

VISIT REPORT

CYPRUS

April 2025



CPT

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE
FOR THE PREVENTION OF
TORTURE AND INHUMAN OR
DEGRADING TREATMENT
OR PUNISHMENT

AD HOC VISIT

1 - 4 April 2025

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European Committee for the
Prevention of Torture and Inhuman
or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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KEY OBSERVATIONS

PRIORITY TOPICS

■ Prison

ILL-TREATMENT – Implement an effective strategy to address inter-prisoner violence and increase prisoner safety.

CONDITIONS OF DETENTION – Eliminate the severe overcrowding at Nicosia Central Prisons (NCP) through, *inter alia* increasing the use of alternatives to detention.

SPECIAL CARE OR UNITS – Swiftly transfer the children held at NCP to a more suitable facility for minors.

OTHER ISSUES – Improve the provision of healthcare through, *inter alia* guaranteeing medical confidentiality, ensuring injuries are properly recorded, and adopting robust policies for suicide and self-harm prevention and for tackling substance use.

■ Police

CONDITIONS OF DETENTION – Cease prolonged detention periods in police establishments.

INVESTIGATIONS AND IMPUNITY – Reinforce a zero-tolerance approach as regards ill-treatment and place a greater emphasis on the training of police officers in interviewing criminal suspects.

■ Immigration

FIRST-RECEPTION/DETENTION CENTRES – Any detention of asylum seekers must be as a measure of last resort and the detention should be legally prescribed, based on an individual detention order, and subject to the principles of necessity, proportionality, and the availability of an effective remedy.

FIRST-RECEPTION / DETENTION CENTRES – End the detention of vulnerable persons, including families with children and unaccompanied and separated children.

GOOD PRACTICES

FIRST-RECEPTION / DETENTION CENTRES – Interpretation services are regularly available at Pournara First Reception Centre, both in person and by phone.

THE CPT AND CYPRUS

Cyprus ratified the ECPT in 1989, and the Committee's first visit took place in 1992.

Since ratification, the CPT has carried out 10 country visits to Cyprus – 8 periodic and 2 ad hoc – including 103 visits to police establishments, 9 to prisons, 12 to psychiatric institutions, 11 social welfare and educational-correctional establishments, 2 to military detention facilities, and 16 to border and immigration detention facilities.

All the visit reports have been published. Cyprus did not accept the automatic publication of the visit reports.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CPT's report on its ad hoc visit to Cyprus in April 2025 examines the treatment and conditions of detention of persons held in prison, law enforcement agencies and immigration detention. To this end, the CPT reviewed the measures taken by the Cypriot authorities to implement recommendations made by the Committee after its previous visits in 2013, 2017 and 2023. The CPT delegation examined the situation at Nicosia Central Prisons, the First Reception Centre of Pournara and the airport holding facility at Larnaca, as well as visiting several police establishments across the country.

Nicosia Central Prisons (NCP)

Overall, the CPT found that the situation for persons held in the prison had remained much the same as found in 2023. Most of the serious issues afflicting the establishment could be linked to continued overcrowding, which adversely impacted the conditions of detention and treatment of persons held in NCP.

As a positive improvement since 2023, the CPT received almost no allegations of physical ill-treatment by staff. Yet overall physical safety remained a concern. The situation regarding inter-prisoner violence and neglect by staff in their duty to protect and prevent such violence, had not just remained unchanged but had even, in some areas, deteriorated. The Committee found that the lack of front-line prison staff created a breeding ground for stronger groups of prisoners to develop. The CPT reiterates that allowing stronger groups to develop and impose informal punishments jeopardises prisoners' safety. This raises clear issues under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the authorities' duty of care to all persons held in NCP. Swift action should be taken to urgently review NCP's violence prevention policy and to recruit and train more front-line prison staff to address these issues.

Turning to the living conditions, the CPT found severe overcrowding. In certain blocks, such as Block 10A, large numbers of prisoners slept on mattresses on the floor, with up to four prisoners crammed into cells of only 5.5m²; such cells should never accommodate more than one person. Further, ready access to toilets remained problematic with over half of NCP's blocks still did not having in-cell sanitary facilities. Consequently, at night, due to the lack of staff available to let prisoners out of their cells to use the block's toilets, prisoners had to resort to urinating in bottles or defecating in bags, in packed cells. The Committee considered this practice degrading.

As for the daily regime, it remains positive that prisoners are able to spend most of the day unlocked from their cells. Further, there has been a slight expansion in the range of activities and training on offer. Nevertheless, regular access to a range of purposeful activities, education and organised sport was not possible for large numbers of prisoners.

The Committee raised several concerns regarding the children and young adults held at NCP. Chief among these was that children remain incarcerated in poor and unsuitable conditions. Due to overcrowding, some children had to sleep on mattresses on the floor in mouldy, graffiti-ridden cells, which they shared with the young adults. Moreover, they lacked any form of tailored, child-oriented regime of purposeful or vocational activities or work, geared at their progress and eventual reintegration into the community. Many of the children complained of being cold, hungry and bored. The Committee underlined that NCP was an inappropriate place to hold children and encouraged the swift transfer of the children to a more suitable facility for minors as soon as possible.

The Committee also puts forward a series of measures to improve the situation of women prisoners, notably as regards developing a gender-specific approach and ensuring that their specific needs are met. Likewise, the treatment of foreign national prisoners held at NCP should be improved.

As for healthcare, with the exception of the recruitment of a psychiatrist, there had been no noticeable improvements since the 2023 visit. Medical confidentiality remained a problem, with officers still distributing medication instead of nurses and the recording of injuries was poor. Action is also needed to put in place a proper suicide and self-harm prevention policy and to develop the approach towards substance use.

The CPT also found that no action had been taken to amend the system of provisional disciplinary isolation and issues remained in the application of disciplinary procedures and the notable lack of due process safeguards. Concerted action is required to change the current approach and to ensure that any offence is investigated, adjudicated and carried out promptly.

The CPT also found that an effective complaints system was lacking. As noted in 2023, many prisoners stated that their complaints never received a response. The internal complaints system did not adhere to the principles of confidentiality, effectiveness and traceability.

Police establishments

The Committee's long-standing recommendations that persons should not be detained in police custody for prolonged periods of time remained unimplemented. While lengths of stay varied greatly depending on the nature of the grounds for detention, some individuals met by the delegation had been held in police stations for many months, in inadequate conditions.

Most persons with whom the delegation spoke said that they had been treated correctly by the police. However, the delegation did receive a few allegations of physical ill-treatment and verbal abuse by police offices. The CPT reiterates the need to reinforce a zero-tolerance approach as regards ill-treatment.

Immigration establishments

At the time of the visit, 290 foreign nationals were deprived of their liberty in the First Reception Centre of Pournara, a marked decrease from the figures seen in 2023. Persons, all of whom had claimed asylum, could leave the Centre once i) asylum registration and other tests results were completed and ii) they provided a proof of future address to the Asylum Service. Certain tests results, including age assessments and DNA tests, were taking many months. Additionally, finding accommodation outside of the centre was challenging for asylum seekers.

The CPT reiterates its long-standing view that asylum seekers should only be deprived of their liberty as an exceptional measure. Further, the CPT reiterates that the Cypriot authorities transfer vulnerable groups to more suitable accommodation and that steps be taken to end the detention of children and unaccompanied and separated children (UASC).

The living conditions in the facility had improved since 2023. In most parts of the facility, tents had been replaced with prefabricated units and the general state of hygiene had markedly improved. Yet, although the facility was operating well under capacity, the CPT found persons accommodated in overcrowded and run-down conditions; this was notably the case in the section for unaccompanied boys.

The lack of regular regime of structured or purposeful activities meant that persons had nothing to do to structure their day. It remained particularly deplorable that, other than the opportunity for each child to attend one Greek class a week, no activities were on offer for children.

The CPT found that healthcare staffing levels had improved, however, access to mental healthcare services remained underdeveloped. Vulnerability assessments were only performed when persons were flagged as potentially vulnerable during registration procedures. Furthermore, once identified as vulnerable, other than being placed in "safe zones", very few protective safeguards were afforded.

As asylum seekers may be held at Pournara for an undefined period ranging from a couple of weeks to several months, it is essential that each person be provided with an individualised detention order that clearly spells out the reasons for detention and the safeguards surrounding such detention, including avenues for appeal and complaint.

I. Introduction

A. The visit, the report and follow-up

1. In pursuance of Article 7 of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (hereinafter referred to as “the Convention”), a delegation of the CPT carried out an ad hoc visit to Cyprus from 1 to 4 April 2025. The visit was considered by the Committee “to be required in the circumstances” (cf. Article 7, paragraph 1, of the Convention).

2. Its objective was to examine the treatment and conditions of persons held in Nicosia Central Prisons, as well as in immigration and police establishments held under immigration legislation, and to assess the implementation of the Committee’s recommendations as set out in its report on the 2023 periodic visit. It was the Committee’s ninth visit to Cyprus.¹

3. The visit was carried out by the following members of the CPT:

- Alan Mitchell, President of the CPT (Head of delegation)
- Mari Amos
- Nikola Kovačević

They were supported by Hugh Chetwynd (Executive Secretary), Francesca Gordon and Ella Dodd of the CPT Secretariat.

4. The report on the visit was adopted by the CPT at its 117th meeting, held from 30 June to 4 July 2025, and transmitted to the authorities of Cyprus on 24 July 2025. The various recommendations, comments and requests for information made by the CPT are set out in bold type in the present report. The CPT requests that the authorities of Cyprus provide **within three months** a response containing a full account of action taken by them to implement the Committee’s recommendations, along with replies to the comments and requests for information formulated in this report.

B. Consultations held by the delegation and cooperation encountered

5. In the course of the visit, the delegation had discussions with Nicholas Ioannides, Deputy Minister of Migration and International Protection, Fedra Gregoriou, Acting Permanent Secretary and Head of the Justice Department of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, and Constantinos Constantinides, Acting Director of Cyprus Prisons Department, as well as with senior officials of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, and the Ministry of Migration and International Protection. On 17 June 2025, the President of the CPT met with the Minister of Justice and Public Order, Marios Hartsiotis, in Nicosia to discuss the CPT’s findings. The discussions focused on the detention conditions and treatment of foreign nationals held in Pournara Registration Centre and issues concerning overcrowding, poor conditions and other problems at Nicosia Central Prisons.

6. On the whole, the CPT delegation received very good cooperation during the visit from the Cypriot authorities at all levels. The delegation had rapid access to all places of detention it wished to visit, was able to meet in private with those persons with whom it wanted to speak and was provided with access to the information required to carry out its task.

The Committee wishes to express its appreciation for the assistance provided to the delegation during the visit by the management and staff in the establishments visited, as well as for the support offered by its liaison officer, Natasa Savvopoulou.

