



Last updated: August 2009

Portugal Detention Profile

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At one time a key European migrant source country, Portugal has seen steady growth in its immigrant population during the last decade. In recent years it has established new immigration and asylum laws, including those covering the detention of undocumented immigrants. Despite these recent developments, the country's response to increasing immigration pressures remains largely understudied (Peixoto 2009; European Parliament 2007).

Detention Policy. Portugal's detention policy is set out in [Act 23/2007](#) of 2007, which provides “the legal framework for entry, permanence, exit, and removal of foreigners into and out of national territory.” Under Article 146, a person illegally entering or staying in Portugal who is detained by “a police authority”—including the Immigration and Borders Service, Guarda Nacional Republicana, Polícia de Segurança Pública, Polícia Judiciária, or Polícia Marítima—must be brought before a judge within 48 hours. If a removal order is made, the person is to be detained “at a temporary lodging centre or a matching facility,” where he/she can be held for a maximum of 60 days. According to the act, “No procedure is made against a foreign citizen who has illegally entered in national territory and presents a request for asylum to any police authority within forty-eight hours after his/her entrance.” The Immigration and Borders Service (SEF) maintains custody of immigrants who are detained because of their “illegal situation.”

Article 142 of [Act 23/2007](#) provides alternative enforcement measures, besides detention, for undocumented residents subject to expulsion procedures who are considered flight risks. These are: “a. Periodical presentations at SEF; b. The obligation of staying at home using electronic surveillance means according to law.”

In 2006, Portugal complemented its existing asylum policy with passage of [Law 20/2006](#). The law provides a simplified legal framework for receiving asylum seekers and specifies the minimum standards of treatment in the reception of asylum seekers and refugees, in particular regarding health care and legal aid (SEF 2007).

Detention Infrastructure. As of mid-2009, Portugal had one dedicated immigration detention centre, the Unidade Habitacional de Sao Antonio in Porto, which is managed by the Immigration and Borders Service (SEF) and falls under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Marques 2009). Opened in 2006, the centre had as of 2007 a capacity of 30 adults and six children (European Parliament 2007).

Portugal's detention infrastructure also includes several transit zone sites—called “Temporary Installation Centres (CITs)” —located at airports, which are used for the short-term detention of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers entering the country. The CITs are located at the airports in Faro, Porto, and Lisbon. The centres in Faro and Porto each have a capacity of 24 while the centre in Lisbon has 56 places. Because these facilities hold people for brief periods—between 24 and 48 hours—the Global Detention Project does not include the CITs on its list of detention sites (Marques 2009; European Parliament 2007).

Portugal also has two non-secure centres for housing foreign nationals. The Bobadela Reception Centre for asylum seekers is located near Lisbon and is run by the Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR) (European Parliament 2007). In 2006 the Pedro Arupe Reception Centre in Lisbon was opened to house vulnerable undocumented foreign nationals. Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) manages the facility, which has a capacity of 25 (European Parliament 2007).

Many services for detainees held at the detention centre and the CITs are provided by non-profit organizations. Through a 2006 Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Interior, the International Organization for Migration, and the Jesuit Refugee Service, JRS-Portugal provides social and psychological services, as well as legal council to detainees. Additionally, the Swiss NGO Médecins du Monde ensures that detainees have access to medical and psychological consultations (Marques 2009; ERSO 2009;

European Parliament 2007).

A 2007 report by the European Parliament on migration-related detention highlighted several concerns regarding conditions at detention facilities and the treatment of detainees. The most prominent concern regarding the CITs in Faro and Porto was that they were not suitable for long-term detention. The rooms in which detainees were held had no windows with outside views, and there were a lack of activities apart from watching television. While the report also lauded the creation of the JRS-run Pedro Arrupe centre for vulnerable illegal foreign nationals, it highlighted the “lack of specialised structures to help the victims of physical or mental violence.” (European Parliament 2007).

