**Human Rights and Covid 19**

**(Replies by Greece)**

Common questions

Impact on human rights

-Please explain the impact of the pandemic on the enjoyment of human rights and what actions have been taken by the State to respect, protect and fulfill human rights.

*The main impact of the pandemic on the enjoyment of human rights was linked to the measures taken to prevent the spread of the pandemic. Freedom of movement was particularly affected. However, the emergency measures taken by the Greek Government in response to the pandemic were necessary, proportionate to the evaluated risk, and also applied in a non-discriminatory way. Moreover, these measures had both a specific focus and duration, and were in accordance with the Greece’s obligations under applicable international human rights law,*

-Are there any measures put in place in your country following the pandemic which have had a limiting effect on human rights? If so, please list them, provide an explanation for their adoption and indicate the time-frame by which they will be lifted.

*Pursuant to a Joint Ministerial Decision, unnecessary movement within the country was provisionally restricted from 23 March 2020. Exceptions were put in place for basic , for example, health and profession related movements, for the purchase of basic necessities, such as food and pharmaceutical products, on humanitarian grounds (provision of help to people in need) etc. The restriction has been lifted.*

a) Were these measures determined by law? If yes, please indicate the relevant legislation.

*The basic legislation was the Act of Legislative Content of 25-2-2020 "urgent measures for avoidance and restriction of spread of coronavirus" that was ratified by law (Official Government Gazette Α/ 42). Other such Acts followed. Based on the Act of Legislative Content of 20-3-2020 (Official Government Gazette Α/68), a Joint Ministerial Decision was issued, concerning restriction of unnecessary movement (no. Δ1 α/Γ.Π οικ 20036/2020 – Official Government Gazette Β/986).*

b) Why were these measures necessary to respond to the COVID-19 situation?

*The measures taken to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic were necessary due to the highly contagious nature of the virus, and aimed at delaying its spread and protecting health services from excessive strain.*

c) Were these measures proportional in view of their expected results to counter the pandemic?

*The measures taken were proportional to the expected results to counter the pandemic. They were also introduced for the absolutely necessary period of time. As of now, they have been lifted.*

d) Did these measures have any discriminatory effects on various groups of the population? If so, please indicate which ones and why.

*While various groups have been disproportionately affected by the crisis, the measures taken themselves had no discriminatory effects οn any groups of the population per se.*

Statistical information

Which groups have been identified as particularly vulnerable to socio-economic hardship in the context of the COVID-19 crisis?

*The effects of the COVID-19 crisis are not the same for everyone. There are groups more vulnerable than others that are disproportionally affected by the ongoing health, social and economic crisis, such as older persons, persons with disabilities, persons with chronic diseases, migrants and refugees, homeless persons, persons of poor physical or mental health, women victims of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) etc.*

*The General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality in Greece, as the competent governmental authority for gender equality issues, sets the main priorities regarding the prevention and combating of violence against all women, regardless of their status, race, origin, physical or mental health, and implements since 2010 the «National Program on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women». Women victims of GBV constituted a particularly vulnerable population during the COVID-19 crisis, especially within a framework of restrictive emergency measures interfering with the rights and freedoms of individuals, notably their freedom of movement.*

Please provide data on incidents of domestic violence, including femicides disaggregated by a) intimate partner femicide b) family related femicide based on the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim/s and c) all other femicides based on the country context.

*Significant increases in allegations of domestic violence were recorded during the days of "quarantine" and compulsory confinement at home due to the pandemic of COVID-19. The SOS 15900 hotline of the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE) has received a total of 1,769 calls in April 2020, while the corresponding number of calls in March was 454. Calls for domestic violence cases almost quadrupled in the quarantine month compared to the previous month, in March, when 166 calls were recorded for similar incidents. As part of the emergency measures to address and prevent the further spread of the Covid-2019 in Greece, the GSFPGE has sent instructions to all structures on their operational procedures in order to protect the health of both employees and women victims addressed thereto. Furthermore, the GSFPGE has also informed the local government bodies, on the framework of which the Counseling Centers and the Shelters are operating.*

*In addition, the statistical data collected by the Department of Documentation, Research and Digital Support of the General Secretariat, along with the statistical data (phone calls and emails along with demographics of the callers-victims and third parties) provided by the SOS 15900 Helpline provide us with a holistic perspective of the phenomenon and enable us to format policy measures according to the data.*

Participation and consultation

-What decision-making processes were used to adopt measures to respond to the pandemic? Did they include participation of local and decentralized authorities, including indigenous authorities, scientific experts, and civil society organizations?

