

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2024 ad hoc visit to Italy, the CPT examined the treatment and conditions of detention of foreign nationals held in four closed pre-removal centres (*Centri di permanenza per il rimpatrio* or CPRs). The visiting CPT delegation received excellent cooperation in terms of facilitating its visit, but regrettably it was not able to present its findings to the senior political leadership of the Ministry of the Interior at the end of the visit. It trusts that its recommendations will be seriously considered and fully implemented. In its report, the Committee also raises several questions relating to the detention of foreign nationals in immigration detention centres in Albania and requests the Italian authorities to ensure that foreign nationals detained overseas under Italian jurisdiction are provided with decent living conditions, treated with respect and afforded their fundamental safeguards (information on rights, notification of custody, access to a lawyer and access to a doctor).

The report describes several cases of physical ill-treatment and excessive use of force against detained persons by police staff in the CPRs visited. This notably concerned interventions in the detention modules of a CPR following a critical event and the CPT identifies several shortcomings such as the absence of any rigorous and independent monitoring of such interventions and the lack of an accurate recording of injuries sustained by detained persons or of any assessment as to their origin. The Committee is also critical of the widespread practice of the regular administration of unprescribed psychotropic drugs to the detained population at the Potenza CPR, as well as the prolonged handcuffing of persons apprehended on the territory during their transfer to a CPR.

With regard to material conditions, the Committee notes the physical layout of CPRs in relation to its carceral aspects, such as metal bars and grilles on windows, reinforced armour and cage-like outdoor facilities. The report recommends removing the carceral elements and ensuring a proper maintenance of the infrastructure, notably the sanitary facilities. The interpersonal skills of custodial staff should also be enhanced. Other shortcomings identified in the report relate to the poor quality of food provided to detained persons and the shortage of stocks of toiletries and pillows.

Turning to the regime of activities offered to detained persons in the CPRs visited, the CPT found that they were effectively being warehoused. At the time of the visit, the relevant contractors were only investing minimal efforts to offer a few activities of a recreational nature. Such an imbalance between the activities envisaged in the relevant tender specifications (*Capitolato*) and the impoverished regime provided in practice has led to the opening of several criminal investigations. The CPT advocates for a full range of purposeful activities to be introduced, particularly in the light of the extension of the period of detention up to a maximum of 18 months. The presence of cultural mediators and psychologists in the CPRs should also be increased.

The assessment of the healthcare provided to foreign nationals held in CPRs shows that there is a need to improve its provision. The current system of doctors certifying a person as fit for detention should be reviewed to ensure that doctors with prior experience and knowledge of the conditions in a secure setting are involved. The CPT also considers that the medical screening of detained persons on their admission to a CPR should be improved, that the practice of widespread administration of psychotropic drugs be reviewed, that the interface between contractors and national health authorities be strengthened and that clinical protocols for the prevention of suicide and the management of hunger strikes be adopted.

The CPT considers that there is a need to create a dedicated corps of detention officers who are adequately trained in the specific challenges of supervising persons placed in immigration detention centres, in particular as regards interpersonal skills and the ability to recognise symptoms of possible stress reactions. Further, the number of cultural mediators should also be increased. The report concludes that the Italian authorities need to reflect on the lessons learned from the privatisation of the management services of CPRs and whether this is a suitable model.

With regard to the legal safeguards afforded to persons subject to a *trattenimento* in a CPR, the CPT recommends that access to a lawyer be improved (which should include the possibility to have a confidential consultation prior to the hearing and to put in place a system that ensures ongoing legal support). Further, foreign nationals should have access to professional interpretation services. The CPT also calls for a better regulation of the procedure for detaining persons in so-called *locali idonei* (holding areas in National Police Headquarters (*Questure*), in ports, airports and border crossings). Persons held in these *locali idonei* are not afforded the necessary safeguards such as information on their rights, access to a lawyer and notification of their detention to a third party. This should be redressed.

Foreign nationals detained for the purposes of being removed should be informed well in advance of their imminent forced removal and the information provided to foreign nationals when they are admitted to a CPR should be improved.

The CPT also makes recommendations on the need to better identify and address the vulnerabilities of persons detained in a CPR, to improve access to the outside world, to streamline the complaints procedure and to ensure stricter control and supervision of the activities of the management of CPRs by the relevant *Prefettura*.