

Amnesty International Report 2015/16 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Cyprus

Irregular migrants were detained for prolonged periods in inadequate conditions. In November, Parliament recognized the right to same-sex civil unions. Allegations of ill-treatment by law enforcement officials continued.

Background

In May, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders resumed negotiations regarding the reunification of the island.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

Certain categories of asylum-seekers and irregular migrants who could not be deported continued to be detained for prolonged periods. Domestic remedies to challenge immigration detention remained ineffective.

In July, the European Court of Human Rights issued three rulings relating to the detention of 17 Syrian Kurds in 2010 and their subsequent deportation despite some of them having asylum proceedings pending before the Supreme Court. The Court ruled that their detention had no legal basis and the procedures available to asylum-seekers and irregular migrants to challenge their detention did not offer an effective remedy.

In September, 14 detainees including several asylum-seekers at the Menoya immigration detention centre started a hunger strike in protest at their prolonged detention and substandard detention conditions.

In September, 115 people were rescued from a vessel off the southern coast and settled in a reception centre for asylum-seekers in Kofinou. Most of the asylum-seekers who arrived in 2015 entered from the north and via the UN Buffer Zone.

In September, the Minister of Interior stated that Cyprus was willing to take up to 300 Syrian refugees under the EU agreed relocation scheme, but would “seek for them to be Christian Orthodox”.

In mid-November, Nataliya Konovalova, a Russian national, was extradited to Russia despite pending asylum proceedings.

In December, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights expressed his concerns about the grave shortcomings of the Cypriot asylum system and urged for improvement of reception conditions for asylum-seekers.

There was an increase in the international protection status recognition rates in comparison to 2014.

Enforced disappearances

Between January and August, the Committee of Missing Persons in Cyprus exhumed the remains of 111 people, bringing the total number of exhumations since 2006 to 1,061. Between August 2006 and January 2015, the remains of 625 missing individuals (476 Greek Cypriots and 149 Turkish Cypriots) had been identified and restituted to their families.

Torture and other ill-treatment

Allegations of ill-treatment in pre-trial custody and immigration detention continued. In August, a video was released showing police officers beating an individual in pre-trial custody at the Chrysochous police station in February 2014. The General Prosecutor ordered the Authority Investigating Allegations and Complaints against the Police to bring criminal charges against the police officers involved in the incident.

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

At the end of November, Parliament recognized the right to same-sex civil unions. However, the new legislation does not include joint adoption rights for same-sex couples and the legal recognition of transgender people.