*By decision of the Prime Minister, the general coordination regarding the response to the pandemic COVID-19 has been assigned to the General Secretariat for Civil Protection. The Deputy Minister for Civil Protection and Crisis Management participated on a daily basis to videoconference with the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Health and, when appropriate, with other relevant Ministries, for the management of the state of emergency and for taking any measures deemed necessary.*

*The General Secretariat for Civil Protection cooperates on a daily basis with the National Organization for Public Health and the Representative of the Ministry of Health for COVID-19, for the provision of scientific advice and data, which are used during the decision-making process to manage the emergency and take any measures.*

*The Deputy Minister for Civil Protection and Crisis Management and the Representative of the Ministry of Health for COVID-19, held daily press conferences to accredited journalists on the updates regarding the pandemic situation.*

-If emergency regulations have been imposed, to what extent have they affected official processes ensuring public participation and consultation? Have women and groups particularly affected by the pandemic and the response measures participated in such decision-making processes?

*The local government authorities (Municipalities and Regions) cooperated with the General Secretariat for Civil Protection, in those cases, when quarantine restrictions were imposed in communities within their area of competence.*

Protection of various groups at risk and indigenous peoples

- Has there been any interruption of services, such as the closure of emergency shelters, food banks, or the disruption of health care or psycho-social services that has been of concern?

*There was no interruption of access to basic, health and other vital services.*

Awareness raising and technology

-What awareness-raising activities have been undertaken by the State to inform groups in vulnerable situation, indigenous people and other populations living in remote or conflict-affected areas of health risks associated with COVID-19?

*In the context of the overall national awareness raising campaign, TV spots have been produced, with protection guidelines also featured in sign language. The General Secretariat for Civil Protection has issued self protection guidelines for vulnerable people, which were posted on its website (*[*https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/koronoios-covid-19-hrisimes-odigies*](https://www.civilprotection.gr/el/koronoios-covid-19-hrisimes-odigies)*).*

-What measures have public authorities taken to protect high-risk populations form COVID-19 , including: a) health care and social workers, b)older persons, c) other persons with a possibly reduced immune system such as indigenous peoples, or persons living with HIV, d) detained and incarcerated persons including persons under state custody; e) persons living in care homes, f) children and adults living in institutions, camps, shelters, or collective accommodation, g) persons with disabilities, h) homeless persons; i)persons living in informal settlements or overcrowded homes, j)refugees, IDPs and k) migrant workers.

*In order to protect asylum seekers and refugees from the risk of contracting COVID\_19 by congregating in its offices, the Greek Asylum Service has applied three measures: a) residence permits of asylum seekers and recognized refugees which expired during the COVID\_19 emergency, were renewed automatically, thus attenuating the need for their holders to come in person to the Asylum Service offices for the renewal, as was the practice beforehand; b) asylum seekers who have already registered their application for international protection can now lodge their full claim by filling in a form and sending it electronically, thus attenuating once again the need for the applicants to come in person to the Asylum Service offices to lodge their asylum application; c) the Asylum Service is launching a new digital applications portal on 15 June 2020 allowing asylum applicants to deal with administrative matters pertaining to their application online.*

-The internet and social media were increasingly used for work, education, shopping for food and other goods, awareness raising sharing of information, freedom of expression, religious ceremonies, cultural and social interaction, consultation and political decision making. What challenges and obstacles has the pandemic highlighted in terms of access for all to internet? Has the recent situation given rise to increased violations of human rights, mobbing and bullying online? If so, how was this addressed?''

