

CYPRUS

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.

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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

CZECH REPUBLIC

Czech Republic

Head of state: **Miloš Zeman**

Head of government: **Bohuslav Sobotka**

Roma continued to face widespread discrimination. The European Commission initiated infringement proceedings against the Czech Republic for the discrimination against Roma pupils in education. The ill-treatment of persons with mental disabilities in state institutions was exposed. Muslims faced growing public hostility.

BACKGROUND

In October, the police announced an investigation into allegations of the manipulation and buying of votes of Roma citizens in the local elections held the same month. According to NGOs monitoring the elections, the practice of vote-buying was

used by a number of political parties in several regions.

DISCRIMINATION

Roma

In June, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights criticized the authorities for the large number of Roma pupils in so-called "practical schools" (former special schools), designed for pupils with mild mental disabilities. The Committee called on the government to abolish practices that lead to the segregation of Roma pupils and to phase out practical schools. It recommended that mainstream schools should provide inclusive education to children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and Roma pupils.

In September, the European Commission initiated infringement proceedings against the authorities for breaching the prohibition of discrimination in education set out in the EU Race Equality Directive.

In August, over four years after the government's apology for the enforced sterilization of Roma women, the Human Rights Minister announced a draft law offering financial compensation of between 3,500 and 5,000 euros to individual victims. According to the NGO Czech Helsinki Committee, almost 1,000 women were forcibly sterilized between 1972 and 1991 and should be entitled to financial remedy.

In November, the government acknowledged that Roma continued to face discrimination regarding access to housing, education, health care and labour market. The government-commissioned report on the situation of the Roma minority highlighted obstacles in accessing affordable housing, including discrimination by private landlords. The report also highlighted the over-representation of Roma children in practical schools.

Hate crimes

In October, the Constitutional Court rejected an appeal by two perpetrators against the length of their sentences for an arson attack