

Cyprus Immigration Detention

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INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Cyprus receives the highest number of asylum applicants per capita of all industrialized countries, which during the period 2003-2007 numbered 39 asylum seekers per 1,000 inhabitants (UNHCR 2008). This distinction is due to a number of factors, including: Cyprus' small population (nearly 800,000); location on the external border of Europe; proximity to both the Middle East and Africa; and the island's division between the Cypriot government-controlled southern area and the Turkish controlled north, which is demarcated by a non-secure boundary called the Green Line (Council of Europe 2008). In 2007, the Republic of Cyprus was estimated to have between 10,000-60,000 undocumented foreign workers as (Symfiliosi 2007); it had over 13,000 asylum seekers as of 2005 (UNHCR 2005).

According to the Cypriot non-governmental organization Symfiliosi, "There are three different categories of people detained on immigration-related 'offences': those detained for a few days until their removal is arranged; those whose removal presents various difficulties (e.g. non-disclosure of their country of origin, or their country of origin is unwilling to accept them); and third country nationals who had initially been declared 'illegal' and who subsequently applied for international protection" (Symfiliosi 2007). According to the Cypriot Ombudsman's office, people who file asylum claims after entering Cyprus illegally are subject to detention, as are immigrants who, after failing to renew a residence permit, claim asylum (Demetriadou 2009).

Cyprus maintains at least nine immigration detention centres, all but two of which are located in police stations. The seven police station facilities are located in Aradippou, Lakatamia, Larnaca, Limassol, Orokline, Paphos, and Paralimni (Demetriadou 2009; Council of Europe 2008). There are also detention facilities located inside the Larnaca International Airport and the Nicosia Central Prison (Demetriadou 2009). Although the Nicosia facility, called Block 10, is located within the prison, it is operated separately (Demetriadou 2009). All immigration detention sites are operated by the Immigration Department of the Police Force, which is a part of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (Demetriadou 2009).

A 2008 report by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe highlighted a number of problems that have been reported at Cypriot detention sites, including excessively long detention periods for rejected asylum seekers, the poor state of repair of many sites, inadequate training of guards, and allegations of mistreatment (Council of Europe 2008).

Country Estimates: Republic of Cyprus

Number of Immigration Detention Sites: **9**

Detention Capacity:

Annual Number of Deportations:

Asylum Seekers: **13,067** (2005)

Undocumented Foreign Workers: **10,000-60,000** (2007)

Sources

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