*The new situation that has arisen due to restrictive measures and the shift of citizens and businesses to digital platforms to address the special needs caused by measures to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, has inevitably strained the country's telecommunications infrastructure. Thus, in order to ensure integrity and availability of the infrastructure, an action plan was established by the leadership of the Ministry of Digital Government in collaboration with the managing directors of the telecommunications sector. The purpose of the plan was to ensure, as far as possible, the efficient operation of the telecommuting solutions used by both public bodies and many private sector companies, as well as all relevant communication services provided to citizens.*

*e-presence: the Ministry of Digital Governance provided this platform in order to enable all public bodies to organize and conduct online teleconferences characterized by high quality, interactivity, and security (URL: https://www.epresence.gr/ ).*

*Zero-rating for the use of distance learning platforms from mobile networks: Mobile companies have responded to the initiative of the Ministry of Digital Governance and provided free access to digital platforms for distance education.*

*teleworking: Due to the urgent need for uninterrupted continuation of the operation of the Public Administration, the Ministry of Digital Governance, ensured for all Public bodies, a secure tele-working environment. The aim is to enable uninterrupted work for the operation of critical services of the Public Administration (business continuity) of employees from their home. This is a service that, provides secure access with VPN (Virtual Private Network). The service is offered for up to 10,000 employees of the Public Administration. The specific action is under implementation since VPN connections recently started to be provided.*

*Finally, in the fields of infrastructure security and cyber security, the Ministry of Digital Governance issued repeatedly instructions to the citizens and disseminated through official online sources and the media about the responsible use of the telecommunication networks and services, recommendations for the safe internet access, tips for the safe work from home. Guidance has been also provided to citizens for fighting misinformation and avoiding online fraud attempts. Furthermore, instructions were given to the digital platform users to change the Taxis-net password as a measure to protect the digital transactions of citizens and businesses with the State, as the use of Taxis-net credentials has significantly expanded, especially after the opening of the single public portal " Gov.gr ”. Taxis-net credentials are used to certify citizens on both the new portal and other digital public platforms.*

*Greek fixed and mobile telecommunication networks have showed resilience and have coped with the increased demand. Preliminary data collected by third parties suggests that the performance of the infrastructure has not been affected in a strongly adverse way. Available bandwidth to fixed and mobile users was in the position to address the increased demand set by data-intensive applications used on teleworking and distance learning applications.''*

Protection of various groups at risk and indigenous peoples

What measures have been taken by public authorities to ensure continued provision of services, including food, healthcare, education, psycho-social assistance to persons in vulnerable situation, including a) older persons, b) persons with disabilities, c) LGBT persons, d) persons in situations of homelessness, e) indigenous peoples, f) victims and survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, g) human trafficking, h) discrimination, i) victims of contemporary forms of slavery, including forced labour, as well as h) child victims of sale and sexual exploitation?

*The General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSFPGE) is an organizational unit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the competent governmental authority for gender equality issues in Greece. As the prevention and combating of gender based violence against women constitutes vital strategic axis of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality, the GSFPGE supervises and co-ordinates the integrated network of structures operating across the country to tackle gender-based violence (and all forms of violence) and protect and support women victims.*

*The network consists of:*

*- The bilingual SOS 15900helpline, a nationwide telephone line that provides immediate assistance in emergency cases on a 24-hour basis (in Greek and English), all year long; at the same time, it is possible for women to communicate electronically through the e-mail address: sos15900@isotita.gr*

*- 42 counseling centers that provide social, psychological, legal and employment support services, as well as,*

*- 20 shelters that offer safe accommodation to women victims of violence and their under -aged children.*

*The services provided by the above mentioned structures are free of charge and include psychosocial support, legal counseling as well as counseling in labour issues, emergency shelter and, where necessary, legal aid in cooperation with local Bar Associations. In addition to safe accommodation to women victims of violence and their children, the Shelters provide additional psychosocial support, and facilitate access to health services and the enrollment of children in schools.*

