



State xenophobia and criminalisation of solidarity in Cyprus: KISA is again under attack by government

KISA, a Cypriot member of the Migreurop network, is once again in the government's sights for its action in favour of people in exile. Since 14 December 2020, KISA has been removed from the Register of Associations¹, pretexting that it did not comply timely with the administrative procedures as per the "Law on Associations and Foundations" of 2017.

This is not the first time that KISA has been subjected to the relentlessness of the authorities² and part of the media, because it denounces the state xenophobia against migrants and asylum seekers in Cyprus and opposes reforms that violate their rights: pushbacks, arbitrary detention as a rule on the island, impossibility of benefiting from the right to an effective remedy, etc.

In December 2019, in an extremely hostile Cypriot political-legal environment, KISA was accused by the Minister of the Interior of undermining national interests and of having "links with Islamic terrorist organisations" and of money laundering³.

Already in 2010, KISA had been sued in a libel case for its actions against online hate speech and nationalism carried out in the framework of its mandate⁴. A financial penalty of €10,000 followed their conviction in 2020 - together with interests for ten years while the case was in court - which has been causing serious harm to KISA.

The criminalisation of KISA is unfortunately not an isolated case: more and more migrants and associations or individuals who support them in Europe and elsewhere are under the sights of repressive governments. Political rhetoric that conveniently associates people on the move with the society's ills, turning them not just into scapegoats but into "criminals", has multiplied and trivialised, justifying these attacks on solidarity and fuelling increasingly security-oriented and repressive policies.

On all sides, it is a matter of muzzling the voices that are raised in resistance: threats, arrests, prosecutions⁵, and even the very recent conviction in Senegal of three fathers for having paid for the crossing of their child who died at sea⁶. Cynicism has no limits.

¹ [KISA denounces the new act of repression by the government](#), KISA, 17 December 2020

² [Report of attacks, defamation, persecution and prosecution of KISA and its leadership](#), KISA communication, December 2020 ; ["CYPRUS : False accusation confirmed , judge drops all charges against Human Rights defender Doros Polykarpou"](#), Joint Press release, June 2012 ; ["Coalition maintains its support to human rights defenders Doros Polykarpou as proceedings go on"](#), Joint Statement, 30 April 2012.

³ ["KISA calls on the Minister to retract his defamatory statements and to proceed to a dialogue with the stakeholders and NGOs concerned"](#), KISA, 3 March 2020

⁴ ["KISA convicted for action in 2010 against online hate speech"](#), KISA, 17 June 2020

⁵ [Serbia Orders Activists to Leave After Confronting 'Chetniks'](#) », Balkaninsight, 6 February 2020 ; [Liberté pour Hamza Haddi et Mohamed Haddar – L'Union européenne doit cesser les incarcérations arbitraires de réfugié-es et de migrant-es](#), La Cimade, 4 February 2020; [Aide aux migrants : les « sept de Briançon » condamnés](#), Le Monde, 14 December 2018.

⁶ « [Mort-e-s et disparu-e-s aux frontières européennes : les États irresponsables désignent de nouveaux coupables, les parents!](#) », Loujna Tounkaranké/Migreurop, 1 December 2020

The Migreurop network strongly condemns the relentless repression of both human rights defenders and individuals trying to use their right to emigrate and expresses its concern about these repeated and unaccountable attacks, which feed intolerance and xenophobia.

Migreurop fully supports KISA in this new hurdle and in this struggle with the Cypriot government!

Paris, 19 January 2021