



Last updated: April 2009

France Detention Profile

Introduction

- » [Detention policy](#)
- » [Detention infrastructure](#)
- » [Facts and figures](#)

French immigration and asylum policies have tightened in recent years. In 2006, the French Interior Ministry instituted the controversial practice of establishing targets for deporting undocumented immigrants each year. Since then, the government has increased police raids to arrest unauthorized immigrants and introduced legislation to make it harder for immigrants to bring their families to France (Lakoff 2008; Bennhold 2007). Accordingly, in January 2009, the government announced that it had surpassed the 2008 target of 26,000 deportations by nearly four thousand cases (Connexion 2009). A similar trend toward more restrictive policies has been evident in immigration detention practices.

Detention policy. Since 2003, there have been substantial changes to the policies governing immigration detention in France, which is regulated by the [Code de l'entrée et du séjour des étrangers et du droit d'asile](#). The legal length of detention of irregular immigrants awaiting deportation has nearly tripled for some forms of detention, and the pressure to fill deportation quotas has led to larger numbers of people being placed in detention (Cimade 2008).

French immigrant detention centres hold undocumented immigrants subject to deportation. These include both immigrants who are awaiting final determination of their status and those who are already subject to a deportation order. Judicial processes and appeals are carried out during detention to determine whether a deportation order is to be issued, upheld, or revoked. Several different types of deportation orders can be issued, depending on the issuing authority. The vast majority (about 76 percent in 2007) of individuals confined in French immigration detention centres are subject to a deportation order, or *arrête préfectoral de reconduite à la frontière*, which is issued to people whose only offense is their irregular status. In contrast, the deportation order *interdiction du territoire français* is typically issued alongside a criminal conviction. Detainees subject to an *interdiction du territoire français* comprised 6.5 percent of all detainees in 2007. Additionally, asylum seekers who initially entered the Schengen zone through another country constituted about 8 percent of detainees in 2007. According to the "Dublin II" Conventions regulating asylum in the Schengen area, asylum seekers may be deported to the country through which they originally entered the Schengen area or to the country in which they have already filed an asylum claim. However, this practice is criticised by NGOs like Cimade, especially because it limits detainees ability to appeal (Cimade 2008).

Persons held in detention may, during their confinement, submit an application for asylum in France. Upon preliminary approval of an asylum application, asylum seekers may be provided a temporary residence permit, in which case they are released from detention (Ceseda 2008). Legal asylum seekers may be housed in centres d'accueil de demandeurs d'asile (CADA), which are non-secure facilities (Direction de la Population et des Migrations 2000).

Immigration authorities provide access to non-governmental organisations to detention centres. Until recently, the French NGO Cimade was the only organisation authorised by the government to provide assistance to immigrants at these centres. In April 2009, the government announced that Cimade would no longer have exclusive access to detention sites (Nouvel Observateur 2009). In addition to assisting detainees in finding legal council and other services, Cimade assesses the conditions of detention and publishes an annual report on its observations. The 2007 annual report calls attention to problems relating to the legal rights and physical handling of detainees. Common complaints by detainees include inadequate heating and food provisions, as well as excessively long periods in detention. The Cimade report also highlights the psychological strain experienced by persons in detention and criticizes the practice of detaining children. Nearly 200 children under 10 years of age were placed in detention in 2007, including one 3 week-old infant (Cimade 2008). In 2007, the European Parliament voiced its concerns about the detention of children in family zones, stating that this form of deprivation of liberty is "particularly shocking" when imposed on children (European Parliament 2007).

Detention infrastructure. France's aggregate detention capacity has increased considerably since 2003 (Cimade 2008). The Global Detention Project has gathered data on some 36 detention sites in France (not including short-term holding facilities, or zones d'attentes, located at airports and other ports of entry). These detention sites operate under the authority of the Interior Ministry and are managed by territorial prefects. The total detention capacity of these sites was 1,724 in 2007 compared to 739 in 2003 (Cimade 2008).

Immigration detainees are held in two types of secure centres: locaux de rétention administrative (LRA) and centres de rétention administrative (CRA). Cimade reports that 24 CRAs and over 150 LRAs are currently operational in French territory (Cimade 2009). Detention in LRAs is legally limited to 48 hours, although Cimade reports several instances of detention in LRAs exceeding this limit (Cimade 2008). If immediate deportation is not possible, detainees are typically transferred from an LRA to a CRA (Ceseda 2008). Although the maximum length of detention in the CRAs was increased from 12 to 32 days in 2003, the average length of detention in 2007 was 10.17 days (Cimade 2008).