*In designing and delivering these services, due consideration is given to the need to respond to different social, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, faiths, states of health, etc. Our goal is to empower women victims of violence and help them to regain self-esteem, thus enabling them to make sound decisions for their future, and ultimately gain independence in their jobs and in their personal and family lives. The tasks of the structures also include networking with local agencies and relevant associations for joint communication and public awareness program. During the last years, the target group of all services has been expanded to include apart from women victims of gender-based violence, women victims of multiple discrimination (refugees, single parents, Roma, women with disabilities, etc.) as well. To this end, to essentially contribute to the refugee crisis, safe accommodation is also provided to refugee women victims of violence or to refugee women at serious risk of gender-based violence and to heads of single parent families with their children.*

*As part of the emergency measures to address and prevent the further spread of the COVID-19, the GSFPGE sent instructions to all structures on their operational procedures in the current situation in order to protect the health of both employees and women victims addressed there. At the same time, the GSFPGE has also informed the local government bodies, in the framework of which the counselling centers and the shelters are operating. All structures continue to offer their services adapted to the emergency restrictive measures in force due to the coronavirus, while tele-working and telephone support sessions have already been ensured and are being implemented.*

*In emergency cases that needed accommodation, the General Secretariat, in collaboration with the Hellenic Society of Forensic Medicine, has offered during the lockdown measures special accommodation, with free housing and meals throughout Greece to women and their under aged children living in poverty, migrants and in situations of vulnerability. In the cases of women victims of violence, free medical tests were provided by the Hellenic Society of Forensic Medicine when required or needed.*

*In addition, free of charge medical tests for the children of women gbv victims were offered by "The Smile of the Child", a voluntary, non-profit child welfare organization. The GSFPGE collaboration with “The Smile of the Child” has been actually confirmed by the signing of a Cooperation Agreement between the 2 organizations for the protection and holistic support of women and children victims of violence.*

*Moreover, with continuous posts on the social media of our governmental organization and in the media (press and electronic press, television news broadcasts), the possibility of increasing incidents of domestic violence was stressed in order to inform and raise public awareness. At the same time, women who remained at home were urged not to remain silent but report possible violence incidents. They were also informed about the support structures. A video spot was published as part of the central campaign of the Greek Government "We Stay at Home", with the message "We Stay at Home but We Don't Stay Silent". The video spot has been widely broadcast on all national television channels. In addition, a weekly statistical processing of data deriving from the common database of the network was launched, in order to have a complete and accurate assessment of the effects of the restrictive measures on the increase of domestic violence rates.*

*The Research Center for Gender Equality (KETHI) - a legal entity of private law supervised by the GSFPGE, that coordinates, promotes and conducts research and studies on gender issues - conducted a sponsored information campaign on support structures for victims of violence on social media with a short video (Gif).*

*The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) features the SOS 15900 helpline on its ‘’Helplines for victims of violence’’ section, while emphasizing the valuable support and aid provided by the helplines in combating domestic violence during COVID-19.*

*In addition, via the SURVIVOR project (Enhancing services for refugee and migrant GBV survivors)in which the GSFPGE implements as partner, migrant women requiring assistance for domestic violence issues, received information regarding the transportation during COVID-19 translated in Farsi and Arabic while the Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI) conducted the translation of information leaflets regarding the COVID-19 restriction measures in various languages. A three-party collaboration among KETHI and NGOs providing translation services to women victims of domestic violence, when required, and relevant training, took place.*

*In general, the GSFPGE has been and continues to be in direct contact with non-governmental organizations, other non-profit organizations and the civil society, collaborating with them to better address the phenomenon of domestic violence during* COVID-19.

Has there been any interruption of services, such as the closure of emergency shelters, food banks, or the disruption of health care or psycho-social services that has been of concern?

