for Health Services and Welfare in 2006 (140/17.8.06) reproduced in the media indicate that although the staff at the center were aware that the child was prone to swallow small objects, they failed to take the necessary measures to prevent his death.

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<sup>3</sup>According to the Inspection Body, there are 87 vacant permanent positions, which include positions for doctors, child psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, special educators, speech therapists, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists.

Ten months after this tragic incident, a 16-year-old child showed symptoms of bloating and died a few hours later. According to forensic evidence, the cause of death was mechanical obstruction of the small intestine as a result of swallowing foreign bodies.

We are also concerned about the allegations of a volunteer at the center who sent a report to the center's administration and the newspaper *Eleftherotypia* in December 2010, stating that staff members severely beat an adult patient for entering a courtyard of the building without permission.<sup>4</sup>

Human Rights Watch understands that the Health Ministry has opened an investigation on the allegations of abuse and the deaths in the center. The Prosecutor's Office has also opened an investigation, based on complaints by volunteers at the center. Human Rights Watch has no information on the status of these investigations.

Human Rights Watch urges the Committee to take these elements into account when discussing this submission.

We recognize that Greece has limited financial resources to remedy the problems in the center identified above. Nevertheless, the lack of financial resources does not relieve Greece of its obligation to protect vulnerable groups, including its absolute obligation to ensure that no-one is subject to inhuman and degrading treatment, or its duty to ensure that persons with disabilities are treated in a humane way in general.

Human Rights Watch therefore hopes to see the Committee use its upcoming review of Greece to raise the following specific concerns, which at present seriously undermine the rights of children, particularly children with disabilities:

1. *Request information on the steps taken by the government to improve the living and care conditions of all residents in the center, including the ending of the use of cage beds, systematic sedation and tying patients to their beds.*
2. *Request information on whether such practices are found in other care centers in Greece in which children are resident.*
3. *Request information on the progress of the investigation conducted by the Ministry of Health and the Prosecutor's office on the reported deaths and allegations of abuse.*
4. *Request further information on mechanisms in place for monitoring and supervision of the care center and others like it.*

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<sup>4</sup>Makis Nodaros, "I saw them beating a child with disabilities", («Είδα να δέρνουν παιδί με ειδικές ανάγκες»), *Eleftherotypia*, December 18, 2010.

5. *Request information on measures taken to:*

- *Recruit sufficient qualified staff to fill permanent positions, including permanent doctors and child psychiatrists; and,*
- *Separate children and adults by adapting the premises and living environment depending on the age requirements.*

6. *Request more information on how the rights of children with disabilities are guaranteed under domestic laws.*

## **B. Unaccompanied migrant children**

### ***Detention of children in inhuman and degrading conditions***

Human Rights Watch has followed closely the treatment of migrants in Greece, including children, over the past four years and has stayed in contact with government representatives and civil society groups throughout this time. We conducted research on the treatment of migrants, including unaccompanied children, in Greece's northern border region with Turkey in late November/early December 2010, and draw upon our findings gathered there in this submission. All interviews cited below are from this period.

During that research mission we documented that up to 1,000 migrants, including unaccompanied children, who had recently crossed from Turkey into Greece were held in extremely overcrowded detention conditions that failed to provide minimum hygienic standards for detainees. The number of migrants detained exceeded capacity limits in some facilities by more than three times. We visited the following places of detention: Venna detention center; Fylakio detention center; Tichero police station detention cells; Feres police station detention cells; Soufli police station detention cells.<sup>5</sup>

We note that the European Court of Human Rights has ruled in the case of *MSS v. Belgium and Greece* that conditions of detention for migrants in Greece amount to inhuman and degrading treatment contrary to article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>According to police officials, the Fylakio detention center held 450 detainees the day of our visit, and has a capacity for roughly 350 persons. The Venna detention center held 220 persons, which is equal to its maximum capacity. The Feres police station detention place held 97 persons in a place designed for 30; the Soufli police station lock-up held 125 migrants and has an official maximum capacity of 36; at the Tichero police station lock-up 130 detainees were held in a ware-house type facility that offers capacity for 48.

<sup>6</sup>European Court of Human Rights, Grand Chamber, *M.S.S. vs. Belgium*, no. 30696/09, 21 January 2011, available at [www.echr.coe.int](http://www.echr.coe.int), paras. 221-402.

