

# Amnesty International Report 2016/17 - Cyprus

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## Republic of Cyprus

Head of state and government: **Nicos Anastasiades**

**Detention conditions for refugees and migrants continued to be inadequate. Concerns were expressed by the Council of Europe Commissioner on Human Rights on the impact of austerity measures on vulnerable groups. Two officers were convicted for the beating of a detainee at a police station in 2014.**

## BACKGROUND

In May's parliamentary elections, the far-right National Popular Front party won its first two seats. During the year, the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot leaders continued their negotiations regarding the reunification of the island and achieved progress on governance and power-sharing, EU matters and property. However, divergences remained and, in November, the two leaders failed to reach an agreement. In December, the two leaders decided to re-engage in negotiations.

## REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In February, the UN Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture urged Cyprus to improve detention conditions in immigration detention centres and police stations. During the same month, the European Court of Human Rights found Cyprus in breach of the right to liberty due to the lack of effective remedies available to a Syrian national to challenge the lawfulness of his detention (*Mefaalani v Cyprus*). The applicant had been held for the purposes of removal between August 2010 and January 2011 and was then deported to Syria.

In September, the Nikosia District Court approved the extradition of Seif el-Din Mostafa, who is accused of hijacking an EgyptAir plane and redirecting it to land in Larnaka in March 2016.

Concerns were expressed that, if returned to Egypt, Seif el-Din Mostafa would be at real risk of torture or ill-treatment. In October, he challenged his detention and extradition before the Supreme Court.

In September, 30 refugees started a protest outside Parliament against delays in their naturalization application processes. Most of the protesters have been living in Cyprus for more than ten years. They face obstacles in integrating on account of their temporary residence status, inability to travel abroad and limited access to employment.

## **RIGHT TO AN ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING**

In March, the Commissioner of Human Rights of the Council of Europe expressed his concerns over the impact of the economic crisis and the measures taken in the context of the European Economic Adjustment Programme on vulnerable social groups such as children, women and migrant families.

## **ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES**

Between January and the end of the year, the Committee of Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP) exhumed the remains of 96 people, bringing the total number of exhumations since 2006 to 1,192. Between 2007 and 2016, the remains of 740 missing individuals (556 Greek Cypriots and 184 Turkish Cypriots) were identified. With information from private individuals drying up and CMP access to Turkish military files continuing to be obstructed, the rate of exhumation and identification of remains was starting to slow down.

## **TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT**

In May, a court in Paphos found two police officers guilty of causing grievous bodily harm and inflicting inhuman and degrading treatment on a man held in Chrysochous police station in February 2014. The ill-treatment was caught on CCTV and uncovered in August 2015. Following the trial, the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights expressed her concerns over the stance of police officers supporting the actions of the perpetrators.

In August, a female police officer was caught on video racially abusing a migrant held in the Mennogeia immigration detention centre. A disciplinary investigation into the incident was initiated.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

In September, a court in Nikosia acquitted Doros Polykarpou, the Director of the NGO KISA, of charges of assaulting a police officer in April 2013. Earlier in the year, the police officer was found guilty of verbally assaulting Doros Polykarpou.

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