In addition to these detention sites, France has 85 zones d'attente in various ports of entry. The zones hold individuals who are not authorised to enter the country until they can leave France or, in the case of asylum seekers, until a preliminary hearing of their case can be arranged (Ceseda 2008). The zones are intended for very short-term detention and often lack permanent holding structures (ANAFE 2008). Typically, people are held in these facilities for only a few hours. However, there have been cases of excessively long confinement in the zones. While the legal limit of detaining persons in zones d'attente is 48 hours, this may be extended with court orders to a total of 20 days. In one case, Asebeha Gebremedhin, an Eritrean national seeking asylum in France, was held in a Paris airport for 20 days and subsequently brought an unsuccessful claim of illegal detention to the European Court of Human Rights (Gebremedhin v. France 2007, §75).

Facts and figures. France receives the highest number of asylum seekers per annum (35,160 in 2008) in Western Europe and is third among industrialised nations after the United States and Canada. The largest numbers of asylum seekers in France in 2008 originated from Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Sri Lanka, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (UNHCR 2009).

In 2006, estimates of the number of irregular immigrants residing in France ranged from 200,000 to 400,000 (Murphy 2006). Government-set quotas for deportations have been successful in increasing their number—nearly 30,000 deportations were carried out in 2008, exceeding the target of 26,000 (Connexion 2009).

The increase in the rise of deportations has led to a concomitant rise in detention capacity, which was 1,724 in 2007, up from 739 in 2003—an increase of 133 percent. The number of persons detained per annum rose from 28,220 in 2003 to 35,008 in 2007. The legal maximum length of detention was raised from 12 days to 32 days in 2003, albeit the average length of detention in 2007 was 10.17 days (Cimade 2008).

Detained persons are primarily male, constituting 92 percent of total detainees in 2007. Whereas in 2006 nearly a third of all detainees in France were of Romanian or Bulgarian origin, in 2007 detainees were predominantly of North African origin. Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians constituted nearly a third of detained persons. Other major nationalities include Turkish, Chinese, and Indians (Cimade 2008).



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List of Detention Sites

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Name	Status (Year)	Location	Facility Type	Security	Authority	Management	Capacity	Reported Population on a Single Day	Demographics & Segregation
Ajaccio Local de rétention administrative - Aéroport Campo Dell'Oro	In use (2007)	Ajaccio, Corse-du-Sud, Corsica	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	6 (2007)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)
Bastia Local de rétention administrative	In use (2007)	Bastia, Haute-Corse, Corsica	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	7 (2007)		Gender segregation. (2007)
Bobigny Centre de Rétention Administrative	In use (2008)	Bobigny (Paris), Seine-Saint-Denis	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	55 (2007)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)
Bordeaux Centre de Rétention Administrative	In use (2008)	Bordeaux, Gironde	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	24 (2007)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)
Cayenne-Rochambeau Centre de Rétention Administrative	In use (2008)	Matoury, French Guyane	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)			Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)
Cayenne-Rochambeau Locale de Rétention Administrative	In use (2008)	Cayenne-Rochambeau Airport, Cayenne, French Guyane	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	38 (2007)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)
Cercottes Local de Rétention Administrative	In use (2007)	Cercottes, Loiret	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	7 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. Gender segregation. (2007)
Cergy Pontoise Local de Rétention Administrative	In use (2007)	Cergy Pontoise, Val-d'Oise	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale	16 (2007)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)
Choisy-le-Roi Local de Rétention Administrative	In use (2007)	Choisy-le-Roi, Val-de-Marne	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	14 (2005)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)
Coquelles Centre de Rétention Administrative	In use (2008)	Coquelles, Pas-de-Calais	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	79 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. Gender segregation; family units. (2007)