1. The visit reports and the responses of the Cypriot authorities on all previous visits are available on the CPT website: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cpt>.

7. Nevertheless, the CPT must recall, once again, that the principle of cooperation between Parties to the Convention and the Committee is not limited to steps taken to facilitate the task of a visiting delegation. It also requires that decisive action be taken to improve the situation in light of the CPT's recommendations.

In this respect, the CPT remains particularly concerned about the limited progress made to implement the CPT's repeated longstanding recommendations. In particular, it notes the lack of concrete change in respect of Nicosia Central Prisons (NCP) and the treatment of foreign nationals and those held in long-term police custody (see Section II (C) below).

8. The CPT acknowledges the reforms underway to try to tackle the systemic issue of overcrowding at NCP, most notably the expansion of the closed prison capacity. Nevertheless, it stresses that there is a lack of concrete action by the Cypriot authorities in introducing sustainable alternatives to detention and other measures to provide long-lasting solutions to reduce the numbers of persons held in NCP.

The Committee is also disappointed by the lack of tangible change concerning the provision of safe and decent living conditions for prisoners. Prisoners are still held in poor, and in some cases, degrading, conditions (see Section II (A) below).

9. Overall, it is clear that substantial investment must be made to fully address these challenges. The CPT calls on the Cypriot authorities to take concrete action to implement the recommendations set out in this report based upon a clear strategy of how to reduce the prison population ongoing and address the multiple concerns of the Committee. The Committee hopes that it will not have to resort to setting in motion the procedure enshrined in Article 10, paragraph 2, of the Convention² establishing the CPT.

2. Article 10(2) of the Convention: "If the Party fails to co-operate or refuses to improve the situation in light of the Committee's recommendations, the Committee may decide, after the Party has had an opportunity to make known its views, by a majority of two-thirds of its members to make a public statement on the matter."

II. FACTS FOUND DURING THE VISIT AND ACTION PROPOSED

A. Nicosia Central Prisons

1. Preliminary remarks

10. Nicosia Central Prisons, built in 1884, remains the only prison facility in Cyprus; this was the Committee's ninth visit to NCP since 1992.

11. In 2023, the Committee found a deplorable situation at NCP. There were overcrowded cells, poor living conditions, insufficient safeguards³ and frequent incidents of severe inter-prisoner violence. These had become embedded, systemic issues and contributed to the Committee's overall findings of a lack of safety, as well as inhuman and degrading conditions prevalent in parts of the prison.

12. The situation facing the Cyprus Prison Service remained challenging. Prisoner numbers had significantly increased since 2023⁴ and, at the time of the 2025 visit, there were 1 123 prisoners (including 831 sentenced and 292 remand prisoners, 82 women (remand and sentenced) and seven children (all boys, including three on remand). 222 prisoners were held on short sentences and 589 on long sentences (over 18 months) for an official capacity of 911 places/beds (123% capacity). These numbers were putting significant and visible strain on the infrastructure and resources of NCP. There was considerable pressure to fit the increasing population into the country's only prison complex.

13. Recent reforms had been undertaken with the aim of tackling overcrowding.⁵ The former Open Prison had been converted into a closed block, with a capacity of 230. A new onsite Open Prison, with a capacity for 60 had been established (but which only catered for men (see *Women prisoners*, section 4)).

Further, the Cypriot authorities informed the CPT of the plans to create a new annex to accommodate a further 360 prisoners. Work is due to start at the end of 2025 and be finalised by 2028. Equally, discussions in Parliament had taken place on the possibilities to expand the range of alternatives to detention, including electronic monitoring for risk-assessed remand prisoners. However, no tangible progress had been made on this at the time of the CPT visit.

14. At the time of the 2025 visit it was clear that, while the extra accommodation space has temporarily provided some relief to the prison, the number of prisoners has continued to creep up, and there were still parts of the prison that were severely overcrowded. The cramped cells and living conditions in Blocks 1B, 8A and 10A were particularly deplorable. In most of the blocks, the cramped, degrading conditions described by the Committee in its 2023 visit report had not improved. The CPT considers that to alleviate overcrowding in a sustainable manner, significantly more effort and investment now needs to be put into the creation of alternatives to detention.⁶

To this end, a detailed strategic plan for the prison system needs to be urgently elaborated⁷ setting out a roadmap for how the reduction in overcrowding at NCP will be delivered.

15. The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to develop a new prison policy which will include measures both to reduce the prison population in a sustainable manner and to improve the operation of NCP (capacity which can be held in decent conditions, staffing, programmes, healthcare, etc.). This policy should include a clear legislative and political strategy/roadmap, with sufficient resources allocated.

3. See Section 8(b) and (d) of the CPT's 2023 Visit Report; [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#).

4. In 2023, occupancy stood at 975 (115%).

5. See the [Response of the Republic of Cyprus to the CPT's 2023 Visit Report](#), paragraph 20.

6. Only 22 prisoners were on electronic tagging and one on suspended sentence, at the time of the 2025 visit. See also the CPT's 31st General Report 2021, on "Combating prison overcrowding": <https://rm.coe.int/1680a63c72>.

7. See also previous recommendation on this contained in CPT's 2023 Visit Report [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#), paragraph 20.

The Committee trusts that, in their efforts, the authorities will take due account of the principles listed in the relevant recommendations of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, in particular, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R(99)22 concerning prison overcrowding and prison population inflation, Recommendation Rec(2006)13 on the use of remand in custody, the conditions in which it takes place and the provision of safeguards against abuse, Recommendation Rec(2003)22 on conditional release (parole), Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)1 on the Council of Europe probation rules, Recommendation Rec(2014)4 on electronic monitoring and Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)3 on the European Rules on community sanctions and measures.

To start with, this policy should review whether there could be an increased application of alternatives to detention for particular groups of current prisoners, such as:

- persons held on remand;
- short-term sentenced prisoners (including those foreign nationals sentenced for illegal entry on counterfeit immigration documents⁸);
- children; and
- women who are eligible for progression to the open prison but cannot do so due to lack of availability.

More generally, stakeholders in the policy and roadmap should include the Government, the Parliament and the judiciary. Prosecutors and judges should also be sensitised, through the appropriate channels, with these above principles. It should include a holistic review of Cypriot sentencing policy, as well as concrete measures to increase the use and range of alternatives to detention, such as significantly increasing the use of the electronic tagging system for risk-assessed prisoners.

2. Ill-treatment

16. The delegation received almost no allegations of physical abuse of prisoners by staff. This is a positive improvement since the 2023 visit. The CPT encourages the management to remain vigilant and to provide staff with the necessary training, support and oversight to maintain this progress.

In 2023, inter-prisoner violence, and neglect by staff in their duty to protect and prevent such violence were serious problems.⁹ There was insufficient staff deployment in the most problematic blocks (notably 10A, 9, 1 and 2). Moreover, there were allegations of staff neglect or, worse, staff deliberately facilitating inter-prisoner abuse.¹⁰ Overall, there was a fertile environment for prisoners belonging to stronger groups, and, in the absence of effective supervision of the wings by prison staff, to impose their will and rules to the rest of the prisoners, who might not have financial means, physical strength or outside support. These prisoners kept control of the above blocks by means of intimidation, bullying and, at times, physical abuse.

17. During the 2025 visit, the delegation found that the situation had not simply remained unimproved but had even, in some areas, deteriorated.

18. During the previous five months (November 2024 to March 2025) alone,¹¹ there had been 59 recorded incidents of inter-prisoner violence or conflict resulting in injury, including 10 cases of beatings which had been referred to the police by the prison.

8. A number that, while having decreased since 2023, still accounted for 10% of the prison population (77/1123) at the time of the 2025 visit.

9. See CPT's 2023 Visit report [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#), paragraphs 23 to 30.

10. Of note, three staff members remained suspended at the time of the CPT's 2025 visit, due to ongoing criminal investigations into their conduct regarding the inter-prisoner murder committed shortly before the CPT's 2023 visit.

11. 138 recorded injuries from inter-prisoner beatings or conflict in 2024, and 52 from January to March 2025.

The severity of the violence, involving beating with objects such as padlocks and chains,¹² had resulted in several prisoners being hospitalised during this period. Blocks 9 and 10A (although these were by no means the only blocks affected), appeared to be the most dangerous, in which much of the inter-prisoner violence took place.

19. Further, the delegation received several more allegations of inter-prisoner violence that had not been reported to the authorities, mainly for fear of reprisals. Several of these were evidenced in the prisoners' individual medical records, which the delegation had the opportunity to examine.

Equally, the delegation received several allegations regarding prisoner-on-prisoner intimidation and extortion (for example, prisoners alleged that they had to pay other, more powerful prisoners to use the telephone(s) on the block when they wanted to make calls to their families).

Of utmost concern to the Committee were the allegations received of staff turning a blind eye to informal punishments in the form of beatings by other prisoners.

20. Lastly, both staff and prisoners alike considered that there were too few front-line prison officers on duty to ensure adequate levels of safety and security. For example, in Block 10A there were three staff members responsible for over 100 prisoners (and at night, there were only two, who had to unlock cells to enable access to the toilet).

21. In 2023, the CPT recalled that allowing stronger groups of prisoners to develop and impose punishments creating an unsafe and insecure environment for prisoners raises clear issues under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). It also recalled the authorities' duty of care to all persons held in NCP. The CPT also considers that it is unacceptable to allow prisoners to impose prisoner routines, phone rotas and other core prison services. The Committee considers unacceptable any, even partial, relinquishment of the responsibility for order and security, which properly falls within the ambit of custodial staff. Firstly, this could effectively legitimise a sub-culture and expose weaker prisoners to the risk of being exploited by their fellow prisoners. Secondly, and above all, it risks reducing human contact between prisoners (except prisoner representatives) and staff to the bare minimum. It is also contrary to the European Prison Rules,¹³ according to which no prisoner should be employed in the institution's service in any disciplinary capacity.

22. Overall, in 2025, the delegation found that the unsafe environment for prisoners, in practice, had not changed since 2023, despite the recruitment of an additional 50 front-line prison staff in 2024 (see *Prison staff*, section 8(a)).

23. **The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure that the NCP management urgently reviews its violence prevention policy to establish measures to more adequately and accurately record, respond to, investigate, and prevent inter-prisoner violence.**

These measures should include the adoption of a comprehensive anti-bullying policy, as well as systematic and regular risk assessments for the allocation and placement of prisoners. They should also cover training of staff in proactive measures to identify and report to management any risk of inter-prisoner violence, as well as the regular monitoring of CCTV cameras and ensuring their good operational maintenance.

More front-line prison staff should be deployed to the most problematic blocks (where most of the injuries are occurring) to help address these issues, and to enable a dynamic security approach to be applied in line with the above precepts.

