

HELPFUL LEGAL INFORMATION

Here's information you may find helpful if you are facing a legal situation in Greece. If you have any other concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to reach the American Services section, at 210-7202414, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 to 17:00, or email us at, AthensAmericanCitizenServices@state.gov

Legal System in Greece:

The U.S. Embassy does not have the authority to legally represent U. S. citizens or to get them out of their legal difficulties. Consular officers cannot interfere in Greek judicial affairs, provide legal advice, seek preferential treatment, or assume any responsibility as guarantor, surety, or supervisor. For legal matters, please consult with a lawyer.

Here is some basic information about the Greek legal system:

According to the Greek Constitution there are three categories of courts: civil courts, penal courts and administrative courts.

- Civil courts have jurisdiction over private losses and cases of voluntary jurisdiction.
- Administrative courts deal with administrative differences.
- Penal courts deal with crimes such as felonies, misdemeanors etc. If you are the victim(s) of a crime, you should file a police report or register your complaint with the local police or the Public Prosecutor.

In practice, if a crime is reported immediately the police may apprehend the perpetrator and place him/her under custody without the need of an arrest warrant. If the perpetrator is not arrested within 24 hours of the crime, then an arrest warrant must be issued by the investigating judge.

The Greek authorities can initiate prosecution for most crimes, whether or not the victim makes a complaint. For certain crimes, the State will initiate prosecution only after the interested party files a complaint.

The police are responsible for the investigation of a crime and the collection of evidence. After the police complete the investigation, the file is sent to the public prosecutor, who may either refer the case to trial, or request further investigation of the case. The case file is referred to the examining magistrate to perform the judicial inquiry. The prosecutor can request the judicial council to acquit the defendant if the evidence is insufficient. As Greek courts are backlogged, a criminal case may take up to 18 months to come to trial. Victims are expected to appear in court to testify or provide testimony at any Greek Embassy in the U.S.

If the court decision does not satisfy the defendant he/she may appeal the decision within 10 days if he/she is resident of Greece and 30 days if he/she is a resident of abroad.

Attorneys:

Anyone who needs legal advice or legal services in Greece should consider hiring a local attorney to secure appropriate legal guidance. Local legal procedures differ from those in the United States. Although the public prosecutor is responsible for prosecuting the case and representing the State's interests, an attorney can promote a victim's interests with the police and the court. While the Consular Section of the United States Embassy cannot recommend specific attorneys, we can provide you with a list of attorneys who speak English and who have expressed interest in representing U.S. citizens. For accessing the list of attorneys, please [click here](http://athens.usembassy.gov/medical-legal.html), (<http://athens.usembassy.gov/medical-legal.html>)

Greek Immigration:

The U.S. Embassy is not able to look into your immigration status in Greece. For short-term residence permits you may call the following aliens' bureaus in the prefecture of Attica:

Central	24 Petrou Ralli St., Tavros	Tel. 210 34 05828-29
Marousi	15 Agiou Orous St., Marousi	Tel. 210 68 75176
Elliniko	Proin Anatolikos Aerolimenas Athinon	Tel. 210 96 01341-96 90293
Aigaleo	21-23 Marmara St., Aigaleo	Tel. 210 53 19298
Piraeus	37 Iroon Politehniou	Tel. 210 41 28607, 4174855

For long-term residence permits you may contact the Municipality or City Hall of the area of residence of the individual concerned.

If you want to acquire Greek citizenship you may contact the Greek Citizenship Sections of the Greek Ministry of Interior at 31 Stadiou St., 10559 Athens, tel. 213-1361701, 213-1361604/5/6 and 6 Ipatias St., 10556 Athens, tel.210-325-8316/318, 210-3252343,

http://www.ypes.gr/el/Generalsecretariat_PopulationSC/, or the City Hall or community office of the area of your residency.

Translation Service:

Official translations can only be obtained by Translation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 Arionos St., tel. 210-328-5712, 210-328-5716, 210-328-5717, 210-328-5764.

Website: <http://www.mfa.gr/ypiresies-gia-ton-politi/metafrastiki-ypiresia/i-metaphrastiki-ypiresia.html> or e-mail at metafrastiki.yf@mfa.gr.

Apostille:

The Embassy cannot offer any Apostille services. Since the U.S. and Greece are part of the Hague Apostille Convention of 1961, both Countries will accept an Apostille stamp on the certificate or official document concerned, as proof of legalization.

Apostille Stamps on a **U.S. document** are given by the respective U.S. State's Secretary of State. To find the addresses of Secretaries of State and more detailed instructions on the procedure to be followed, please click on the following useful links:

National Association of Secretaries of State:

<http://www.nass.org/NPA/us/UnitedStates.htm>

Authentication of U.S. documents:

<http://www.state.gov/m/a/auth/>

U.S. State and Local government websites:

<http://www.statelocalgov.net>

Apostille stamps for documents originating **in Greece** are issued either by the local Nomarchy (Region) if administrative documents, or by the local Court of First Instance, if judicial documents.

Apostille may also be obtained through KEPS (Citizen Service Centers in Greece)

<http://www.ermis.gov.gr/portal/page/portal/ermis/KepIndex>

September 2013