Two 16-year-old unaccompanied boys from Iran and Iraq who had spent 50 days in detention at the time we interviewed them described conditions inside Feres police station as follows:

I am sleeping inside the toilet and I sit on a box. During the day I sleep. The food is bad. I bought the soap [myself]. It costs one Euro. I have no toothpaste, and no clothes to change.<sup>7</sup>

For seven days I have been sleeping in the toilet because there is no space. Every night. The rest of the time I sit outside.<sup>8</sup>

A 14-year-old Afghan boy who had been detained for 43 days at the time we interviewed him described conditions in the Fylakio detention center:

We don't have any clothes. The toilet is broken. The sewage comes out. There's a very bad smell. If a person comes here, 100 percent he will get sick. There are no adults in our cell. The youngest boy is 12 years old... we're children but we're treated badly.

Another 16-year-old Afghan boy who had spent two and half weeks detained in the Fylakio detention center at the time of the interview told us:

The bed here is dirty, really dirty. On two beds four of us are sleeping... In 18 days they took us out only once.<sup>9</sup>

A 14-year-old unaccompanied boy from Eritrea, who had been held for 26 days in Fylakio detention center when we met him, described similar conditions:

For three days in the beginning I was sleeping on the floor. Now I'm sharing a bed with other five persons... we use the bed in shifts. Some use the bed during the day and others at night. We are 83 persons in a room with 30 beds.<sup>10</sup>

A 17-year-old Eritrean boy, who had been held in Feres police station detention cells, said that the "drinking" water was dirty, that they were not taken to a doctor after requesting one, and that they did not have access to telephones:

There is not enough water. Sometimes we spend hours without water, and then they give us dirty water to drink. For five days I was asking to see a doctor, but was not able to see one yet. Recently we had a strike here, because they did not provide us with access to phones or doctors. Yesterday there were problems again, and again we went on strike. They took everyone outside and did a search on us.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Human Rights Watch interview (S-3), Feres police station, November 29, 2010.

<sup>8</sup>Human Rights Watch interview (S-5), Feres police station, November 29, 2010.

<sup>9</sup>Human Rights Watch interview (S-19), Fylakio detention center, December 1, 2010.

<sup>10</sup>Human Rights Watch interview (I-18), Fylakio detention center, December 1, 2010.

<sup>11</sup>Human Rights Watch interview (I-3), Feres police station, November 29, 2010.

Among the 120 unaccompanied migrant children held in the Fylakio detention center at the time of our December 2010 visit, some were being comingled with unrelated adults in the same cells.

The Feres police station director explained that unaccompanied children are detained until a place in a reception center becomes available, at a minimum for one week. When we asked him what the maximum length of time children would be held for, he explained that an unaccompanied boy had been held for an extended period because he was ill with hepatitis, and the reception center refused to accept him as it lacked adequate services to care for him.<sup>12</sup>

We found that unaccompanied children were detained for longer periods than adults. Among the 120 unaccompanied migrant children held in the Fylakio detention center there were many from Afghanistan. Several said they have been in detention for 40 days and longer. Afghan adults, in contrast, are released after a few days as they cannot be deported to Turkey under the Greece-Turkey readmission agreement, according to police officials. Children are detained because they can only be released once they are assigned a place in a care center. And because the Greek government has failed to create more open places in care centers, children remain detained for prolonged periods.

### ***Ill-Treatment and Lack of Accountability***

During our research as the end of 2010, we gathered numerous and credible testimonies from migrants who told us they had been ill-treated at the hands of Greek law enforcement officers. Those who reported ill-treatment included unaccompanied children.

A 16-year-old unaccompanied boy was caught after a foiled escape attempt in late October 2010, and described the stress position and ill-treatment he suffered at the hands of Greek police officers at Soufli border police station:

Once I tried to run away. They caught me after five minutes. They beat me after that. They beat me a lot on my neck, legs, and head. They kicked me.... For four hours they tied up my hands. They tied my hands to the bars; for four hours. And they threw water on me. It was in Soufli. Then they took me to the place where the other detainees were. I was beaten for 30 minutes or one hour.... I was not taken to the doctor.... For two weeks I could not sleep I was in such pain.<sup>13</sup>

Another 16-year-old unaccompanied Afghan boy described the ill-treatment he experienced in 2010 in Fylakio detention center:

One night they took me out and beat me. I don't know why. They took us into the room where the telephones are. In the small room and they beat us. First they were two, then two others joined. It happened at night. We were four or five [detainees] who made noise. We were

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<sup>12</sup>Human Rights Watch interview with Spiridon Daskaris, director, Feres police station, November 29, 2010.

