

Kafka in Athens: The Hellenic Statistical Authority and the Athens Review of Books

Is freedom of speech in danger in Greece? Extensive litigation against Andreas Georgiou, former president of the Hellenic Statistical Authority, and against the publisher and editor of the literary magazine Athens Review of Book (ARB) are causing concern about freedom of speech and freedom of the press in Greece and about Greece's international reputation as a country governed under the rule of law.

After numerous adventures and misadventures, the Georgiou case is heading for a resolution under pressure from the Eurozone and the IMF. The comical allegations against Mr. Georgiou, claiming that he fraudulently dragged the country into a sequence of stabilization programs, are to be withdrawn.

But the government and its judicial authorities are continuing the campaign against the Athens Review of Books for slander of the Foreign Minister. The Athens Review of Books is a quality magazine, a veritable oasis for scholars from all over the world who write for thoughtful and independent citizens. The periodical is being hounded because it has delved into the political past of the Foreign Minister, underlining the difference between his views in the present and those in the past.

It is the inalienable right of every citizen to change his political views as he wishes, particularly when conditions dictate such a change. But this flexibility does not give anyone, even in the Foreign Ministry, a license to censor others, particularly journalists and historians.

Freedom of speech is a precious intellectual and social asset, which distinguishes developed countries from others. The persecutors of the Hellenic Statistical Authority and the Athens Review of Books mar the country's reputation and further jeopardize the younger generation's already difficult future.

Are they insensitive to the consequences, or do they not understand what is at stake?

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