Name	Status (Year)	Location	Facility Type	Security	Authority	Management	Capacity	Reported Population on a Single Day	Demographics & Segregation
Hendaye Centre de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2008)	Hendaye, Pyrénées-Atlantique	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	15 (30 planned for 2008)		Adult males and females; families. (2006) Gender segregation; family units. (2008)
Le Chaudron Centre de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2008)	Le Chaudron, La Réunion	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)			
Le Mesnil-Amelot Centre de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2008)	Le Mesnil-Amelot	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Gendarmerie nationale	140 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. Gender segregation; family units. (2007)
Les Abymes Centre de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2008)	Les Abymes, Guadeloupe	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)			
Lille Lesquin Site 1 Centre de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2008)	Lesquin, Nord	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	41 (2007)		Adult males only. (2007)
Lille Lesquin Site 2 Centre de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2008)	Lesquin, Nord	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	96 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. Gender segregation; family units. (2007)
Lyon-Saint-Exupéry Centre de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2008)	Lyon airport, Saint Exupéry, Rhône	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	122 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. Gender segregation; family units. (2007)
Marseille-Le-Canet Centre de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2008)	Marseille, Bouches-du-Thone	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	137 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. (2008) Gender segregation; family units. (2006)
Metz Centre de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2008)	Metz-Devant-Les-Ponts, Moselle	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Gendarmerie nationale	30 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. Gender segregation; family units. (2008)
Nanterre Local de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2007)	Nanterre, Hauts-de-Seine	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	18-22 (2005)		Adult males only. (2007)
Nantes Centre de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2008)	Nantes, Loire-Atlantique	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	8 (2007)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)
Nice Centre de Réten-tion Administrative	In use (2008)	Nice, Alpes-Maritimes	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	44 (39 men and 5 women) (2007)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)

Name	Status (Year)	Location	Facility Type	Security	Authority	Management	Capacity	Reported Population on a Single Day	Demographics & Segregation
Nîmes-Courbessac Centre de Réention Administrative	In use (2008)	Nîmes, Gard	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	126 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. (2008) Gender segregation; family units. (2007)
Palais du Justice Centre de Réention Administrative	In use (2008)	Paris	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	40 (2005)		Adult females only. (2007)
Palaiseau Centre de Réention Administrative	In use (2008)	Palaiseau, Essone	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	40 (2007)		Adult males only. (2007)
Paris- Vincennes (Sites 1 & 2) Centre de Réention Administrative	In use (2008)	Vincennes, Paris	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	270 (2006)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)
Perpignan Centre de Réention Administrative	In use (2007)	Perpignan, Pyrénées-Orientales	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Gendarmerie nationale	50 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. (2007) Gender segregation; family units. (2008)
Plaisir Centre de Réention Administrative	In use (2008)	Plaisir (Villepreux), Yvelines	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	32 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. (2007) Gender segregation; family units. (2008)
Poitiers Local de Réention Administrative	In use (2007)	Poitiers Vienne	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales		2 (2007)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)
Rennes-Saint Jacques-de-la-Lande Centre de Réention Administrative	In use (2008)	Rennes, Ile-et-Vilaine	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Gendarmerie nationale	72 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. Gender segregation; family units. (2008)
Rivesaltes Centre de Réention Administrative	Closed (2007)	Rivesaltes (Perpignan), Pyrénées-Orientales	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Gendarmerie nationale	16 (2007)		Adult males and females. (2006) No gender segregation. (2005)
Rouen-Oissel Centre de Réention Administrative	In use (2008)	Oissel (Rouen), Seine-Maritime	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	72 (20 for families)		Adult males and females; minors; families. (2007) Gender segregation; family units. (2008)
Saint-Louis Local de Réention Administrative	In use (2007)	Saint-Louis, Haute-Rhin	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales		9 (2007)		Adult males and females. (2007)
Sète Centre de Réention Administrative	In use (2008)	Sète, Hérault	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	29 (2007)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)

Name	Status (Year)	Location	Facility Type	Security	Authority	Management	Capacity	Reported Population on a Single Day	Demographics & Segregation
Strasbourg-Geispolsheim Centre de Rétention Administrative	In use (2008)	Geispolsheim (Strasbourg), Bas-Rhin	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Gendarmerie nationale	36 (2007)		Adult males and females. Gender segregation. (2007)
Toulouse-Cornebarrieu Centre de Rétention Administrative	In use (2008)	Toulouse-Cornebarrieu, Haute-Garonne	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	126 (2007)		Adult males and females; minors; families. Gender segregation; family units. (2007)
Toulouse-Minimes Centre de Rétention Administrative	In use (2008)	Toulouse, Haute-Garonne	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministère de l'Intérieur de l'Outre-mer et des Collectivités Territoriales	Police nationale (Police des Airs et Frontières PAF)	37 (2005)		Gender segregation.

