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Portugal should address overcrowding in prisons and effectively apply safeguards against ill-treatment, says Anti-torture Committee

Strasbourg, 24.04.2013 – In a report published today, the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture ([CPT](#)) calls on the Portuguese authorities to address the steady increase in the prison population and to eradicate overcrowding.

The [report](#), which contains the CPT's findings on its last visit to Portugal, in 2012, urges the authorities to improve the conditions in Lisbon Central Prison, which the CPT delegation found in a state of dilapidation, made worse by chronic overcrowding, in particular the basement units.

The CPT requests that rigorous safeguards are applied concerning the placement of prisoners in high security units. In respect of these units at Linhó and Paços de Ferreira Prisons, the report recommends that inmates are not confined to their cells for up to 22 hours a day and are provided with a programme of activities.

The Committee also recommends improvements in the disciplinary system, including to reduce the maximum period of solitary confinement as a punishment to 14 days, and to reinforce the health-care in prisons, including the medical screening on admission and the recording of injuries.

The report highlights several cases of alleged ill-treatment of persons deprived of their liberty by law enforcement agencies and stresses the importance of the authorities carrying out effective investigations into such allegations. Further, it makes recommendations about ensuring the right of detained persons to have access to a lawyer (including the right to talk to a lawyer in private), to notify their detention to a third party and to be informed of their rights.

The CPT states that the Psychiatric Hospital of Santa Cruz do Bispo is unsuitable for providing the necessary care and treatment to patients, and recommends urgent steps to upgrade the conditions and to improve the range of purposeful activities in order to foster a therapeutic environment.

In their [response](#), the Portuguese authorities provide information on the steps being taken to address the various CPT concerns and recommendations, including the action taken to investigate cases of alleged ill-treatment, to expand the application of alternative measures to imprisonment and to improve prison conditions, notably as concerns Lisbon Central Prison.

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