24. In parallel, **the CPT recommends that prison staff should be clearly and regularly instructed that any staff tolerating, encouraging, or colluding in punitive action taken against prisoners by other prisoners will be subject to criminal or disciplinary proceedings.**

12. These were provided to help keep prisoners' belongings safe.

13. European Prison Rules, Rule 62.

3. Conditions of detention

a. material conditions

25. The layout of the prison, as well as the material living conditions, remained substantially the same as described in the CPT's 2023 visit report,¹⁴ with the exception of the newly converted Block 11.

26. The overcrowding in certain blocks was still severe, such as Block 10A, which was holding 105 persons for an official design capacity of 38 (276% capacity), and Block 1B, which was holding 97 persons for an official capacity of 35 (277% capacity).

27. The delegation once again observed some appalling living conditions. Cells of 5.5 m², which are not even appropriate for accommodating one person, were crammed with three to four prisoners, affording little more than 1 m² of living space each. This was most evident in Block 10A, where almost all the cells had one or two persons sleeping on mattresses on the floor.

Moreover, on the ground floor of Block 10A there were four padded observation cells,¹⁵ with reinforced plexiglass screens in front of the closed windows and barred gates. These cells each accommodated up to three persons sleeping on mattresses directly on the floor or on makeshift beds fashioned from plastic containers. The rooms were airless at night when the doors were closed. There were no electrical sockets in these cells, which meant that the prisoners held there could not watch television. Originally designated as emergency observation cells for urgent and temporary use only, these had become normal accommodation cells due to overcrowding (see also *Healthcare*, section 7).

28. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that over half of the blocks still did not have in-cell sanitary facilities. Consequently, prison officers on night duty had to individually open each cell for prisoners to be able to access the toilets at night. Prisoners remained wary about bothering the staff at night, which resulted in the systemic practice of prisoners urinating in bottles or defecating in bags (and "slopping out" the next morning), in these packed cells. The Committee is of the view that this can amount to degrading treatment.

Many prisoners also complained to the delegation about getting skin rashes and bites from fleas (from the many cats present within the prison) or bedbug infestations.

29. The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to urgently reduce the occupancy levels in all blocks, starting with in Blocks 1A and B, 8A, and 10A. To this end, it should be ensured that, at the very minimum, cells measuring 6 m² are only used to accommodate one prisoner and that the living space in multiple-occupancy cells is at least 4 m² per prisoner,¹⁶ and that all cells are adequately ventilated.

30. It is the long-standing view of the CPT that certain basic elements constitute a minimum standard, or decency threshold, to enable the proper treatment and accommodation of prisoners. These elements include ready access (meaning at any time during the day or night) to sufficient clean drinking water and a clean, fully functioning toilet, proper sanitation, warm washing water and a shower, amongst other criteria.¹⁷ **The CPT once again calls upon the Cypriot authorities to guarantee that all prisoners have access to the toilet promptly when required.**

31. The Committee recalls its detailed standards on decent sleeping and living conditions for prisoners, as well as its long-held view that all prisoners must have their own bed, personal locker, and a living space with appropriate furniture, and must benefit from heating, adequate artificial and natural light, ventilation and access to fresh air, and sufficient personal living space. Cells that lack call bells, in-cell sanitary facilities

14. See the [CPT's 2023 Visit Report](#); see also the [CPT's 2017 Visit Report](#) paragraph 80; and the [CPT's 2013 Visit Report](#), paragraphs 62 to 64.

15. Block 10A was not the only Block with these cells; Blocks 10 and 10B also had them (see *Healthcare*, section 7).

16. See [CPT/Inf \(2015\) 44](#), Living space per prisoner in prison establishments: CPT standards.

17. See [A decency threshold for prisons – criteria for assessing conditions of detention](#).

or toilets, windows, or have insufficient numbers of beds for their actual occupancy do not satisfy these basic standards. Without these elements they fail to meet the decency threshold to enable the proper treatment and accommodation of prisoners.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities take urgent and swift action to ensure that all accommodation cells meet the above criteria. In particular, the CPT would like to be informed of the actions taken in Blocks 1A and B, 8A and 10A .

32. Equally, it remained the case that smoking in communal spaces and cells was permitted, which exposed many prisoners to passive smoking and associated health risks. Indeed, exposure to passive smoking can amount to a form of ill-treatment, as highlighted by the European Court of Human Rights.¹⁸

Smokers and non-smokers should be offered separate accommodation, and designated areas for smoking should be established in certain areas of the prison. **The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities put in place measures to ensure, at the very least, protection from the harms of passive smoking, such as the designation of smoke-free accommodation and the establishment of a policy on the prohibition or restriction of smoking in areas of common use. All areas should be adequately ventilated and programmes should be established to help prisoners address nicotine dependence.**

33. The CPT's view remained, overall, that such appalling living conditions can only be described as amounting to inhuman and degrading treatment contrary to Article 3 of the ECHR.

b. regime

34. It was positive that most prisoners could spend most of the day unlocked from their cells and were free to walk around their blocks and the adjoining concrete exercise yards, which were equipped with some sports equipment. Many were allowed to play football on the central, well-maintained football pitch once or twice a week.

35. There had been some efforts undertaken to expand the range of purposeful activities and vocational training for many of the prisoners.¹⁹ Most of these, however, were only available in Greek or English (see *Foreign Nationals* section 6).

Access to a range of purposeful activities was not possible for all prisoners. Prisoners held on the blocks for persons sentenced for sexual offences (Block 1B), and those held in the vulnerable persons' blocks (such as Blocks 10, 10B and 4A), had no access to any activities outside their blocks.

36. Moreover, many of the 200 prisoners held in the newly converted Block 11 were frustrated by the complete lack of education or structured activities on offer. The library and new education/ computer room remained permanently shut since the inauguration of the new block in December 2024 due to a lack of staff to run the classes. Prisoners described the new block as a "prison within a prison" because of its stand-alone location, separated from the main prison and the activities on offer.

37. The result was that prisoners in Blocks 1B, 8A, 10 and 10B and the new Block 11 had very little to do all day, other than play football or basketball in their internal courtyards.

Other blocks appeared to have only limited access to activities, such as those on Block 4 and Block 10A, who had only weekly access to the main gym located in a different part of the prison.

18. See the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, notably *Sylla and Nollomont v. Belgium*, no. 37768/13 and 36467/14, 16 May 2017, paragraph 41; *Florea v. Romania*, no. 37186/03, 14 September 2010, paragraphs 60-62 and 63-65; *Elefteriadis v. Romania*, no. 38427/05, 25 January 2011, paragraphs 49-52 and 55. See also UN Resolution 64/292 on right to water and sanitation.

19. The authorities informed the CPT that, in 2024, 824 prisoners participated in educational activities, 250 of whom were engaged in formal education. Language classes had been expanded and 320 prisoners attended Greek and English language classes for 4.5 hours per week. 253 prisoners were involved in vocational training, such as carpentry, mechanics, solar panel installation and beautician courses. New educational classes were on stress management and mindfulness. Additionally, art, film and football tournament sessions were organised.

38. While the Committee recognises that there have been certain developments to improve it, many prisoners still have no meaningful regime. **The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to support the NCP management in expanding the range of regular purposeful activities, vocational training, education and organised sport on offer to all prisoners (in a range of commonly spoken languages).**

In particular, immediate steps should be taken to ensure that a wider range of education, library access, purposeful activities, work and organised sports are offered on a regular basis to prisoners held on Blocks 1B, 3, 4A, 8A, 10, 10A and B, and 11.

4. Women prisoners

39. At the time of the visit, NCP was accommodating 22 remand and 60 sentenced women²⁰ for a design capacity of 60 places (137% capacity) in the dedicated Block 3. There were 81 beds available on Block 3 for the 82 women prisoners, with one prisoner sleeping on a mattress on the floor at the time of the CPT visit. The layout of Block 3 had not changed since 2023.²¹ **The CPT recommends that every prisoner should be provided with their own bed.**

40. The women met by the delegation stated that the custodial staff treated them correctly and virtually no allegations of physical ill-treatment by staff were received. On the contrary, the women prisoners and staff appeared to get along well.

41. Nevertheless, staff and prisoners felt frustrated that they could not communicate more easily given the large number of exclusively French-speaking foreign national women held there. This was despite requests for increased interpretation and translation services. It was therefore particularly challenging for staff to adequately assess the women's specific needs and potential vulnerabilities (including at initial screening and healthcare interviews and on an ongoing basis throughout their time at NCP). This also fuelled a perception of discrimination. **The CPT recommends that this be addressed, and that means of interpretation (including French) be provided for all women who need it upon their initial entry to the prison, at medical consultations and on an ongoing basis, as required** (see also section 8(a) *Prison Staff*).

42. Upon admission to the prison, the women were provided with basic hygiene items such as shampoo, soap and toilet paper. However, several women complained that certain hygiene products, including shampoo and even sanitary towels, had to be purchased thereafter, and that they could not afford them.

The Committee recalls that it is essential for the authorities to maintain humane living conditions for prisoners by applying a minimum decency threshold, which includes providing decent living conditions and the means to keep clean, including personal hygiene products.²²

The CPT therefore reiterates its recommendation that immediate steps be taken to ensure that all prisoners have adequate quantities of essential personal hygiene products free of charge, including sanitary towels.

43. Concerning the regime, it was positive that there was also generous daily out-of-cell time in the Women's Block.²³

Education was provided daily within the block, but was of a basic level and did not include tailored higher education. The women were not permitted to leave the block to go to the main prison gym and there were no longer any *organised sports* or a gym instructor. The only sport available was basketball, and a small

20. Of whom 27 were serving sentences less than, and 33 sentences more than, two years in duration.

21. See the CPT's 2023 Visit Report [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#), section 4.

22. See 30th General Report, [CPT/Inf \(2021\) 5](#); [CPT/Inf\(2021\)5-part](#), paragraph 86; the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the [Bangkok Rules](#)), [Rule 5](#)

23. Cells were opened at 06:00 and closed at 21:00, except on Saturday and when a bank holiday followed, when the cells were closed at 22:00.

gym. The women were not allowed to access the prison's internal communal green spaces. There was a sewing class, which provided some activity, but there were insufficient resources or space to allow access for all the women.

Regarding *work* opportunities in the prison, most of the women prisoners worked as cleaners, in exchange for small payments, and seven were involved in bookbinding work.

