

Bundesministerium für Inneres  
Josef Holaubek Platz  
1 Wien

Email: [REDACTED]@bmi.gv.at

18 June 2020

## **Request for Information on Immigration Related Detention & Covid-19**

Dear Madam or Sir,

The [Global Detention Project](#) is a non-profit organisation based in Geneva that documents the use of detention for immigration or asylum reasons. We are working on an [initiative](#) to track official responses to Covid-19 with respect to immigration detention and removal policies in an effort to better understand how countries are dealing with this vulnerable population in custody. We would be very grateful if you could take the time to answer the following questions:

- 1) Is there a moratorium on new immigration detention orders because of the Covid-19 pandemic? YES / NO**  
No.  
- **If not, is such a measure under consideration?**  
No.
- 2) Have people been released from immigration detention because of the Covid-19 pandemic? YES / NO**  
No.  
- **Please describe any decisions about who is to be released.**
- 3) For migrants and / or asylum seekers released from detention, what measures are being taken to prevent spreading of the infection and to ensure appropriate care?**  
- **If you are employing "alternatives to detention" (ATD) programs to release detainees, please indicate in which cases they are being used and whether these ATD programs include measures to prevent the spreading of Covid-19.**

Disease protection measures regarding released detainees are within the sole responsibility of the public health authority. Thus former detainees are subject to the same health-related rules and legal responsibilities as all people.

- 4) Are immigration detainees tested for Covid-19? YES / NO**  
- **Please describe any measures that are being taken to test and protect detainees.**

No, medical tests for Covid-19 are only carried out if an infection is suspected. In this case the detainee pending deportation is placed in protective isolation until a result is known. There is no appropriate legal basis for an initial screening to detect infections among all detainees. But of course general measures were taken to prevent the spread of the virus among the detainees.

- 5) Have deportations/removals been halted because of the pandemic? YES / NO**  
- **To which countries are removals still taking place?**

No. In practice, the implementation of return decisions is currently diffculted by limitations / cancellations of flights, the closure of borders or the refusal of readmission / transit of returnees. Currently, daily air traffic is being monitored with regard to scheduled flights, which allow return actions. Charters will continue to be planned and

continued according to the general conditions.

**6) Broadly, has the country adopted new immigration and/or asylum policies as well as border controls in response to the Covid-19 crisis? YES / NO**  
**- Please briefly describe any changes.**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary internal border controls to all neighbouring countries were reintroduced starting on March 11, 2020. The duration and intensity of the measures depended on the necessity. Since June 16, 2020 there have been no more internal border controls because of COVID-19.

I kindly request you to provide this information in electronic format if at all possible, to the email address, [admin@globaldetentionproject.org](mailto:admin@globaldetentionproject.org)

Should you require any further information, or a clarification of any part of this request, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Flynn

Global Detention Project

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