

Amnesty International Report 2014/15 - Cyprus

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Republic of Cyprus

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

Immigration authorities continued to routinely detain hundreds of migrants and certain categories of asylum-seekers in prison-like conditions for extended periods while awaiting deportation. Those detained included Syrian refugees. Some women detainees were separated from their young children.

Background

In February, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders resumed negotiations regarding the reunification of the island after an 18-month break, but no progress had been made by the end of the year.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

Irregular migrants, rejected asylum-seekers and certain categories of asylum-seekers were routinely detained for prolonged periods at the country's main immigration detention facility in the village of Menoyia, while awaiting deportation. Syrian refugees were also detained despite Cyprus' formal policy not to deport Syrian nationals.

People held at Menoyia were detained in cramped, prison-like conditions. Detainees complained about the limited time allowed to exercise outside, the quality of the food and the fact that their cells were locked between 10.30pm and 7.30am. A small number of migrant women were held in police stations pending deportation. In at least two cases, detained women were forcibly separated from their young children .^[1]

In May, the UN Committee against Torture raised concerns about the routine and prolonged detention of irregular migrants and asylum-seekers; the detention conditions in Menoyia; and the reports that asylum-seekers were deported to their countries of origin despite facing a serious risk of torture or religious persecution. The Committee also criticized the fact that asylum-seekers were not protected from *refoulement* during the judicial review process and that there was no effective judicial remedy to challenge deportation decisions and halt deportations pending the outcome of appeals.

Trafficking in human beings

In April, a law was adopted with the aim of bringing national legislation on combating trafficking in line with EU and other international standards. However, the law did not provide for appeals against decisions by the Office of the Police for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings not to recognize an individual as a victim of trafficking. Concerns were also raised that police employed a definition of a victim of trafficking that fell short of international standards.

Enforced disappearances

Between January and August, the Committee of Missing Persons in Cyprus exhumed the remains of 65 people, bringing the total number of exhumations since 2006 to 948. Between August 2006 and August 2014, the remains of 564 missing individuals (430 Greek Cypriots and 134 Turkish Cypriots) had been identified and restored to their families. However, no perpetrators were identified or prosecuted for the disappearances and killings in either Cyprus or Turkey at the end of the year. The graves date from the inter-communal fighting which took place between 1963 and 1964, and during the Turkish invasion in 1974.

Torture and other ill-treatment

A report published in December by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture highlighted a number of allegations of ill-treatment by police officers that were received by the Committee's delegates during their visit to Cyprus in September and October 2013. The allegations mainly concerned ill-treatment of foreign nationals during their transportation or interviews at police stations. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture also received a number of allegations concerning physical ill-treatment, verbal abuse and inappropriate use of tear gas by police guards against migrants held at the Menoyia immigration detention facility. Similar allegations were received by the UN Committee against Torture.

[1. Cyprus: Abusive detention of migrants and asylum-seekers flouts EU law \(Press release\)](#)
www.amnesty.org/en/news/cyprus-abusive-detention-migrants-and-asylum-seekers-flouts-eu-law-2014-03-18

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