Sources

(This is only a partial list. More detailed information is available upon request.)

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- Journal Officiel. 2008. « Arrêté du 21 mai 2008 pris en application de l'article R. 533-1 du code. » 21 May 2008. <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000018879646> (accessed 4 May 2009)

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Map of "In Use" Detention Sites

For more detailed information, see the complete [List of Detention Sites](#).

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Country View

1. Ajaccio Local de Rétention Administrative - Aéroport Camp Dell'Oro
2. Bastia Local de Rétention Administrative
3. Bobigny Centre de Rétention Administrative
4. Bordeaux Centre de Rétention Administrative
5. Cayenne-Rochambeau Centre de Rétention Administrative
6. Cayenne-Rochambeau Local de Rétention Administrative
7. Cercottes Local de Rétention Administrative
8. Cergy Pontoise Local de Rétention Administrative
9. Choisy-le-Roi Local de Rétention Administrative
10. Coquelles Centre de Rétention Administrative
11. Hendaye Centre de Rétention Administrative
12. Le Chaudron Centre de Rétention Administrative

13. Le Mesnil-Amelot Centre de Réention Administrative
14. Les Abymes Centre de Réention Administrative
15. Lille Lesquin Site 1 Centre de Réention Administrative
16. Lille Lesquin Site 2 Centre de Réention Administrative
17. Lyon-Saint-Exupéry Centre de Réention Administrative
18. Marseille-Le-Canet Centre de Réention Admisnistrative
19. Metz Centre de Réention Administrative
20. Nanterre Local de Réention Administrative
21. Nantes Centre de Réention Administrative
22. Nice Centre de Réention Administrative
23. Nîmes-Courbessac Centre de Réention Administrative
24. Palais de Justice Centre de Réention Administrative
25. Palaiseau Centre de Réention Administrative
26. Paris-Vincennes (Sites 1 et 2) Centre de Réention Administrative
27. Perpignan Centre de Réention Administrative
28. Plaisir Centre de Réention Administrative
29. Poitier Local de Réention Administrative
30. Rennes-Saint-Jaques-de-la-Lande Centre de Réention Administrative
31. Rouen-Oissel Centre de Réention Administrative
32. Saint-Louis Local de Réention Administrative
33. Sète Centre de Réention Adminsitrative
34. Strasbourg - Geispolsheim Centre de Réention Administrative
35. Toulouse - Cornebarrieu Centre de Réention Administrative
36. Toulouse - Minimes Centre de Réention Administrative
37. Tours Local de Réention Administrative

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France Country Links

- » Government
- » International Organizations
- » NGOs and Research Institutions
- » Media

Government

Immigration Ministry (Le ministère de l'immigration, de l'intégration, de l'identité nationale et du développement solidaire)
<http://www.immigration.gouv.fr/>

Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (French)
<http://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (English)
<http://www.diplomatie.fr>

Commission de recours des réfugiés (French)
<http://www.commission-refugies.fr/>

International Organizations

International Labour Organization: France Office
<http://www.ilo.org/public/french/region/eurpro/paris/index.htm>

IOM - France
<http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/1377>

UNHCR – France
<http://www.unhcr.org/country/fra.html>

UNHCR – France Country Information
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/category,COI,,FRA,,0.html>

NGOs and Research Institutions

Amnesty International
www.amnesty.asso.fr

Association nationale d'assistance aux frontières pour les étrangers (ANAFE)
<http://www.anafe.org/acces.php>

Association d'accueil aux médecins et personnels de santé réfugiés en France (APSRF)

<http://www.apsr.asso.fr/com/bicetre.pdf>

Cimade

<http://www.cimade.org/>

Comité médical pour les exilés (COMEDE)

www.comede.org

Coordination Française pour le Droit d'Asile

<http://cfda.rezo.net/>

Forum Réfugiés

www.forumrefugies.org

France Terre d'Asile

www.france-terre-asile.org

Groupe Accueil Solidarité (GAS)

www.gas.asso.fr

Ligue des Droits de l'Homme

www.ldh-france.org

Migreurop

<http://www.migreurop.org>

Service National de la Pastorale des Migrants (SNPMI)

<http://www.eglisemigrations.org/>

Media

Le Monde

<http://www.lemonde.fr/>

Liberation

<http://www.liberation.fr/>

Le Figaro

<http://www.lefigaro.fr/>

Ouest France

<http://www.ouest-france.fr/>

Le Point

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