*Within the competences of the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality and its provided services to women victims of GBV, there has not been any interruptionof service provision. As already mentioned, our network of structures was operating continuously, under of course all the necessary precautions and restrictive measures.*

*More information on the actions taken by the General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality during the COVID-19 pandemic is available here: http://www.isotita.gr/en/actions-taken-by-the-secretariat-general-for-family-policy-and-gender-equality-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/*

Awareness raising and technology

What awareness-raising activities have been undertaken by the State to inform groups in vulnerable situation, indigenous people and other populations living in remote or conflict-affected areas of health risks associated with COVID-19?

*As mentioned above, with continuous posts on the social media of the GSFPGE and in the media in general (press and electronic press, television news broadcasts), the possibility of increasing incidents of domestic violence was stressed in order to inform and raise public awareness. At the same time, women who remained at home, were urged not to remain silent but report possible violence incidents. They were also informed about the support structures.A video spot was published as part of the central campaign of the Greek Government "We Stay at Home", with the message "We Stay at Home but We Don't Stay Silent" . The video spot has been widely broadcast on all national television channels.*

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*Accountability and justice*

*1. The Ministry suspended the hearings in order to avoid congestion in the courtrooms, however, urgent cases and procedures were still in place in order to ensure the unhindered and effective administration of justice. In particular, all courts of justice and prosecution offices closed their buildings, initially from 28 March to 10 April and then until 15 May 2020.*

*Exceptionally, courts remained in operation for the following proceedings:*

*● petition and granting of temporary orders*

*● petition and granting of provisional relief measures*

*● trials of detained misdemeanour defendants caught in the act*

*● selection of members of the jury*

*● trials of felony defendants under pre-trial custody who have served time close*

*to the maximum time allowed in pre-trial custody*

*● trials of felonies bound to become time-barred*

*● publication of judgments*

*2. Due to extraordinary conditions of the pandemic, the Public Prosecutor’s Office at the Supreme Court issued a document, addressed to all prosecutor’s offices of the State, with specific instructions regarding the protection of unaccompanied minors and neglected minors or victims of domestic violence. In particular, the Prosecutor of the Supreme Court requested from all prosecutors of the State to pay due attention to cases where there is poor exercise of parental responsibility and where there is an immediate risk to the physical and mental health of the minor. The main relevant direction was to take all necessary means to protect these victims.*

*In general and in order to assist the function of judicial procedures and simultaneously provide protection to citizens’ rights, there has been a full suspension of the legal deadlines in judicial proceedings as well as a suspension of the enforcement proceedings.*

*Regarding judicial cooperation in both civil, commercial and criminal matters’ requests continued to be dealt and central authorities continue their communication by e-mail or phone. Especially, regarding the European Arrest Warrant (EAW), decisions were issued during this period of time. As far as the execution of the surrender, Greece fully applied "force majeure" in the meaning mentioned and duly explained by others. The police officers with the Prosecutors were in constant contact with their counterparts trying to figure out the best way to proceed, in close cooperation.*

*3. As far as the public access to the judicial services concerned, the government decided measures to reduce the economic burden and to limit the physical presence. The public received updated information from the independent authorities regarding the use of internet for their access to public sector’s services and also about their personal data protection.*

*The relevant Ministerial Decision provided for the possibility of conducting the hearings and any other proceedings concerning the operation of judicial services to be carried out, if possible, remotely using technological means. In this framework, electronic submission of an application has been made possible for the issuance of certificates in some of the major Courts for which citizens and lawyers have the opportunity to receive electronically through a web portal. Moreover, IT communication tools and applications have been provided in order to secure video conferencing and teleworking of judges, prosecutors and other legal actors.*

*These provisions applied for all citizens. No particular provisions for victims of hate-speech racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance were adopted.*

*4. As regards women’s access to justice no particular provisions were adopted. See also above reply to point 2*

Questions by the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

*Another important initiative taken by the Greek government is the monthly financial support of 800€ to those people who worked in businesses whose operation has been ceased due to the lockdown. These financial initiatives have been followed by a 40% discount in the rents of students, extra funds aimed to support young entrepreneurs and the upgrading of equipment and personnel in the health system.*

