



## **Statement for immediate release**

**Brussels, Belgium – 11 January 2024**

### **Bomb attack targets anti-racist organisation in Cyprus, human rights defenders increasingly at risk in Europe**

On the early morning of January 5<sup>th</sup> 2024, KISA, an anti-racist organisation based in Cyprus, endured a violent and targeted attack in its offices. An explosive device was detonated merely meters away from KISA President Mr. Polykarpou's workspace, an act that undermines the vital efforts of organisations such as KISA, and poses a lethal threat to activists and anti-racist work in the European Union. The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) vehemently condemns the appalling attack against our member, KISA.

"This attack represents a direct assault on the principles of justice, equality, and non-discrimination upon which the EU is built," stated Kim Smouter, ENAR Executive Director. "It is emblematic of a hostile political environment that perpetuates biased and divisive narratives against marginalised groups and those providing them assistance."

The assault on KISA is a direct consequence of targeted smear campaigns, alongside judicial and administrative harassment by the authorities in Cyprus against KISA and its staff. ENAR firmly demands a swift and comprehensive investigation into the bombing targeting KISA's office. Furthermore, the organisation calls upon the Government of Cyprus, relevant institutions, and authorities to issue official statements denouncing the attack and offering unwavering support to KISA in these troubling times.

The lack of official responses from key entities, including the government, Parliament, in addition to the mainstream media's minimal coverage, is deeply concerning. Even the police has refused to issue an information note, breaking away from its standard

practice. ENAR urges these institutions to acknowledge the severity of this incident and take a stand against violence targeting anti-racist organisations and activists. Furthermore, ENAR demands that the illegitimate judicial cases against Mr. Polykarpou to be dismissed.

Moreover, ENAR calls upon the European Commission and the European Parliament to closely monitor the situation in Cyprus and pressure Cypriot authorities to ensure justice prevails. The organisation emphasises the need to protect human rights defenders advocating for racialised minorities in the EU, safeguarding their rights to freedom of expression and association.

“There needs to be a strong public condemnation at EU level of this alarming attack. There’s a growing hesitancy to denounce violence against anti-racist organisations and activists due to the fear of potential electoral consequences. We cannot afford to stay silent as our world regresses into an atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and violence reminiscent of the violence and oppression inflicted on the civil rights movement of the 1960s in the United States,” added Kim Smouter.

In solidarity with KISA and its crucial mission, ENAR reiterates its firm stance against any form of violence, intimidation, or discrimination aimed at organisations dedicated to human rights, equality, and anti-racism.

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**For more information or to arrange an interview, contact:**

Nabil Sanaullah, ENAR Communications and Press Manager

Mobile: +32 (0)487 400 423 - Email: [nabil@enar-eu.org](mailto:nabil@enar-eu.org) - Web: [www.enar-eu.org](http://www.enar-eu.org)

**Notes to editors:**

- The European Network Against Racism (ENAR aisbl) stands against racism and discrimination and advocates equality and solidarity for all in Europe. We connect local and national anti-racist NGOs throughout Europe and voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debate
- Mr. Doros Polykarpou was arrested and prosecuted in 2019 for interfering in police business when he tried to help a minor in a stop and search incident by the police.

- Mr. Polykarpou was attacked by guards at the Pounara camp and subsequently indicted for the incident in March 2022.
- KISA was deregistered as a civil society organisation by the government of Cyprus on formal grounds and regularly excluded from parliament proceedings and advisory roles pertaining to its expertise.
- KISA and its staff members have been the target of repeated threats or violence and acts of physical and verbal violence. Despite reporting these incidents to the authorities, no proper investigations were conducted and none of the offenders were brought to justice.