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Greece: Upcoming trial of migrant rights defenders Seán Binder, Sarah Mardini and Nassos Karakitsos

On 18 November 2021, the trial of **Seán Binder, Sarah Mardini** and **Nassos Karakitsos** will start at the Mytilene Misdemeanor Court in Lesbos. All three human rights defenders are accused of “people smuggling”, “money laundering”, “espionage” and “membership in a criminal organisation” and if convicted, they may face up to 25 years in prison.

[Seán Binder](#), [Sarah Mardini](#) and [Nassos Karakitsos](#) are migrant rights defenders who worked with Emergency Response Center International (ERCI) between 2016 and 2018. The humanitarian work of the ERCI was extensive, and included supporting more than 1000 people to reach safety, organising workshops and swimming classes for children in Kara Tepe camp for migrants, and providing residents in Moria camp in Lesbos with medical assistance. ERCI was registered as a non-governmental organisation and regularly cooperated with Greek authorities, including with the Greek Coast Guard on rescue operations.

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The case of Seán Binder, Sarah Mardini and Nassos Karakitsos is not isolated, another 21 people are included in their court case. Moreover, in October 2020, Greek authorities opened a criminal investigation into four international humanitarian organisations assisting refugees and migrants, namely Mare Liberum, FFM (Forschungsgesellschaft Flucht und Migration), Sea Watch and Josoor on charges of “espionage, smuggling and participation in a criminal organisation”. The only source of information about the investigation was the press published by the Lesbos Police Directorate on 28 September 2020. The criminal file and the names of NGOs under investigation were leaked to Greek media outlets and triggered a smear campaign against the NGOs, including allegations of imminent arrest of its members. At the time of writing, the file has been sent to the judge and none of the individuals concerned have received any official communication regarding the ongoing investigation against them.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the ongoing criminal prosecution of Seán Binder, Sarah Mardini and Nassos Karakitsos as it believes it is solely linked to their peaceful and legitimate work in defence of the rights of refugees and migrants as well as their role with the ERCI.

Front Line Defenders calls on the authorities in Greece to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Seán Binder, Sarah Mardini and Nassos Karakitsos as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his/her legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;

2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Greece are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions [including judicial harassment].

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