*Great initiatives have been taken in the field of volunteerism as well, initiatives that, apart from the digital civic action, involve the field of Youth work, designed to support the most vulnerable citizens, people with disabilities and high risk groups in local communities, particularly the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. At the same time, volunteerism of young people is displayed via various local level charity initiatives such as the sewing of face masks for local hospitals, the provision of home food, medicines and other important supplies to those who are currently even more financially challenged due to the Covid-19 impact. It should be noted that the Greek Orthodox Church as well as other organizations and communities have been incessantly offering their help to the public through charity meals and offering of food supplies. Overall, it is important to note that services for disabled people will be fully operational from the 15th June 2020 onwards.*

Questions by the Special Rapporteur on the right to food

*Executives from the competent Ministries participate in the National Council of Urban Supply Chain. All this time of COVID-19 crisis the urban supply chain has worked very well. Several improvement points related to urban distributions, the "last mile", the combined distributions, the combination of actions with the corresponding actions and actions for the circular economy have been recorded. The Council is working intensively on these issues.*

Questions by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

*As concerns Youth in Greece, Covid-19 has closed down the Youth Centres. All activities and projects of national and international character had to be either cancelled or postponed for a later and safer environment in time. On an international youth affairs, seminars, trainings and youth exchanges had to be postponed or cancelled. Consequently, all European volunteers’ arrivals that were originally scheduled for September 2020 have been postponed; this situation obviously raises concerns around the issue of funding. What is more, these organizations work mainly with Erasmus+ projects and travelling is required for participation in Youth Exchanges, Training Courses, Transnational meetings etc. As travelling among countries is prohibited, all European projects have been cancelled or postponed. Most youth organizations are based on EU funding, mainly through the Erasmus+ Youth Program. It is clear that the Greek Youth organizations have limited access to national funding as youth work is not yet recognized.*

*All face to face interaction has been declined and digital communication has become a priority. Youth organizations created Digital Youth Work activities. Organizations using non formal education and arts such as theatre, dance i.e. face great difficulties in adapting methods via web seminars and as a result, they can’t continue their local activities.*

*Greek government displayed readiness and reflex to protect the human rights of all the inhabitants. It’s first priority was to protect the public health. Successful measures were taken to facilitate the access of all to health services. Medication prescription has been available online. Additionally, the support of young couples and pregnant women has been taking place via digital platforms.*

*Most of the Youth organizations have been relying for their activities on EU funding, mainly through the EU Erasmus+ Youth Program. Due to the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, all the Erasmus+ activities have been either postponed or cancelled; therefore, Youth organizations are left with very limited financial sources at the moment.*

*The Greek government has placed the financial support to active Youth organizations among the top priorities in the field of Youth.*

*On the whole, the measures taken by the Greek government during the Covid-19 pandemic have been universally accepted as timely and targeted. The main concern which was the protection of public health was achieved as the statistics daily prove. The human rights of the people in Greece have been satisfactorily protected and cared for but there is still a long way to go on that field.*

Questions by the Independent Expert on the human rights of older persons

*Young people from different organizations and the Greek Orthodox Church have supported the older people, the poor and vulnerable ones. Pharmacists have taken the medicines to older people. In a very short period, digital platforms and special call services have been created in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, municipalities, the Red Cross, universities and hospital, in order to support the people psychologically and socially. Access to these platforms and call services is available to all young people.*

*There is a fast rising number of young people through their organizations to step up to support the most vulnerable in society, particularly the elderly and those with underlying health conditions who stand to suffer disproportionately as a result of the virus outbreak.*

Questions by the Working Group on Persons of African Descent

*In order to protect public health and to limit the further dissemination of virus COVID\_19, to its staff but also to asylum seekers and to refugees, the Greek Asylum Service suspended all services provided to the public for the time period from 13/03/2020 until 31/05/2020 inclusive. This measure was determined through ministerial decision. Given the perennial high demand on the services provided by the Greek Asylum Service, translated as congestion, long queues, etc., the suspension measure was certainly proportional in view of the highly contagious nature of COVID\_19 in situations of overcrowding in public places.*