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Amnesty International Report 2017/18 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Cyprus

UN-backed peace talks for the reunification of the island collapsed in early July. Reception conditions for asylum-seekers remained a cause of concern.

Background

After intense negotiations, high-level peace talks for the reunification of Cyprus failed to reach an agreement in early July. The Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot leaders could not agree on security, including the withdrawal of Turkish troops, and property issues.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

In February, the Supreme Court rejected an application challenging the detention and extradition of Seif el-Din Mostafa, an Egyptian national accused of hijacking an EgyptAir plane in March 2016. Despite concerns he would be at real risk of torture or other ill-treatment if returned to Egypt, the Supreme Court decided not to accept additional evidence regarding the risk of torture. The Court held that the applicant could be extradited regardless of his not having had a final decision in his asylum claim. In November, the Supreme Court also rejected an appeal lodged against its previous decision. However, on the same day the European Court of Human Rights halted Seif el-Din Mostafa's extradition to Egypt.

In May, the CERD Committee expressed concerns about the limited employment options for asylum-seekers living on the island, the insufficient amount of social assistance they received and the limited reception facilities. The Committee also raised concern about the insufficient access to services for those asylum-seekers staying at the Kofinou Reception and Accommodation Center for Applicants for International Protection, the only official centre hosting asylum-seekers on the island.

In September, the NGO Future Worlds Center warned of the need for a contingency reception plan, especially in case of an increase in refugees arriving by boat. According to the UN Migration Agency, 851 people arrived by boat on Cyprus between January and November 2017 in comparison to 345 in the previous year.

Enforced disappearances

Between January and the end of December, the Committee of Missing Persons in Cyprus exhumed the remains of 46 people, bringing the total number of exhumations since 2006 to 1,217. Between 2007 and 31 December 2017, the remains of 855 missing individuals (645 Greek Cypriots and 210 Turkish Cypriots) were identified.

Discrimination – people with disabilities

In May, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed concerns about the insufficient access to health care by people with disabilities, the high level of unemployment among them and the insufficient measures to promote their access to employment in an open labour market.

Torture and other ill-treatment

In April, the European Court of Human Rights found that the Cypriot Ombudsperson and the national police complaints mechanism had failed to investigate effectively the alleged ill-treatment of a Kenyan national during his deportation in March 2007 (*Thuo v. Cyprus*). The Court also held that the applicant's detention conditions in Nicosia Central Prison amounted to degrading treatment.

At the end of August, a 60-year-old Turkish national claimed to have been ill-treated by a police officer outside and inside a police station near a designated crossing point of the UN Buffer Zone. The incident was being investigated by the national police complaints mechanism at the end of the year.

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Austrian Red Cross

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien

T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583

F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

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