Facts and Figures. The number of immigrants in Portugal has increased steadily since the beginning of the 2000s. Between 2005 and 2006 total legal migration increased by 50 percent to 42,000. In 2007 there were approximately 435,000 foreigners living legally in the country, accounting for some 4 percent of the population. Since the 1990s the number of migrants from Africa has slowly decreased, while the number of Brazilians and Eastern Europeans has increased. In 2007 the most numerous groups were from Brazil, Cape Verde, and Ukraine (Peixoto 2009, OECD 2008).

While overall asylum applications to Portugal have declined significantly since the mid-1990s, they have slowly increased since 2004, when 110 applications were made. This number reached 220 in 2007, although it decreased by 27 percent to 160 the following year. The top countries of origins of asylum applicants in 2008 were Sri Lanka (27), Colombia (24) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (17) (UNHCR 2009).

Data on the number of undocumented immigrants living in Portugal is scarce, although a 2009 report by the Real Instituto Elcano concluded that a “large” percentage of Portugal’s immigrant population entered “the country irregularly or overstayed, easily finding a job, often in the irregular labour market” (Peixoto 2009).

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List of Detention Sites

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Name	Status (Year)	Location	Facility Type	Security	Authority	Management	Capacity	Reported Population	Demographics & Segregation
Unidade Habitacional de Sao Antonio	In use (2009)	Porto	Migrant detention centre	Secure	Ministry of Interior	Immigration and Borders Service	30 adults, 6 children		Adult men and women, minors

Sources

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

- European Parliament. 2007. The conditions in centres for third country national (detention camps, open centres as well as transit centres and transit zones) with a particular focus on provisions and facilities for persons with special needs in the 25 EU member states. European Parliament, Directorate-General Internal Policies, Policy Department C, Citizens Rights and Constitutional Affairs. Contract Ref: IP/C/LIBE/IC/2006-181. December 2007.
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Map of "In Use" Detention Sites

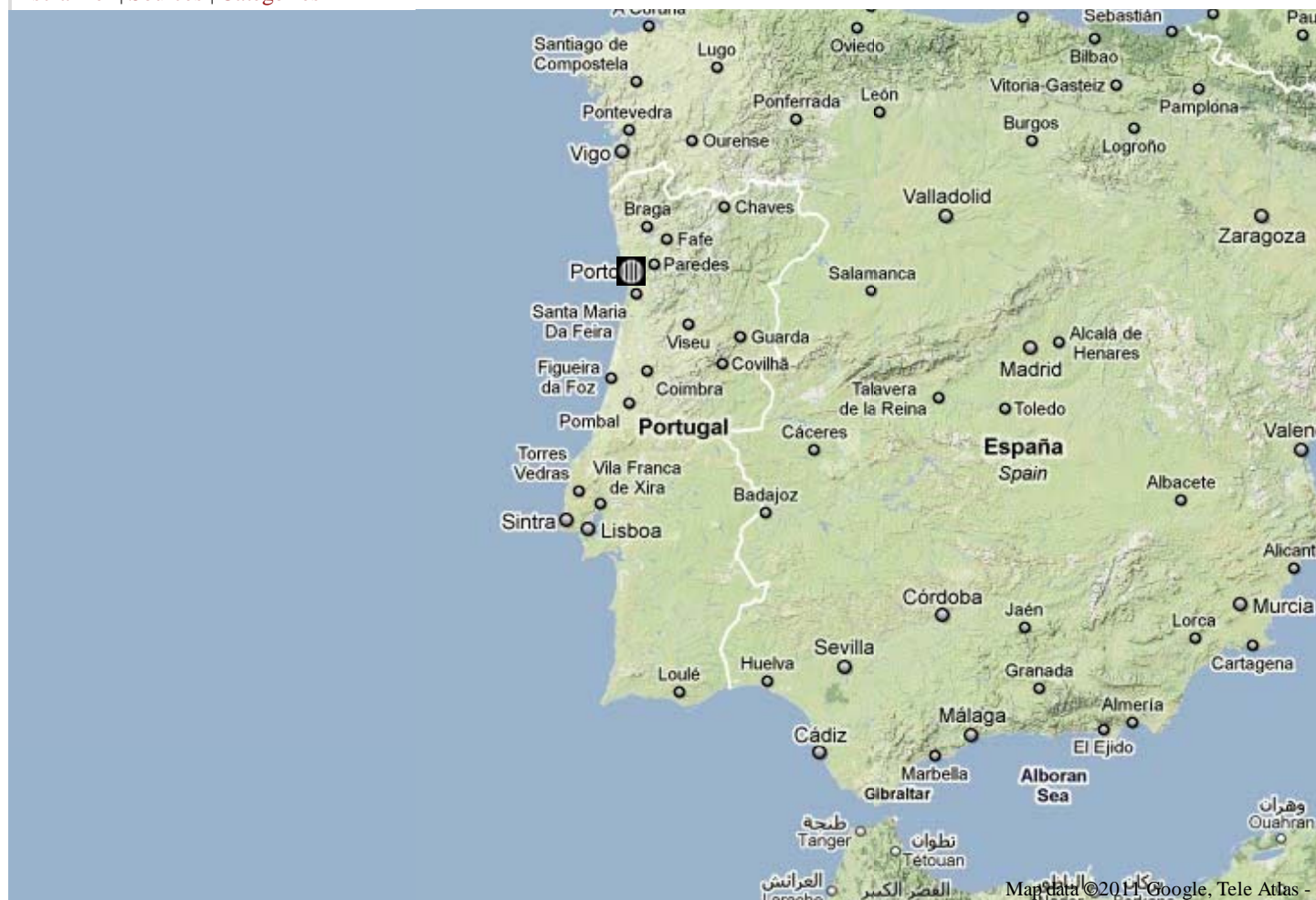
For more detailed information, see the complete [List of Detention Sites](#).