<sup>13</sup>Human Rights Watch interview (S-3), Feres police station, November 29, 2010.

shouting because all people became crazy and we were in bad conditions. They took us out because of that.... They hit me with a stick. Three or four police officers hit me on my upper leg two or three times. They didn't punch me but slapped me with their hands... for two to three hours they locked us into the telephone room. Then they poured alcohol [on the floor] and lit it. It was under the door. It was a lot [of alcohol]. The door was locked. We were scared and we tried to put out the fire but couldn't - then it went out by itself.<sup>14</sup>

The case of Mohammed Zadar, 17-year-old unaccompanied Iraqi who was hospitalized on October 22, 2009 and alleged that police severely beat him in the Lesvos detention center showcases the absence of accountability for perpetrators of violence against migrants. Two staff working for a non-governmental organization who reported the incident and gathered witness testimonies told us that police officials intimidated them as well as witnesses for reporting the incident.<sup>15</sup>

The Greek government informed us that an internal disciplinary investigation was launched into the incident, but concluded that there was no evidence to support the allegation of abuse.<sup>16</sup> We have not been informed of the outcome of the criminal investigation but were told by the Prosecutor General that the same Lesvos police body whose member was the alleged perpetrator carried out the investigation.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Failure to Protect Unaccompanied Migrant Children from Exploitation or Abuse***

According to a report by UNHCR-Greece, published on June 16, 2011, the vast majority of unaccompanied migrant children in Greece are homeless and are consequently at risk of being trafficked, subject to labor exploitation, prostitution or drawn into drug trafficking.<sup>18</sup> There are few special accommodation centers available to migrant children. Those that exist lack of support services, including access to education and Greek language training.

In principle the guardianship system in Greece, which would allow closer monitoring of the status of each child and to ensure that decisions are taken in their best interests, applies to unaccompanied migrants children. But in practice, the guardianship of such children exists only on paper.

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<sup>14</sup>Human Rights Watch interview (S-19), Fylakio detention center, December 1, 2010.

<sup>15</sup>The incident has also been reported by the BBC news service, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8328746.stm>

<sup>16</sup>Letter from Michalis Chrysochoidis, Minister of Citizen Protection, to Human Rights Watch, August 3 2010. The letter is on file with Human Rights Watch.

<sup>17</sup>Human Rights Watch meeting with Ioannis Tentes, Prosecutor General, April 13, 2010. Mr. Tentes informed us that his office had issued an instruction to ensure investigations into allegations of ill-treatment by police are carried by an independent body, and not by the concerned police unit.

<sup>18</sup>UNHCR-Greece, The situation of Refugees in Greece: Observations and Recommendations of the High Commission, ("Η κατάσταση των προσφύγων στην Ελλάδα Διαπιστώσεις και προτάσεις της Υ.Α."), 16 May 2011.



Under current legislation, unaccompanied migrant children are treated first and foremost as irregular migrants. As such, they are subject to detention and deportation without proper safeguards.

In line with our previous findings, Human Rights Watch documented cases in 2010 of Greek officials registering children as adults in the absence of any procedures for assessing age.<sup>19</sup> To date, and contrary to the government's assertions, Greece lacks any official age assessment procedures. None of the children we met with had undergone any age assessment.

Human Rights Watch interviewed three separated boys who said they told Greek officials their age but were nevertheless registered as adults.

A 16-year old unaccompanied Iraqi boy told us "I had an interview. They asked my name.... there was no interpreter. It was in English. They only wrote my name and nationality. I said I was 16. They didn't accept that. They wrote 1986 as my year of birth. They didn't tell me anything,"<sup>20</sup>

Greek police handed this boy, as well as another boy, a paper which attested that the children were informed about their rights in English, a language they did not speak or understand. Furthermore, Greek police separated the boys from other relatives when they transferred them to another detention center. Police failed to register the family link between detainees. Both boys pleaded to be reunited with their relatives.