44. **The CPT recommends that the women held in Block 3 have access to the main prison gym and varied organised sports on a regular basis, including in the green spaces of the prison, and enjoy access to vocational and other purposeful activities, and education of an appropriate level, equal to that provided to men prisoners at NCP. Further, the Committee recommends that the activities provided to all prisoners should be purposeful, tailored to progression, reintegration and preparation for release to the community, and non-gender stereotyped.**

45. The Open Prison had been converted into a closed block and the new, small Open Prison block only catered for a handful of men prisoners. Women had now been deprived of the right to progress to the Open Prison, along with the consequent benefits which came with progression (such as regular home leave, more family time and the possibility to work outside the prison). At the time of the visit, the CPT found that there was at least one woman prisoner who had qualified to progress to open prison, but who could not go because of these restrictions. **The CPT recommends that the Open Prison be expanded and made accessible to women as well as men, on an equal basis.**

46. At the time of the visit, the healthcare examination upon admission for women was the same as that carried out for men. There was no gender-specific screening.

The CPT considers that a gender-specific screening on admission for women should be in place in all prisons accommodating women prisoners. Such screening should allow, in addition to identification of the responsibilities of newly admitted women towards their families, for the detection of specific needs, including a history of any sexual abuse and other gender-based violence. While it may not be appropriate to conduct such screening immediately upon prison admission, to avoid re-traumatisation, it should still be incorporated into the admission process and carried out within the first few weeks. Without such an approach, management is unable to take the necessary steps to prevent victims of sexual abuse from being re-traumatised during their imprisonment. In addition, such screening should include interpretation services (as mentioned above), in the commonly spoken languages of the prisoners, including French.

47. **The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities:**

- **develop prison admission procedures to take account of the gender-specific needs of women prisoners. This should include screening for sexual abuse or other forms of gender-based violence inflicted prior to entry to prison, and to ensure that such information is considered in the drawing up of a care plan for the woman in question;**
- **develop clear policies and regulations on the management of women prisoners, which are gender-sensitive and trauma-informed, which are aimed at providing protection against any form of sexual or gender-based violence and (re)traumatisation and at fostering a prison environment of safety and stability;²⁴ and**
- **provide interpretation services in the commonly spoken languages of the prisoners, including French, when necessary and especially for all foreign nationals sentenced on illegal alien entry charges.**

24. See in particular rules 29 to 35 of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders with their Commentary, "[Bangkok Rules](#)".

48. Block 3 staffing was provided by three female prison officers (during the day, and two at night), who were present in the unit 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Despite previous CPT recommendations,²⁵ staff members were not offered systematic training and refresher training within their working hours.²⁶ Staff considered that regular training in conflict management, de-escalation and ensuring personal safety was essential, but was not provided. The lack of training and of full communication ability meant that, in practice, there was a reliance on longer-serving Greek- or English-speaking prisoners to calm the situation when required, and to explain to new arrivals how things worked on the block. This is not appropriate.

49. In light of the above, **the CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities**

provide regular and refresher trainings in conflict management and de-escalation for staff at Block 3.

5. Children and young adults

50. The CPT was informed that plans were underway to transfer children out of NCP to a juvenile facility. The provisional deadline was set for the end of 2026. In the meantime, children remain in NCP, in inappropriate conditions. **The CPT encourages the swift transfer of children to a more suitable facility as soon as possible. The CPT would appreciate an update on these plans as they progress.**

51. At the time of the delegation's visit, there were seven boys (three on remand and four sentenced) and 33 young male adults (18 to 21 years of age). All the boys and young men were held in Block 8A (the "Juvenile Block"). The children (under 18 years old) were not separated from the young adults, with whom they also shared cells. **The CPT recommends that increased attention should be paid to the need for careful risk assessment to ensure the safety and security of children who mix and share cells with young adults.**

52. The Juvenile Block was one of the oldest blocks in the prison and the material conditions remained equally as poor as the rest of the prison, featuring decaying, dark and damp communal spaces and cells, graffiti-ridden walls, and open, unscreened toilets. Some children were, or had recently been, sleeping on mattresses on the floor at the time of the visit. Cells measuring 5.5 m² were accommodating up to three children, affording less than 2 m² per person. Moreover, the children complained that they had been extremely cold in the winter months.

The children and young adults also complained about flea bites and bedbug infestations (see the recommendation below).

53. Further, smoking was permitted in cells and communal spaces, which meant that non-smoking children and young adults ran the risk of passive smoking. Equally, the children complained that the food was of insufficient quantity and lacked variety; the children interviewed were hungry at the time of the visit.

54. As for their regime, apart from education (one hour each day), the children and young adults had nothing meaningful to do to structure their day, nor were there many reintegration or vocational, purposeful activities to help prepare them for release. This was particularly deplorable for those children who were there for long sentences. They were not allowed to access the main gym, located in a different part of the prison, and had a very limited range of regular organised activities or sport.

In practice, for most of their day, the children stayed on their block, and in the concrete small yard. Many of them were bored and deeply frustrated.

25. See CPT's 2023 ([CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#)) and 2017 ([CPT/Inf \(2018\) 16](#)) visit reports.

26. Some trainings were offered occasionally, but these were outside working hours and were neither compensated nor mandatory.

A lack of purposeful activity is especially harmful for children and young adults, who have a particular need for physical activity and intellectual stimulation.

55. As regards the future envisaged new juvenile facility, the CPT considers that this should be a well-designed juvenile detention centre to provide positive and personalised conditions of detention for young adults, respecting their dignity and privacy. Children should normally be accommodated in individual bedrooms; reasons should be provided explaining why it is in the best interests of the minor to share sleeping accommodation with another minor. Children should be consulted before being required to share sleeping accommodation and should be able to state with whom they would prefer to be accommodated.

56. Pending the opening of the new centre, **the CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take measures to provide children and young adults held in the Juvenile Block (8A) with appropriate living conditions and access to a wide range of daily purposeful, vocational and structured activities, with the aim to help them progress and prepare them for reintegration into the community.**

Further, the Committee recommends that child and young adult smokers and non-smokers should be offered separate well-ventilated accommodation, and designated areas for smoking should be established in certain common areas of Block 8A (see also section 3, *Conditions*), along with programmes to help stop smoking.

Sentence plans should be tailored to individual needs and designed to fulfil the functions of personal and social development, rehabilitation and preparation for release, in light of the European Rules for Juvenile Offenders subject to sanctions or measures.

In addition, increased attention should be paid to the food provided to children and young adults, to ensure that it is adequate both in terms of quantity and nutritional value.²⁷ Children and young adults should have access to additional food, available on the Block between main meals, to meet their specific nutritional needs. Appropriate heating and ventilation should be provided. Pest infestations, such as bedbugs, should be immediately addressed.

6. Foreign nationals

57. The number of foreign national prisoners at NCP comprised around half of the entire prison population. The situation remained as seen in 2023. The CPT found that more needs to be done to address their specific needs. The delegation continued to receive allegations of discrimination towards male and female foreign national prisoners regarding access to education, healthcare, activities and work.

58. Not all foreign national prisoners were provided with written information about the internal regulations in a language they could understand. Many complained of being unaware of their rights and duties within the establishment.

Further, they had little regular access to interpretation services. There was a high number of foreign nationals who did not speak English or Greek, who experienced many difficulties. Staff too were frustrated as they could not communicate with them effectively enough.

A lack of interpretation services also hampered the equal and adequate delivery of healthcare services as some foreign national prisoners had to rely on fellow prisoners who could speak English or Greek to accompany them to healthcare consultations. Not only did this mean that medical confidentiality could not be assured, but also that the diagnosis and treatment relayed were dependent upon the quality of interpretation provided by other prisoners. This is not appropriate.

27. See [30th General Report of the CPT \(2020\)](#), paragraph 70.

59. Moreover, the services of psychologists and social workers were not available to those persons who did not speak English or Greek. In addition, vulnerability assessment, gender-specific screening and other such proceedings were only superficially provided due to the lack of a common language (see *Women Prisoners*, section 4).

60. Overall, this resulted in foreign national prisoners who could not speak Greek or English being in a considerably worse situation compared to other prisoners.

61. **The CPT reiterates its recommendation²⁸ that the Cypriot authorities should ensure that foreign national prisoners are afforded in practice equal rights and treatment to those afforded to Cypriot prisoners. In this respect, the principle of non-discrimination should be respected, in line with international norms prohibiting discrimination.**

It also reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities should increase the support provided to foreign nationals in NCP through, *inter alia*:

- **appointing a dedicated foreign national liaison officer;**
- **ensuring that written information on prisoner rights, obligations, and house rules is provided upon admission, in a range of the most commonly spoken languages and in an accessible format, including information on immigration procedures to be systematically given to foreign nationals; and**
- **ensuring foreign national prisoners have recourse to interpretation services when required.**

62. In 2025, 77 of the 1 123 prisoners were foreign nationals sentenced and on remand for the crime of carrying or producing counterfeit documents or entry into the Republic of Cyprus under false pretences (including 15 out of the 82 women prisoners). This offence carried a 10 to 18-month prison sentence,²⁹ depending on the number of times the person had tried to enter Cyprus, despite the existence of the non-penalisation principle of persons seeking international protection enshrined in Cypriot legislation.³⁰

Many of these male and female foreign national prisoners were held in large dormitories accommodating 12 to 30 persons in cramped conditions, with some sleeping on mattresses on the floor. Many wanted to be repatriated but, allegedly, very few had the necessary access to the Aliens and Immigration Department to submit their cases.

Given the situation of severe overcrowding, **the Committee calls upon the Cypriot authorities to review the policy, legislation, and end the practice of imprisoning this category of foreign nationals in NCP.**

7. Healthcare services

a. healthcare staffing and the administration of medication

63. Turning to healthcare staffing, with the exception of the recruitment of a new psychiatrist, the situation remained similar to that seen in 2023.³¹

64. Despite more than ten years of the CPT repeatedly calling for prison officer orderlies to be replaced with qualified nursing staff,³² these recommendations remained unimplemented. 10 prison officers were

28. See CPT's 2023 Visit report ([CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#)), paragraph 62.

29. Criminal Code of the Republic of Cyprus, Chapter 154. These charges included possession or circulation of forged documents and impersonation (up to 18-month sentences, but on average these were for periods of between six to 12 months).

30. Article 7(1) of Cypriot Asylum Law No. 3383 of 28 January 2000.

31. At the time of the 2025 visit, there were two general practitioners (GPs) employed on a full-time basis; they worked weekdays and were on call in the evenings and on weekends. They were supported by eight nurses, including one senior nurse. Nurses worked in shifts to ensure that at least one nurse was present 24 hours, seven days a week, at the prison. A public health nurse, accompanied by a public health doctor, visited monthly to carry out Mantoux tests for tuberculosis. As concerns ancillary staffing, a dermatologist visited the prison monthly and a dentist visited twice a week.

32. See CPT Visit Reports of 2013 ([CPT/Inf \(2014\) 31](#)), paragraph 70, 2017 ([CPT/Inf \(2018\) 16](#)), paragraphs 85 and 90 and 2023 ([CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#)), paragraphs 66 to 67.

still employed as medical orderlies. Five prison officer medical orderlies were present during the day and at least one (and occasionally two) at night. Their main duty continues to be to administer medication to prisoners and to accompany doctors on their rounds.