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Country View

1. [Unidade Habitacional de Sao Antonio](#)

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Portugal Country Links

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- » [International Organizations](#)
- » [NGOs and Research Institutions](#)
- » [Media](#)

Government Agencies

Immigration and Border Service, Ministry of Interior
<http://www.sef.pt/portal/V10/EN/asp/page.aspx>

Immigration Information, Ministry of Interior
<http://www.imigrante.pt/>

Ministry of Interior (Portugese)
<http://www.mai.gov.pt/>

Portugese Ombudsman's Office
<http://www.provedo-jus.pt/Ingles/Index.htm>

International Organizations

International Organizations
International Labour Organization – Lisbon Office
<http://www.ilo.org/public/portugue/region/eurpro/lisbon/>

International Organization for Migration – Portugal Country Information
<http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/activities/europe/southern-europe/portugal>

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – Portugal Country Information
<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/txis/vtx/page?page=49e48edc6>

NGOs and Research Institutions

Amnesty International – Portugal Country Information
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/portugal>

Human Rights Watch – Portugal Country Information
<http://www.hrw.org/en/europecentral-asia/portugal>

JRS - Jesuit Refugee Service Portugal
<http://www.jrseurope.org/countries/portugal.htm>

Media

The Portugal News

<http://www.the-news.net/>

Correio de Manhã (Portuguese)

<http://www.correiomanha.pt/>

Diário de Notícias (Portuguese)

<http://dn.sapo.pt/Inicio/>

Jornal de Notícias (Portuguese)

<http://jn.sapo.pt/paginainicial/>

Publico (Portuguese)

<http://www.publico.clix.pt/>

Lusa News Agency (Portuguese)

<http://www.lusa.pt/lusaweb>

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- Peixoto, João and Catarina Sabino. 2009. *Immigration, Emigration and Policy Developments in Portugal*. Real Instituto Elcano. ARI117/2009. July 2009. http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_eng/Content?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/Elcano_in/Zonas_in/ARI117-2009 (accessed 3 August 2009).

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