The shipwreck near Corfu Island on January 19, 2011 highlights the extent to which the Greek government fails to protect unaccompanied migrant children. According to news articles, a shipwreck involving migrants trying to leave Greece resulted in the drowning of several persons. Those rescued were taken back to the port of Corfu.

According to the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), the 228 survivors of the tragedy included several dozen unaccompanied children. GCR found that police had immediately transferred 21 unaccompanied migrant children to police station detention cells without taking any steps to protect them: they did not notify the public prosecutor who acts as children's temporary guardian, and they ignored the fact that the children had just lived through a traumatic experience.<sup>21</sup>

The government's failure to offer adequate protection, combined with the chronic deficiencies in the migration management system, leads dozens of undocumented migrants, including unaccompanied migrant children to gather at port cities such as Patras and Igoumenitsain order to seek a way out of Greece. In a research mission in Patras in late November/early December 2011, Human Rights Watch spoke with ten unaccompanied migrant children, all of

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<sup>19</sup>Human Rights Watch, *Left to Survive: Systematic Failure to Protect Unaccompanied Migrant Children in Greece*, December 2008. In 2008, Human Rights Watch carried out research in Athens, Volos, Patras, Samos Island, Mitilini and Hagius Andreas.

<sup>20</sup>Human Rights Watch interview (S-3), Feres police station, November 29, 2010.

<sup>21</sup>Greek Council for Refugees, Press Release: "Let's Stop the Tragedy of Corfu," January 21, 2011.

them Afghans, who told us of police and Coast Guard abuse. These abuses occurred on the streets, in the abandoned factory where they live, and in the port area during attempts to hide under or inside trucks heading to Italy. Two of the children we spoke with had been returned to Greece by Italian authorities in what appear to be summary procedures. Human Rights Watch is very concerned that the lack of adequate protection in Greece puts the lives and well-being of these children at great risk.

In addition, those who stay in Athens face the risk of being exposed to an alarming increase of racially-motivated attacks including by what appear to be vigilante groups. Migrants and asylum seekers interviewed by Human Rights Watch in December 2011 and January 2012, including four older children, speak of virtual no-go areas in Athens after dark because of fear of attacks. In response to the government's failure to identify racist attacks and prosecute suspected attackers, the National Commission for Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees established, in October 2011, a network of 18 nongovernmental organizations to systematically record racist attacks.

Human Rights Watch is concerned that the police are not responding effectively to rising violence against migrants and asylum seekers, including children. We have collected numerous testimonies indicating that the police have failed to intervene rapidly or have discouraged victims from filing official complaints. We are similarly concerned that the government has yet to acknowledge the gravity of the situation, has failed consistently to condemn attacks at the highest level, and lacks a clear plan of action to prevent attacks, prosecute those responsible, and dismantle groups involved in attacks.

### ***Asylum reform***

There has been only limited progress in implementing urgent reforms to the asylum system. A January 2011 law provided for the establishment within 12 months of an initial reception service, an appeals authority and an asylum service which would take over the processing of asylum applications from the police. The three authorities were inaugurated in March 2012 and are part of the government's National Migration Action Plan. Delays in staffing the new services continue because of the public sector hiring freeze. Only current public servants may be seconded to the new services, raising questions also about whether the most qualified people will be hired. In a joint March 2012 press release, the Greek Council for Refugees and other civil society groups noted that little progress has been made in practice regarding the implementation of the January 2011 law.<sup>22</sup>

Some progress has been made in the recognition rate for asylum seekers in Greece, however, the numbers are still considerably low in first instance. According to Eurostat data published on March 23, 2012, Greece recognized fewer than 1% of asylum seekers as refugees at first

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<sup>22</sup>Greek Council for Refugees, Joint Press Release, "Inauguration of New Asylum Services in Greece – but when will they be operational?", March 16, 2012.

instance in 2011,<sup>23</sup> although government statements indicate that the recognition rate on appeal is higher.<sup>24</sup> The low recognition rate means that unaccompanied children who file an asylum application are unlikely to obtain refugee status, although some are able to access subsidiary protection.