The CPT has criticised this practice since 2013. It has repeatedly urged the Cypriot authorities to take concrete measures to ensure that prison officers do not dispense prescription medication or administer injections. Under no circumstances should prison officer orderlies be considered a substitute for trained nurses.

In this respect, **the CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to replace all prison officer medical orderlies with qualified nursing staff.**

65. In addition, the CPT remains concerned by the unsafe practice of *administration, distribution, and recording of medication* by medical orderlies. **The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure that the dispensing of medicines only be undertaken by qualified pharmacy or nursing staff, and not by prison officers. Further, the procedure and organisation of medication dispensing should be reviewed to ensure that prisoners receive the correct medication at the right time (see also section c. medical confidentiality below).**

b. medical screening and recording of injuries

66. All newly admitted prisoners were seen by a nurse on their arrival, and also by the doctor (within their working hours on that day if possible, or during the following day, if not). All newly arrived prisoners were systematically asked on arrival whether they would like to be seen by a member of the in-house mental health team and/or a psychiatrist and were seen according to their request. There was a standard medical admission system and forms were generally well annotated.

67. Access to the doctor in practice was adequate; each block was allocated two half-day slots per week during which prisoners could see the doctor.

68. The recording of injuries, either observed upon admission or following a violent incident inside the establishment, had deteriorated since the CPT's 2023 visit. These were recorded by healthcare staff in a first aid book completed by the nurse. However, after a review of the records by the delegation, it was clear that none of the recent instances of injury which had been recorded by nursing staff in the first aid book were supported by a doctor's medical report. Moreover, there remained no central injury or trauma register. Equally, the descriptions of the injuries remained superficial, too brief and often incomplete. In addition, there remained few observations made as regards the consistency between prisoners' statements and the injuries observed.

69. The CPT recalls once again that prison healthcare services can significantly contribute to the prevention of ill-treatment of detained persons through the systematic and proper recording of injuries and, when appropriate, the provision of information to the relevant authorities.

The CPT again calls upon the Cypriot authorities to take the necessary steps to ensure that the record drawn up after the medical examination of prisoners – whether newly arrived or following a violent incident in the prison – contains:

- i) **an account of statements made by the persons which are relevant to the medical examination (including their description of their state of health and any allegations of ill-treatment),**
- ii) **a full account of objective medical findings based on a thorough examination, and**
- iii) **the healthcare professional's observations in light of i) and ii), indicating the consistency between any allegations made and the objective medical findings.**

Further, the existing procedures should be reviewed in order to ensure that, whenever injuries are recorded by a healthcare professional which are consistent with allegations of ill-treatment made by a prisoner (or which, even in the absence of allegations, are indicative of ill-treatment), the report is immediately and systematically brought to the attention of the relevant investigative authority.

The healthcare professional should advise the prisoner concerned that the writing of such a report falls within the framework of a system for preventing ill-treatment. Further, that this report must automatically be forwarded to a clearly specified independent investigative authority, and that such forwarding is not a substitute for the lodging of a complaint in proper form.

The results of every examination, including the above-mentioned statements and the healthcare professional's opinions/observations, should be made available to the prisoner and to their lawyer.

c. medical confidentiality

70. Since 2013, medical examinations have occurred out of the hearing and out of the sight of custodial staff, but often with the presence of the medical orderlies (unless the prisoners expressly requested otherwise). Prison officers who worked in the healthcare centre continued to have ready access to medical files. This resulted in a situation where there was little confidentiality of prisoners' medical records. In 2025, the situation was no different. The CPT found that the doctor and nurse examined prisoners with a medical orderly present in the room. **The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure that the confidentiality of medical data within the prison is guaranteed. Healthcare staff may inform prison officers on a need-to-know basis about the state of health of a detained person; however, the information provided should be limited to that necessary to prevent a serious risk for the detained person or other persons, unless the detained person consents to additional information being given.**

The CPT also reiterates its recommendation that, as a general rule, all medical examinations/consultations of prisoners should be conducted both out of the sight and out of the hearing of non-medical persons (namely, custodial staff, other prisoners or civilian people), and in conditions that fully guarantee medical confidentiality.

Taking due account of the need to ensure the safety of healthcare staff while exercising their duties, the presence of non-healthcare staff during the examination at the request of the healthcare professional may be warranted in exceptional cases. Prison officers should, when appropriate, fully apprise the healthcare professional of any relevant prior behaviour on the part of the prisoner, but the final decision should rest with the healthcare professional. Any such exception should be limited to those rare cases in which, based on an individual risk assessment and after consideration of less intrusive security measures, the healthcare professional considers the presence of prison officers is necessary to fully contain the perceived risks posed by the prisoner. For instance, consideration should be given to ensuring the presence of additional healthcare personnel. Another option may be the installation of a call system, whereby healthcare staff would be in a position to rapidly alert prison officers in those exceptional cases when a prisoner becomes agitated or threatening during a medical examination/consultation.

All healthcare professionals should receive training on the applicable rules and how to react in high-risk situations.

d. drug use treatment and mental healthcare services

71. Turning to *mental healthcare staffing*, on a positive note, a full-time psychiatrist had been engaged by the prison. This is a positive development.

72. The mental health team comprised four registered mental health nurses.³³ In addition, there were 1.5 full time equivalent (FTE) clinical psychologists in the mental health team responsible for assessments prior to release or court hearings. An occupational therapist attended one day a week in the mental health outpatient clinic and one day a week in Block 10. One of the mental health nurses would see every prisoner upon their arrival and, if necessary, engage with them thereafter.

73. The CPT was informed by staff that professional interpreters are used in discussions between the psychiatrist/mental health nurse and patients as required. In practice, however, many foreign national prisoners stated otherwise (see *Foreign nationals*, section 6).

74. Those prisoners with the most pressing mental health problems remain accommodated in Block 10. Since 2017, the CPT has criticised the austere material conditions and impoverished regime in Block 10.

75. Block 10 held some of the most vulnerable prisoners in NCP, and those in need of mental health support. This block served as a transition point to or from the mental health facility of Athalassa Hospital. Prisoners were under the supervision of NCP's mental healthcare team.

76. Block 10B was the most recent block to be refurbished, in 2024. Originally envisaged to serve a similar purpose to Block 10, Block 10B is its mirror image with shared outdoor yard between the accommodation areas. The delegation was informed by prison management that Block 10B was designed to be a transitional stepdown facility in which prisoners with a mental disorder would be accommodated upon their discharge from the Athalassa psychiatric hospital, prior to their re-integration into the mainstream prison population.

However, as no new nursing staff could be recruited, the Ministry of Health would not agree to 10B being designated as a mental health unit. At the time of the visit, the unit had just opened with prisoners from other accommodation blocks transferred to 10B based apparently on whether they had had a mental health crisis in the past. Prisoners accommodated in Block 10B received no more mental health support than any other prisoner group within NCP and some of the prisoners questioned why they had been transferred to the block. None had been provided with clear information on their situation.

77. Some of the cells on 10B were padded for observation purposes (as seen in the case of Block 10A) but, because of overcrowding, they had been turned into normal accommodation. Prisoners held in them did not have their own beds (they slept on a mattress on the floor), they possessed no chairs, desks, lockers or any furniture, obliging the prisoners to place their personal items and clothes directly on the floor. These rooms had no electrical sockets, so the prisoners held here had no access to television.

78. Once again in 2025,³⁴ the CPT found that despite its purported mental healthcare ethos, prisoners held in Block 10 (as well as in Block 10B) had little access to purposeful, rehabilitative, or therapy-based programmes. This could not be considered as providing a therapeutic environment and was not conducive to assisting the patients' mental health to improve. Additionally, rather than being applied on a risk basis, most cells were under constant CCTV surveillance.

79. **The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure that prisoners held in Blocks 10 and 10B are:**

- **afforded adequate access to natural light and sufficient artificial lighting in each cell;**
- **offered access to varied and purposeful, rehabilitative or therapy-based programmes and activities; and**
- **afforded more time outside.**

33. They each work between one to two days per week, providing a 1.5 full-time equivalent.

34. See also [CPT/Inf \(2018\) 16](#), paragraph 94.

The CPT also calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure prisoners held in 10B are each provided with a bed and, if the safer cells are used for ordinary accommodation purposes, that they be properly furnished and equipped with furniture and electrical sockets.

Overall, prisoners in Block 10 should only be placed there if they have specific and urgent mental health needs and do not qualify for transfer to a mental healthcare facility, and only for the shortest possible duration, with regular reviews of the necessity of their placement.

80. Further, as concerns Block 10B, the Committee was not at all convinced that adequate placement criteria had been established or sufficient safeguards put in place. Without these, placement in this block risked being totally unregulated and not for mental healthcare purposes. **In light of this, the CPT requests that the Cypriot authorities share the criteria of placement on Block 10B.**

81. At the time of the visit, there were 16 persons receiving suboxone, the opiate agonist therapy, in doses varying from 1-16 mgs. Suboxone was administered by the mental health nurses six days a week. In 2023, they administered a double dose on a Saturday for all Blocks. In 2025 the situation had worsened insofar as those in Blocks 5, 8, 9, 10A and 11, were administered double doses on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays, due to staffing challenges. The CPT notes that this practice remains poor clinical practice as it can cause oversedation on the double-dose day and then withdrawal symptoms the next day, and **it reiterates its recommendation that the practice of double dosages be ceased as a matter of priority.**

82. As for food and fluid refusal, the situation had not changed since 2023.³⁵ There remained no specific prison policy in place for the management of prisoners refusing food or fluids. **The CPT reiterates its recommendation the establishment of a formal written procedure on managing food and fluid refusal by prisoners.**

e. prevention of suicide and self-harm

83. The CPT again found that there was no central register to record incidents of self-harm and attempted suicide at NCP. Nevertheless, from several interviews in different blocks, it was clear that instances of self-harm and attempted suicide were, unfortunately, fairly frequent at NCP in 2023 and 2024. **NCP should, as a matter of urgency, establish a comprehensive and robust suicide prevention policy and ongoing prevention programme. Moreover, the CPT reiterates its recommendation that a central register be kept recording all incidents of self-harm and suicide attempts, to enable management and external monitors to have a clear picture of the situation at NCP.**

8. Other issues

a. prison staff

84. At the time of the visit, there were 433 custodial prison officers, of whom 357 were permanent and 76 were additional, fixed-term contracts, for an official complement of 548 officers (453 permanent posts and 95 fixed term). There were 96 vacancies in the permanent staff category and 19 in the additional staff category. Active recruitment was underway for 77 new staff. It was positive that the number of officers had significantly increased, by over 90, since the CPT's 2023 visit.

