

MEDIA BRIEFING

GREECE IS PUTTING THE WITNESS ON TRIAL

Proceedings scheduled on Rhodes - 6 October 2026

THE STORY IN 30 SECONDS

Tommy Olsen, Norwegian founder of Aegean Boat Report (ABR), is due to face criminal proceedings on Rhodes on 6 October. He denies the charges. Greece previously sought his surrender under a European Arrest Warrant; Olsen was arrested at his home in Tromsø on 16 March 2026. On 15 May, the Hålogaland Court of Appeal refused surrender. The Greek prosecution and European Arrest Warrant remain in place. International human-rights organisations and a UN human-rights expert have raised serious concerns about the case.

WHO IS TOMMY OLSEN?

Tommy Olsen is the Norwegian founder of **Aegean Boat Report**, an independent organisation established to monitor and document what happens to people crossing the Aegean Sea and arriving on the Greek islands. ABR documents arrivals, distress situations, disappearances, pushbacks and human-rights violations and provides information and documentation to journalists, lawyers and human-rights organisations.

Olsen has worked on these issues since 2017. The criminal case concerns activities Greek authorities link to his work with refugees and people seeking asylum.

THE CHARGES

Greek counsel has confirmed the following public wording of the charges:

1. **Establishing and participating in a criminal organisation.**
2. **Facilitating the unlawful entry into Greek territory of third-country nationals without the legally required border checks, jointly, in respect of multiple persons, for profit and on a professional basis.**
3. **Facilitating the unlawful stay of third-country nationals in Greek territory, in respect of multiple persons and for profit.**

Olsen denies the charges.

THE NORWEGIAN DECISION

On 16 March 2026, Olsen was arrested in Norway under a European Arrest Warrant issued by Greece. Greece sought his surrender for prosecution. On 15 May 2026, the Hålogaland Court of Appeal refused surrender.

Amnesty International reported that the court confirmed that the actions for which Olsen is prosecuted in Greece are not punishable under Norwegian law and that the charges represent a **"real risk of violation of his freedom of expression"**. Human Rights Watch reported that the appeals court unanimously recognised that the acts described by Greek authorities did not constitute criminal offences under Norwegian law and that surrender would risk violating Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Important: the Norwegian judgment was not an acquittal, did not terminate the Greek proceedings and did not determine what the Greek court must decide. It determined whether Norway could lawfully surrender Olsen to Greece. Norway refused.

INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY

UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders: Human Rights Watch reported in March 2026 that UN Special Rapporteur Mary Lawlor expressed deep concern about Olsen's arrest and said the charges appeared to be in direct retaliation for his human-rights work. UN Special Procedures also addressed Olsen and ABR in a joint communication to Greece concerning the situation of human-rights defenders working on refugee, migrant and asylum-seeker rights.

Amnesty International: Amnesty said in March that, based on the information available to it, Olsen and Panayote Dimitras were being prosecuted for human-rights work documenting serious human-rights violations, including pushbacks. Amnesty said the charges were not backed by evidence and constituted misuse of anti-smuggling legislation. In May, it reported the Norwegian refusal of surrender and the freedom-of-expression concern identified by the Norwegian court.

Human Rights Watch: HRW has criticised the prosecution and called on Greece to revoke the warrant and drop the charges. Following the Norwegian ruling, HRW described the decision as a victory for human rights.

OMCT/FIDH Observatory: The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders addressed Olsen's case under arbitrary detention, judicial harassment and transnational repression and described the prosecution as retaliation for legitimate human-rights activities.

These are the assessments of the respective UN expert and organisations. They are not findings of the Greek court.

WHAT HAPPENS ON 6 OCTOBER?

The criminal case is scheduled before a court on Rhodes on 6 October 2026. Olsen will not publicly litigate individual pieces of evidence from the Greek criminal file before the hearing. Any public information about developments in court will be released only after verification with his Greek lawyer.

The campaign's central public question is:

"What happens when the person documenting human-rights violations becomes the accused?"

ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN HEADLINE

The campaign headline is **GREECE IS PUTTING THE WITNESS ON TRIAL**. Olsen uses "Greece" to refer to the Greek state authorities responsible for bringing and pursuing the prosecution - not the Greek people, Greek civil society, journalists, independent institutions or the court hearing the case. He has stated that the court did not initiate the prosecution and that he respects its independent role.

Olsen's position is that he believes the prosecution is politically motivated and that the history and nature of the case raise serious concerns about a connection to ABR's documentation of pushbacks. This is **Olsen's assessment**, not a finding of the Norwegian or Greek court.

AVAILABLE TO JOURNALISTS

Olsen is available for interviews ahead of 6 October. The complete Halogaland Court of Appeal judgment can be provided, together with relevant public statements and background material. The official Norwegian judgment is the authoritative source; any English or Greek translation supplied by ABR is unofficial.

Media contact

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KEY TIMELINE

Date	Development
2017	Aegean Boat Report begins documenting arrivals and conditions in the Aegean.
2022	Greek investigation underlying the present prosecution is opened.
14 May 2024	Greek investigating magistrate issues an arrest warrant.
December 2025	European Arrest Warrant is issued / circulated.
16 March 2026	Olsen is arrested at his home in Tromsø, Norway.
20 March 2026	Olsen is released from custody while the surrender case continues.
15 May 2026	Halogaland Court of Appeal refuses Greece's request for surrender.
6 October 2026	Greek proceedings scheduled on Rhodes.

VERIFICATION / PRIMARY PUBLIC SOURCES

Norwegian Court of Appeal judgment, 15 May 2026: complete judgment available from ABR.

Amnesty International, 22 May 2026: Norway: Further Information: Human rights defender extradition halted: Tommy Olsen.

Amnesty International, 18/23 March 2026: statements and Urgent Action concerning Olsen's arrest and proposed surrender.

Human Rights Watch, 19 March and 19 May 2026: statements concerning the extradition request and Norwegian ruling.

OMCT/FIDH Observatory, 31 March 2026: urgent intervention concerning Olsen's arrest and prosecution.

UN Special Procedures: joint communication concerning human-rights defenders working on refugee, migrant and asylum-seeker rights in Greece, including Olsen and ABR.

Public source links can be supplied directly. Journalists are encouraged to read the Norwegian judgment and the organisations' original statements rather than relying solely on campaign summaries.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Aegean Boat Report is not publishing evidence from the Greek criminal case file before the hearing. Requests concerning individual messages, photographs, witness material or other case-file evidence will be referred to the legal proceedings. Legal developments on 6 October will be verified with Greek counsel before publication.

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