

Athens, 27th April 2021

TO: President of the European Commission
Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Council
Charles Michel
Vice President – Values and Transparency
Vera Jourova
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
Sophie in 't Velt

As journalists of the Sunday newspaper Documento and the websites documentonews.gr and koutipandoras.gr, we ask for your protection. For years, there has been an ongoing attempt in favor of our moral and financial extermination. This attempt culminated recently, after our newspaper revealed that a contract of murder had been set against journalist and publisher of Documento, Kostas Vaxevanis, and one more journalist whose name remains unknown. The revelation was indirectly, yet clearly confirmed by the Greek Police.

We turn to you because we do not believe that the current Greek government neither can, nor wants to protect us. After all, prominent cabinet members in the recent years have pioneered in the slander of the newspaper and its employees. They have also taken active part in excluding our newspaper from public and private advertising spending as a result of publishing critical articles towards Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis revealing his family's relationship with offshore and hidden funds. We had also published stories revealing that one of his associates was involved in a trafficking ring in Moldova. That person was later brought to justice following our reports.

You are aware that in recent years there have been many incidents of targeting investigative journalism in Europe, especially when it dares to touch upon the involvement of members of the political and economic elite in all kinds of scandals. Especially in our country, which went bankrupt in 2010 with the well-known unpleasant results for all citizens without anyone being punished.

We are hoping for your practical support. We are deeply convinced that investigative journalism is at the heart and core of the EU's founding declaration. It is the tool that can and must exercise real control over power and stand in the way of any attempt to overthrow Democracy itself in Europe.

Journalists of Documento

Below you may read Kostas Vaxevanis' full article about the information and incidents that indicate that the threat is genuine, translated to English. (<https://www.koutipandoras.gr/article/vaxevanis-death-contract-mafia-greece>)

I am forced to inform you because you are my only protection

by Kostas Vaxevanis

In journalism we usually say that when it comes to reporting about yourself, then the situation is dire. This is the second time I am forced to report about myself. Just as it was the first time, it is the result of pressure and my belief that this is the only way to protect myself.

Last time, 9 years ago, an unidentified woman met me and informed me that she was part of a group led by a secret service employee, whose target was to destroy me, first ethically, and then physically.

According to the "source" of that unusual report, the perpetrators had already intruded into my house, and had leaked false proof to the Press which made me appear as if I was being paid by the Greek Intelligence Service (EYP). That group was uncovered after journalistic investigation and was brought to Justice. They were sentenced to 2 years in prison for this case.

I wrote all of the above, perhaps because I need to believe in a positive outcome of this new adventure as well. It is my principle to publish what I consider dangerous, trusting that the most powerful protection is that of an informed citizen. Unfortunately, all this is taking place in the light of the murder of a journalist, only some days ago.

Let's begin with the facts.

In the afternoon of April 6th 2021, a man visited me at the headquarters of Documento, willing to inform me that I am in danger.

I accepted to speak to him in the presence of my colleague, Vangelis Triantis. In our meeting that lasted for one hour and three minutes, he told us that Menios Fourthiotis, for whom we had done serious revelations in the [Documento] newspaper, was in search of someone in the "underworld" to execute a contract for him. The contract was for him to shoot against Fourthiotis' residence in order to show that Fourthiotis was in danger, and also to "hit" me, and another journalist, whose name he couldn't remember. For that reason, he spoke to a guy in the "underworld" using the nickname "Tariff-man" who was initially not interested.

The information given to us couldn't be evaluated at the time, so we only wrote it down. Nevertheless, Vangelis Triantis, contacted the head of the Athens Prosecution Office, Sotiria Georgakopoulou for other cases, and also informed her about the information we had received. It was clear that no legal use could have been made, unless our source decided to testify to the Prosecutor. Besides the informal information we gave the Head of the Prosecution Office, I thought it would be good to also inform my lawyers and two other colleagues, besides Vangelis Triantis.

On the night of April 17, a hooded man, in clear disregard of the security cameras, took several shots against the house of Menios Fourthiotis. He was careful, however, not to cause damage to the house itself, or to the people inside. He only shot against the wall. The "attack" against Fourthiotis may have provoked ironic comments in the press and on social media, but for me, it acted as a confirmation of the information I had received, by 50%. Since the information was partially confirmed by the attack, I had every reason to fear that it was entirely true. All this time I have been trying to remain calm and careful and look for
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possible facts that can lead me to a conclusion. The last thing I would do would be to contact the Police. Firstly because it was the Police who assessed Fourthiotis as a "target" in the first place, providing him with protection, and secondly, because the Police would use this whole story to present me as an imaginative person, should they fail to reach the perpetrators. After all, I have had relevant experience when they tried to present an ambush of five people at my house, as an attempted theft.

At the dawn of April 16, a stranger tried to enter Documento's offices, going up to the 5th floor, from the emergency staircase. When he was spotted by the Security Control Center, he did not attempt to leave using the ladder. On the contrary, with acrobatic movements, he descended from pipes, hanging 30 meters above the ground.

This afternoon (April 23) I received a phone call from a serious person, who told me I should be careful, because as another person informed him, two gunmen who were located by the DIAS Police force in Ekali area [northern suburbs of Athens]. After firing shots, they managed to escape. According to his source, those were the men who would later execute a contract against me, but they aborted the plan due to the clash with the police. This incident took place in the early hours of April 16, one day before the "attack" on Fourthiotis residence, and a few hours before the attempt to invade Documento. Specifically, DIAS police officers had located two hooded men on a black Yamaha XT motorcycle, at the intersection of Agioi Saranda street and Theseos street in Ekali. When they were signaled to stop, they fired using Kalashnikovs.

Those are the facts. I don't know whether or not, all this actually leads to myself. I am a journalist and not a police officer. I know that many people are bothered by my type of journalism. I may not be in danger, but it is impossible not to be afraid. Only an idiot is never afraid. For many years, I have learned how to live with fear and how to manage it. I do not allow it to handle me.

Just as the majority of Greeks, I know that we live in a corrupt state, which one cannot trust. Just last week, we had a front page on Documento about the mafia consisting of corrupt police officers and executors. It is the road connecting the sewers of crime with the penthouses of power.

I do not expect anything from the Police, although they are fully responsible for what happens to me, my family or the 100 employees of Documento, who are fighting, not only for a living, but against corruption itself. We know that our only real power and protection is the people, regardless of political beliefs, who want to live in a democratic state that has no ties to the parastate.

Kostas Vaxevanis