Nevertheless, the prison population had also increased by approximately 20% since 2023, thus front-line operational staff on any given shift now had to be responsible for an ever-increasing number of prisoners on the blocks. Certain blocks had one to three staff members on duty for over 100 prisoners, who were mainly unlocked on the blocks during the day. For example, when the delegation visited Block 10A, there were three staff members for 105 prisoners. While the staff-to-prisoner ratio has slightly improved since 2023, it was still at a dangerously low level.

35. CPT 2023 Visit Report [CPT/Inf.\(2024\) 18](#), paragraph 77.

85. In 2023, the CPT underlined that these factors cumulatively may have contributed to a dependence on systems of informal control, including reliance on stronger groups of prisoners to help maintain control, most notably in Block 10A, but also evident in other blocks such as 1 and 2A and 2B. This may also have contributed to the increase in levels of inter-prisoner violence. The situation had not changed in 2025; many of the blocks remained extremely unsafe places and were perceived as such by prisoners and some staff (see *III-treatment*, section 2).³⁶

The Committee wishes to stress again that ensuring a positive climate in prison requires a professional team of staff, who must be present in adequate numbers at any given time in detention areas and in facilities used by prisoners for activities. Low numbers of custodial staff in detention areas increases the risk of violence and intimidation between prisoners, and of tension between staff and prisoners, and precludes the emergence of dynamic security. Further, tensions arose when prisoners and staff could not communicate effectively (see sections 4 and 6, *Women prisoners* and *Foreign nationals*).

The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to review the deployment of front-line staff and increase the presence of custodial staff on the most problematic blocks, where inter-prisoner violence occurs more regularly. It also recommends that more effort be made to recruit staff with a range of languages, where possible.

b. discipline and security measures

86. The delegation found that no action had been taken to amend the system of provisional disciplinary isolation (known as “investigative lock-up”) since 2023. This practice remained in place and was used systematically, despite the Committee’s repeated recommendations for improvements in this regard.³⁷

87. This security measure grants senior prison officers the power to confine a prisoner to a cell for up to six days (four immediate days, plus two additional days for investigation) as an instantaneous response to an alleged breach of discipline. This rule intends to provide an opportunity for the alleged offence to be investigated fully and charges to be prepared. In 2017 and in 2023, the CPT found it to be used routinely and perceived by prisoners as a punishment, despite the fact that no due process safeguards or formal disciplinary adjudication had been afforded.

Indeed, prisoners who finally received further sanctions after the adjudication process perceived that they had been subject to a double punishment, as the six-day lock-up was not deducted from any additional period of solitary confinement.

88. Further, investigative lockups are approved by the director or his deputy *ex post facto*. In practice, all prisoners interviewed said their lock-up usually lasted for the entire six days, and they never saw the director during this time. The records show, for example, for the month of November 2024 that the prison imposed 307 days of lock-up on 67 prisoners, across the prison (used most frequently in Blocks 2A, 2B and 10A). Five of these 67 prisoners had been locked up for one day, two for two days and one for three days, whereas the remainder (88% of the total) had been locked up for four to six days (some 50% for the full six days).

89. **The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to review this practice of placing prisoners in provisional disciplinary isolation following a suspicion that they may have committed a disciplinary offence, and before a formal charge is brought, and ensure that:**

- **provisional disciplinary isolation does not last longer than a few hours;**
- **that is only be used as an exceptional measure; and**
- **that it complies with due process safeguards; these should include that confinement to a cell for longer than a few hours, about an incident giving rise to a disciplinary procedure, should not occur without the prisoners being charged, and being allowed to be heard on the matter and to explain their behaviour to a senior prison officer reporting to the director, as well as prisoners being given the written decision and informed about their right to appeal.**

36. See section 2. *III-treatment* for more detail.

37. See CPT Visit Reports of 2017 ([CPT/Inf \(2018\) 16](#)), paragraphs 101 to 102 and 2023 ([CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#)), paragraphs 94 to 98.

90. As for the procedural safeguards and the disciplinary system, in 2023, there were lengthy delays between the commission of an alleged disciplinary offence and its formal adjudication process and sanction. This had improved in 2025, with the waiting time for adjudications having been reduced to one or two months.

Nevertheless, the CPT believes that prison disciplinary proceedings are summary proceedings. Their function is to respond as quickly as possible, consistent with the need to give adequate notice of hearings and charges after the alleged offence has been discovered. In NCP, while the waiting time between charges being laid and disciplinary hearings taking place had indeed decreased, there still remained delays between the alleged incidents and the imposition of any disciplinary sanctions. Justice requires that a sanction for a disciplinary offence be adjudicated and executed as soon as possible, not months later.

The CPT recommends that the NCP management further review its disciplinary proceedings to ensure that any offence is investigated, adjudicated and any sanction is given promptly and, in the case of criminal offences, that reports are immediately forwarded to the public prosecutor for appropriate criminal action. It would also appreciate being sent a copy of the NCP internal disciplinary regulations.

91. The Committee notes that the prison director's power to remove remission from prisoners due to disciplinary offences appears unaddressed. In the case of NCP, during 2024 and early 2025, loss of remission had been imposed on multiple occasions,³⁸ with several cases involving sentences of 90 to 100 days (accumulated). Loss of remission can be considered an additional sentence and thus requires the full range of safeguards associated with a fair trial (namely, that an independent judge, not the prison director, should adjudicate such cases).

The CPT has repeatedly recalled³⁹ that the prison director's power to remove remission has been abolished in most countries because such procedures risk non-compliance with all the rules of natural justice. These rules require, *inter alia* that the adjudicating officer be conspicuously independent and come to the case *de novo*. A prison director cannot comply with these precepts.

In this regard, **the CPT again calls on the Cypriot authorities to amend the relevant provisions of the Prison Regulations, as well as any other applicable legislation, to ensure compliance with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights⁴⁰ and that only an independent judge can deal with disciplinary proceedings which may result in loss of remission.**

c. contact with the outside world

92. Voice over Internet Protocol had been previously introduced to the prison, but its use was limited by the small number of available computers and, in practice, was still only accessible once per month and only by certain categories of prisoner (see *Women prisoners* and *Children* sections above). The delegation received several allegations from foreign national prisoners of difficulties in accessing computers on a regular basis, and some could not afford the cost of the telephone calls to their families abroad (see below). **In this respect, the CPT again invites the authorities to expand Voice over Internet Protocol technology and consider expanding its use, notably for foreign national prisoners.**

93. With the exception of Block 10, 10B and 10A, prisoners could access the two, fixed line pay telephones on each block daily until 20:30. However, there was only one telephone on Block 10A for 105 prisoners. Moreover, privacy was a problem as the telephones were placed in open corridors without privacy booths. These telephones were pay phones, and some prisoners did not have the money to make calls. For example, one Portuguese prisoner interviewed informed the delegation that he had been unable to contact his family since arriving at the prison, one month prior, because he had no money. **The CPT**

38. In January 2025, for example, with regard to the 41 adjudicated cases, 20 of these cases had resulted in loss of grace days/remission (often with a condition of return if no further offences were committed).

39. See CPT Visit reports of 2013 ([CPT/Inf \(2014\) 31](#)), paragraph 83; 2017 ([CPT/Inf \(2018\) 16](#)), paragraph 103; 2023 ([CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#)), paragraph 99.

40. *Ezeh and Connors v. the United Kingdom*, 2003, paragraphs 128-129, the Court found, in particular, that the potential awards of additional days of imprisonment (42 days for disciplinary offence) could not be regarded as sufficiently unimportant or inconsequential and thus amounted to a "criminal charge" against the applicants within the meaning of Article 6 of the ECHR.

recommends that all prisoners be offered the opportunity to inform their families or a third person free of charge upon their admission to the prison, and that thereafter indigent prisoners be provided with support to maintain contact with the outside world. Further, steps should be taken to provide privacy booths for the payphones. Lastly, Block 10A should be provided with an additional phone, to enable equality of access to the telephone in comparison to the other blocks.

94. Lastly, several foreign national prisoners alleged that many letters they had sent were not received by their relatives, and that they were not receiving letters sent by their relatives. Equally, indigent foreign national prisoners could not send letters to their families, as they could not afford the stamps, and many did not understand the internal prison application system which needed to be completed to be allowed to post a letter from within the prison. **The Committee recommends that the prison management address these issues.**

d. complaints procedures

95. The situation concerning the prisoners' complaints procedures had not changed significantly since 2023. As has repeatedly been the case since 2013, the delegation received numerous complaints about the lack of a functioning complaints system and the limited trust that prisoners had in existing internal complaints' systems.⁴¹

While locked internal⁴² and external (Ombudsperson) complaints' boxes were available, many prisoners stated that their complaints never received any response. Indeed, many of the boxes were still located outside the blocks in direct view of the block's staff offices or directly exposed to the security cameras, which did not permit confidentiality.

96. In practice, internal complaints continued to be processed through the avenue of the prison's internal application system and were only addressed orally with the relevant block staff member or by management. This itself prevented any form of confidentiality or anonymity and made complaints impossible to track or register. Indeed, the prison management had only registered very few written complaints over the previous 18 months. The Committee recalls that complaints should be systematically recorded and registered, in adherence with principles of confidentiality.

Moreover, the delegation received numerous complaints from prisoners that the letters they had written to the Prison Board were never responded to, despite the Board supposedly becoming operational again as from June 2024, when its membership was finally elected after a delay of several years.

97. **The CPT calls upon the Cypriot authorities to ensure that:**
- **all internal prisoner complaints are registered centrally within the prison before being allocated to a particular service for investigation or follow-up;**
 - **all internal prisoner complaints are investigated expeditiously (with any delays justified), and prisoners informed within clearly defined periods of the action taken to address their concern, or of the reasons for considering the complaint unjustified;**
 - **statistics on the types of complaints made are kept, as an indicator to management of areas of discontent within the prison; and**
 - **any oral complaints are addressed and systematically recorded and registered, in adherence to principles of confidentiality.**

Equally, all staff should be trained in the importance of the complaints' system and their role within this system. In addition, prisoners should be fully informed of their right to complain and the method by which to do so (for example through brochures, written information and posters) and provided with the means by which to make their complaints (paper/pens/forms, etc.).

98. **Further, the CPT reiterates its recommendation that management ensure that prisoners are informed of the Prison Board's composition and independent mandate, and that both prisoners and Prison Board members should have unimpeded and confidential access to complaint boxes in all blocks.**

41. See CPT's 2013 Visit Report ([CPT/Inf \(2014\) 31](#)), paragraph 87; 2017 Visit Report, paragraph 106 ([CPT/Inf \(2018\) 16](#)).