Access to asylum remains severely limited in Greece, with the Central Alien's Police Directorate in Athens only accepting 20 applications per week. In March 2012, UNHCR issued a statement criticizing the fact that more than 100 people, including women and children, spend every Friday night outside of the Athens Alien's Police Directorate, hoping to apply for asylum.<sup>25</sup> On every Saturday at 6am, police officers choose just 20 people, from the dozens that are gathered, to file their asylum application.

Human Rights Watch is concerned that migrants, including unaccompanied migrant children who are unable to file an application for asylum due to the system's deficiencies will face deportation before they have any chance to claim protection.

There has been virtually no progress in building new reception centers for asylum seekers including unaccompanied migrant children despite the fact that the EU has made funding available under the European Refugee Fund and the European External Borders Fund. Some efforts are being made to separate children and women from male adults but detention conditions remain poor and in some cases are inhuman and degrading.

In March 2012, the Greek government announced its plans to establish more detention facilities and reception facilities in old military camps and other venues including an army base in Kozani, Northern Greece, where some 1,000 undocumented foreigners would be moved from Athens streets in order to be deported.

The government is also spending money on building a 12-kilometer fence along the border with Turkey in the Evros region. The fence, which the EU has refused to support financially or otherwise, is likely to make the crossing more difficult and dangerous for those seeking international protection, particularly children and other vulnerable groups. Greece has a right to patrol its borders, but not to prevent those in need of international protection from seeking a safe haven.

The asylum reforms are also intended to provide for improved identification of vulnerable migrants, including children. But such identification will only be meaningful if the government provides sufficient reception places and adequate services to ensure that those identified as in need of protection actually receive it.

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<sup>23</sup> From the 8,670 decisions at first instance, 45 claimants were granted Refugee status, 85 were granted subsidiary protection and 45 were granted authorization to stay for humanitarian reasons.

<sup>24</sup> In September 2011, the Citizen's Protection Minister announced a 12.35% recognition rate for the first seven months of 2011. According to information received from UNHCR, this figure is an average for both instances and it only concerns refugee status. Other official figures are not available.

<sup>25</sup> UNHCR, Press Release: "Dozens queue every week in Athens to apply for asylum," March 23, 2012.

We recognize that Greece faces a significant burden due to the continued influx of migrants and asylum seekers and agree that the rest of the EU should set up a meaningful burden-sharing mechanism. Nevertheless, this situation does not relieve Greece from its obligation to protect vulnerable groups and to ensure that unaccompanied migrant children in the country are treated in a humane way.

Our research and monitoring indicates that Greece's efforts remain insufficient across the board. The government continues to detain unaccompanied migrant children in appalling and inhuman conditions despite available alternative places that offer acceptable conditions. It fails to provide them with access to asylum, to legal assistance, guardianship, and in most cases the care offered to other unaccompanied children in Europe.

We encourage the Committee to take these findings into account when discussing Greece's this submission. In particular, we recommend that the Committee request the Greek government to provide information that demonstrates how its legal reforms and policy commitments will contribute to concrete improvements in the treatment of unaccompanied migrant children.

We further encourage the Committee to:

- Request information on the number of available care places for unaccompanied migrant children in the country, the number of unaccompanied migrant children present in Greece, and the number and timeframe of planned places for unaccompanied migrant children.
- Urge the Greek government to amend its legislation to prohibit the detention of migrant children for the sole reason that they have crossed irregularly into Greece.
- Urge the Greek government to amend its legislation to ensure that unaccompanied migrant children in the country enjoy regularized status that enables them to access their entitlements such as education, housing, and protection for as long as they are on Greek territory.
- Urge the Greek government not to detain migrant children.

We strongly believe that sustained monitoring and pressure on the Greek government by the UN and other rights bodies are crucial to ensure that the rights of marginalized children, such as children with disabilities and unaccompanied migrant children, are fully respected.

We hope you will find these comments useful and would welcome an opportunity to discuss them further with you. Thank you for your attention to our concerns, and with best wishes for a productive session.

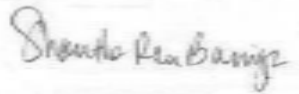
Sincerely,



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Benjamin Ward  
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Shantha Rau Barriga  
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