42. Labelled to the prison director and the Prison Board.

B. Law enforcement agencies

1. Preliminary remarks

99. In the course of the 2025 ad hoc visit, the CPT delegation visited Nicosia Central Police Station, Lakatamia Police Detention Centre, and the Nicosia Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to examine the treatment and conditions of detention of persons held therein. In particular, the delegation wanted to verify to what extent the CPT's recommendations contained in its 2023 visit report had been implemented, notably as regards limiting the amount of time persons could be held in police custody under the Refugee Law or under criminal law.

However, at the time of the 2025 visit, the legal framework underpinning the administrative detention of third-country nationals, as well as that regulating the arrest and police custody of persons suspected of a criminal offence remained unchanged.⁴³

100. During the course of the visit, the delegation found that administratively detained persons were routinely held for periods longer than 24 hours, including for multiple weeks. The delegation also found that persons held under criminal law were held for periods longer than 72 hours, including for multiple months.

At the time of the visit Lakatamia Police Detention Centre was accommodating 30 men: eight administratively under immigration legislation, 15 on remand and seven sentenced. The 38-cell centre⁴⁴ was separated into criminal, administrative and juvenile areas.⁴⁵ Nicosia Central Police Station was accommodating five men under immigration legislation. No persons were detained at the time of the delegation's visit to the Nicosia Criminal Investigation Department.

2. Ill-treatment

101. Most persons interviewed by the delegation stated they had been treated correctly by the police. However, the delegation did receive several allegations of physical ill-treatment of persons by police officers. The allegations related to the time of apprehension and during questioning by police investigators, notably in the Kokkinotrimithia Police Station, the Limassol Central Police Station, the Germasogeia Police Station and the Criminal Investigation Department of Nicosia. The alleged ill-treatment consisted primarily of slaps, and punches to the head, chest and torso; in one case, a person stated that, in CID, a gun was pointed at his head, and he was threatened with his teeth being removed with a pair of pliers which the police officer waved in front of him. A pair of pliers, matching the description provided by the person interviewed, were found by the delegation in the offices of criminal inspectors in the CID. The purpose of the ill-treatment was purportedly to elicit a confession from the suspect.

The CPT has repeatedly recommended that the Cypriot authorities adopt a different approach to police investigations and proactively provide regular professional training to officers and investigators, particularly on investigative interviewing techniques.⁴⁶

The Committee recommends that the Cypriot authorities place greater emphasis on the training of police officers in interviewing criminal suspects. In this context, reference is made to the 2018 Council of Europe's document "A brief introduction to investigative interviewing. A practitioner's guide"⁴⁷ and to the Méndez Principles on Effective Interviewing,⁴⁸ as well as paragraphs 73 to 81 of document CPT/Inf(2019)9-part.⁴⁹ **The CPT would also like to be provided with details of the present Cyprus Police Academy curriculum concerning police interviews of victims, witnesses and suspects.**

43. See [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#), paragraph 111.

44. At the time of the visit three cells were out of use due to the lack of running water.

45. Custody records detailed that children were rarely present. On average, one juvenile case was recorded every two to three months.

46. See [CPT/Inf \(2018\) 16](#), paragraph 16 and [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#), paragraph 117.

47. See <https://rm.coe.int/guide-to-investigative-interviewing/16808ea8f9>.

48. See <https://interviewingprinciples.com>.

49. "Preventing police torture and other forms of ill-treatment – reflections on good practices and emerging approaches. Extract from the 28th General Report of the CPT, published in 2019", <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cpt/preventing-police-torture>.

102. The delegation also received several allegations of verbal abuse, including comments of a racist nature towards foreign nationals, from persons who had been held at the Limassol and Kokkinotrimithia Police Stations.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities ensure that police officers throughout Cyprus are instructed, at regular intervals, that all forms of ill treatment of persons deprived of their liberty – including verbal abuse, racist behaviour and threats – are unprofessional and illegal and will be sanctioned accordingly.

3. Safeguards against ill-treatment

a. introduction

103. In the course of the visit, the delegation examined the effectiveness of safeguards against ill-treatment offered to all persons deprived of liberty by the police, namely the right to be informed of their rights in a language the person can understand, the notification of custody to a third-party and the right of access to a lawyer and a doctor. The delegation also examined custody records and complaints procedures.

104. As was the case in 2023, the delegation found the presence of non-standard issue items, including, *inter alia* unlocked and unlabelled pliers, a pair of wire cutters, a chainsaw and a retractable baton in rooms used by criminal inspectors to interview suspects.

105. In order to dispel speculation about improper conduct on the part of police officers and to remove potential sources of danger to staff and detained persons alike, the CPT recommends that any non-standard issue objects capable of being used for inflicting ill-treatment should never be kept in offices where detained persons may be interviewed or held, and should be immediately removed from all police premises where persons may be held or questioned. Any such items seized during criminal investigations should be entered in a separate register, properly labelled (identifying the case to which they refer) and kept in a dedicated store.

b. information on rights

106. The delegation found that persons in police custody were provided with information booklets on their rights in the Greek language,⁵⁰ yet many persons stated that they were unaware of their rights and that they had not been explained to them orally (which was corroborated by the police officers on duty). The booklets were written in small font and used technical language, making them difficult to understand.⁵¹

107. The CPT reiterates its recommendation that all detained persons should be expressly informed, without delay and in a language they understand, of all their rights, their legal situation (including the grounds for their detention) and the procedure applicable. To this end, detained persons should be systematically provided with a document setting out this information; the document should be available in the languages most commonly spoken by those concerned. If necessary, documents should be available in an easily accessible format, and the services of an interpreter should be made available.

Particular care should be taken to ensure that detained persons are actually able to understand their rights; it is incumbent upon police officers to ascertain that this is the case.

50. Despite the existence of translated information booklets, persons deprived of their liberty reported only receiving them in Greek.

51. Upon admission, detained persons signed a form to confirm receipt of the information booklets, which was then added to their personal file.

c. notification of custody

108. The CPT has repeatedly recommended that the Cypriot authorities ensure that persons held in police custody are able to notify the fact of their detention to their family or a third person of their choice from the outset of their detention, including abroad.⁵² The delegation noted that all persons detained by the police were informed in the information booklet of their right to notify a third-party. Administratively detained persons in police stations visited were allowed to keep their mobile phones during the day, which facilitated their ability to notify a third-party about the detention measure. However, some persons detained under criminal law reported to the delegation that they had not been able to notify a third-party from the outset of their detention.

109. The CPT has repeatedly recommended that a written register be kept of when a detained person first requests to make a call to notify a third person of their detention, when this request is granted, or, if denied, the reasons for such refusal.⁵³ During its visit to Lakatamia Police Detention Centre, the delegation found no such written record. **The CPT calls on the Cypriot authorities to remedy this shortcoming.**

d. access to a lawyer

110. The CPT has repeatedly called on the Cypriot authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure that all persons detained by the police understand and can effectively benefit, if they so wish, from access to a lawyer from the very outset of their deprivation of liberty.⁵⁴ The delegation noted positively that at Lakatamia Police Detention Centre a list of legal aid lawyers was maintained for persons to contact and that the dedicated room for detainee-lawyer meetings was no longer under CCTV, thus safeguarding the confidentiality of meetings.⁵⁵

However, despite there being no time limit on lawyers' visits, records from Lakatamia Police Detention Centre detailed that meetings with *ex officio* lawyers were typically brief, often lasting less than 10 minutes. Moreover, most of the detained persons met by the delegation stated that, in practice, they did not have access to a lawyer from the outset of their detention, nor during their first formal questioning as a suspect. Many of the administratively detained persons interviewed by the delegation believed they were either ineligible for free legal aid or were unaware of its existence, while those with private lawyers expressed that their communication with them was severely limited. Furthermore, several persons detained under criminal law reported being prevented from contacting a lawyer at the moment of their apprehension and during questioning.⁵⁶

111. In light of the above, **the CPT once again calls upon the Cypriot authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure that all persons detained by the police – including persons detained under the aliens legislation – have an effective right of access to a lawyer as from the very outset of their deprivation of liberty and at all stages of the proceedings. To this end, the CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities introduce a more effective legal aid system for persons in police custody who are not in a position to pay for a lawyer so that this right may be effectively enjoyed.**

e. access to a doctor

112. In the report on the 2023 visit, the CPT recommended that the Cypriot authorities put in place a system of visiting doctors at police establishments and the practice of police officers carrying out healthcare duties be ended. The situation had not improved by the time of the 2025 visit. For example, in Lakatamia Police Detention Centre police officers completed a medical screening questionnaire on behalf of detained persons.⁵⁷

52. See [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#), *inter alia* paragraphs 123 and 126.

53. See [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#), paragraph 127 and [CPT/Inf \(2018\) 16](#), paragraph 35.

54. See, *inter alia* [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#), paragraph 130 and [CPT/Inf \(2018\) 16](#), paragraph 37.

55. See [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#), paragraph 131.

56. Officers on duty at CID reported to the delegation that 95% of persons interviewed by criminal inspectors waived their right to a lawyer.

57. According to police officers, injuries were documented only when persons were subjected to full body searches. A few detained persons reported to the delegation that they had arrived with visible injuries due to ill-treatment by police, but no body charts were included in the personal files analysed by the delegation.

113. Moreover, despite the Committee recommending that the system of storage and management of medication at police detention centres be reviewed, in 2025 this continued to be problematic. Medication, including psychotropic medication, was stored in an unlocked cupboard. Due to the absence of medical staff, police officers, following doctors' instructions, administered medication. Officers were not competent in this regard and expressed unease to the delegation in performing this role. The delegation found no systematic strategies in place to monitor medication intake. For instance, at Lakatamia Police Detention Centre, records indicated that some individuals would receive their prescribed psychotropic medication but not take it immediately. Instead, they would collect the medication in order to take larger doses at once.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities put in place a system of visiting doctors at police stations and detention centres. Further, as a matter of urgency, the practice of police officers carrying out healthcare duties should be ended and the current system of storage and management of medication at police detention centres reviewed.

114. In the establishments visited by the delegation, no basic life support equipment such as an automated external defibrillator. **The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take steps to ensure that a person competent to provide first aid (who holds a valid certificate in the application of cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED)) is always present in every police holding facility; all police holding facilities should be equipped with an AED.**

f. interpretation

115. The delegation once again observed significant shortcomings in the provision of interpretation services for those detained persons who did not speak Greek. Using other detained persons to act routinely as interpreters is not appropriate.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities put in place an effective system to provide detained foreign nationals who do not understand Greek with the services of either an interpreter or telephone interpretation whenever such persons have to sign a statement or require assistance in exercising their rights.

g. custody records

116. Despite the CPT recommending that the Cypriot authorities take steps to ensure that police custody records are accurately maintained, custody records reviewed by the delegation were of poor quality. For instance, at Lakatamia Police Detention Centre the delegation was concerned to find a lack of dedicated registers.⁵⁸

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities take steps to ensure that police custody records are accurately maintained. Ybb

h. complaints procedures

117. In 2023, the CPT recommended that the Cypriot authorities put in place a robust, transparent complaints system for detained persons, including written information on available mechanisms, and secure, independently managed complaints boxes in all police facilities. The delegation found no functioning complaints system in place in the facilities visited: the complaints box at Lakatamia Police Detention Centre was inaccessible due to its location on the visitors' side of the visitation room, while Nicosia Central Police Station lacked a complaints box entirely. No complaint forms or written information about complaints procedures were available. Police officers interviewed by the delegation could not recall receiving any written complaints and reported that grievances were usually raised verbally. Due to the lack of records for written and oral complaints, it was not possible to assess the nature, frequency, or handling of complaints.

⁵⁸. While limited information was found in personal files, key dedicated registries, including for incidents, security measures and use of force were absent.

118. **The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities put in place a robust complaints system for persons detained by the police, which should include the provision of information about the complaints procedures and mechanisms available in the initial written information given to detained persons on arrival, and the installation of locked complaints boxes with confidential complaints forms in relevant languages in all police stations and detention centres, which are emptied regularly by an independent police body as well as other relevant external inspectorate bodies.**

4. Conditions of detention

119. The material conditions in Nicosia Central Police Station, designated for short-term detention, were generally acceptable for periods of less than 24 hours. Yet it continued to hold people for longer periods. Despite recommendations to refurbish the facility, the Cypriot authorities had taken no action. Hence at the time of the 2025 visit, the delegation found the lighting in the cells (both natural and artificial) remained poor, leaving the cells sombre, and that the facility continued to be poorly maintained and in a very poor state of cleanliness.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities ensure that all police custody cells be maintained in a good state of repair and hygiene, and that all cells grant access to natural light and functioning artificial lighting.

120. While the material conditions in Lakatamia Police Detention Centre, designated for long-term detention, were generally acceptable for periods of up to 24 hours for persons held under immigration legislation and 72 hours for persons held under criminal law, at the time of the delegation's visit the majority of persons had been detained for prolonged periods (several days, up to many months).⁵⁹

The CPT once again calls on the Cypriot authorities to prevent extended detention in police custody of individuals held under criminal law beyond 72 hours and to keep the detention of administratively detained persons in police establishments to an absolute minimum (that is, no more than 24 hours).

121. At Lakatamia Police Detention Centre, the delegation noted that hygiene kits were provided to detained persons upon their admission and that the food provisions had improved since 2023, with three meals offered daily, including two hot meals. This is a positive development.

122. Further to the recommendation contained in the report on the 2023 visit, the Cypriot authorities informed the CPT that a committee of police officers planned to visit the detention areas to find ways to allow access to fresh air and sunlight and to help regulate the high temperatures.⁶⁰ However, at the time of the 2025 visit, no action appeared to have been taken in the police stations visited: cell windows remained covered with mesh or were made up of opaque glass blocks, which reduced the level of natural light entering the cells. Furthermore, the courtyard in Lakatamia Police Detention Centre remained enclosed by opaque plastic sheeting, effectively transforming it into an enclosed indoor yard. **The CPT reiterates its recommendation that these shortcomings be rectified.**

123. Despite the CPT's recommendations, the regime for detained persons across the stations visited remained inadequate. The findings again point to the fact that police stations are totally inadequate places to hold persons for longer than short periods. Pre-trial and sentenced prisoners must be taken out of police stations forthwith. At Lakatamia Police Detention Centre, administratively detained persons must be provided with daily access to outdoor fresh air.

59. Persons were detained across two separate corridors in single-occupancy cells of 10.5 m² and equipped with a plinth and mattress, a fixed table and stool, toilet, shower and call bell. The cells lacked natural light and ventilation. The facility also had accessible cells for persons with disabilities which measured 13.7 m².

60. See [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 19](#), page 35.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that all persons detained for 24 hours or longer be provided with at least one hour of outdoor exercise each day.

5. Other issues

124. As regards staffing levels, these remained insufficient at Lakatamia Police Detention Centre, which adversely impacted both the quality of care provided to detained persons and the wellbeing of officers.⁶¹

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that steps be taken to increase the presence of custodial staff in detention facilities, ensuring that staffing levels are maintained in line with official standards.

125. The delegation observed several officers who were not wearing name tags or identification numbers. **The CPT recommends that appropriate safeguards be in place to ensure that police officers may be identified and can be held accountable for their actions (for example, by way of a clearly visible means of individual identification on the uniform, such as a name or a number).**

⁶¹. Despite the official procedure requiring that five officers be assigned per shift, the delegation found that, due to absenteeism and leave, on average only two to three officers per shift were actually present.

C. Immigration detention establishments

(i) First Reception Centre Pournara

1. Preliminary remarks

126. The aim of the delegation's visit to First Reception Centre Pournara was to review the situation of persons deprived of their liberty. In 2023, due to the establishment's overcrowding and dire conditions, the CPT immediately recommended that the Cypriot authorities take steps to decongest the Pournara Centre, notably by transferring vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), to more suitable accommodation. Representing a significant decrease in population when compared to 2023, at the time of the delegation's most recent visit, 290 foreign nationals were deprived of their liberty in the Pournara Centre.⁶² However, vulnerable groups, including 25 UASC, continued to be held at the facility.

127. In March 2025 the average length of detention for adults in the Pournara Centre was 23 days, with one vulnerable woman at the time of the delegation's visit being *de facto* deprived of her liberty for 166 days. While the registration procedure on average took a matter of days, some assessments, such as age assessments or DNA tests, took several months. Therefore, while on average UASC were detained for 13 days, multiple UASC were detained for extended periods, including one boy who had been detained for over 75 days.

128. At the time of the delegation's visit the Pournara Centre was composed of a "main camp" for newly arrived persons undergoing registration procedures and for the accommodation of vulnerable persons with disabilities, three functional "safe zones" (A, B and D) for unaccompanied and separated girls, vulnerable women and unaccompanied and separated boys respectively,⁶³ and three "emergency zones" (A, B and C) at the perimeter for single men and families. The population was split across prefabricated units in the "main camp" and "safe zones" and in Rubb Halls in the "emergency zones". Infrastructural changes, led by the Cypriot authorities and the International Organisation for Migration, were underway to restructure and increase the capacity of the centre. Scheduled for completion by the end of 2025, the project envisions the opening of additional prefabricated container sections, thereby creating a further 1 240 places.

129. Asylum seekers who irregularly enter Cyprus and claim asylum are initially deprived of their liberty in Pournara. As found in 2023, the CPT considers that persons held in Pournara Centre are, by default, *de facto* deprived of their liberty.⁶⁴ Persons were only permitted leave the facility once: i) the registration procedure was complete, ii) the results of mandatory assessments were final (including vulnerability, age, and medical evaluations) and iii) the person provided a proof of future address to the Asylum Service.⁶⁵ The CPT considers that the deprivation of liberty in the Pournara Centre may well amount to arbitrary detention, which undermines detainees from effectively accessing safeguards against ill-treatment.

130. Considering that asylum seekers should only be deprived of their liberty as an exceptional measure, **the CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities cease the routine practice of initially depriving asylum seekers of their liberty.**

62. Out of that number, 43 were children (29 boys and 14 girls). Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen and Iran were the primary countries of origin. At the time of the visit the Centre's nominal capacity was 1 322.

63. Due to being in a state of disrepair and a lack of running water "Safe Zone C" was not functional.

64. The following factors demonstrate foreign nationals' inability to leave the facility: several metres' high double-layered barbed wire fencing surrounded the perimeter of the centre which, since 2023, had been reinforced with a further layer of fencing, with holes in the initial fence filled; Pournara recruited private security who, together with police, permanently secured the centre's perimeter; unauthorised leave or non-registration at the centre could result in a person being detained under aliens legislation in Menoya Detention Centre; the delegation was informed of "escape attempts" from the facility; the length of stay in Pournara at the time of the delegation's visit ranged from days to several months; and, foreign nationals were under constant supervision, surveillance and control, including via CCTV cameras and orders made over the facility's speaker system.

65. The information sheet provided to asylum seekers details that "the First Reception Center (FRC) operates as a closed facility. Individuals are not permitted to leave the premises until all required procedures have been completed. Once all necessary procedures are concluded, you will be required to vacate the FRC premises."

The CPT recalls that the detention of asylum seekers should only be used as a measure of last resort. Detention must be strictly necessary, on the basis of an individual assessment and must only be used where less coercive measures cannot be effectively applied. Where detention is used, it must be prescribed by law, be in accordance with the principles of necessity and proportionality and be subject to an effective remedy. **The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities ensure that any deprivation of liberty in Pournara comply with such precepts.**

131. Staff and detained persons complained to the delegation of challenges to asylum seekers finding accommodation in the community. There appeared to be both a lack of state-provided accommodation for vulnerable persons and a lack of affordable rental accommodation. The shortage of affordable housing was further exacerbated by the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance's decision to increase the waiting period for asylum seekers before they are allowed to work— from one month to nine months. This measure meant that asylum seekers were unable to work and earn an income for the first nine months after arrival, thus limiting their financial resources. As a result, they faced greater difficulties securing rental accommodation. While the Asylum Service offered five days of free accommodation outside the facility to help individuals find housing, many of those interviewed by the delegation reported that this was insufficient time. As a result, despite the majority of persons met expressing a keen desire to leave Pournara, many were reluctant to accept the offer, fearing it would lead to homelessness after the five days. **The CPT would appreciate the comments of the Cypriot authorities on this matter.**

2. Ill-treatment

132. The vast majority of detained persons met spoke positively of staff. While the delegation received no direct allegations of physical ill-treatment by staff, it did receive a couple of allegations, both from detained persons and civilian staff who, in the months prior to the delegation's visit, had witnessed incidents of police ill-treatment, including against children.

The delegation did receive a couple of allegations of verbal ill-treatment by staff. For example, two UACS complained to the delegation that, upon arrival at the centre, they had been forced to stand outside in the rain while individually they were brought into a police container and subjected to verbal abuse, yelling and offensive language.

The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities ensure that staff, notably police officers, at the Pournara centre are instructed, at regular intervals, that all forms of ill-treatment of persons deprived of their liberty – including verbal abuse, racist behaviour and threats – are unprofessional and illegal and will be sanctioned accordingly

133. Contrary to the situation found in 2023, the delegation found that inter-personal violence was minimal and that, when it arose, the staff took action to separate the detained persons. This is positive and is a clear consequence of the lower numbers and the ability to manage the population more effectively.

2. Living conditions and regime

134. The living conditions in the facility had much improved and the delegation noted that many of its 2023 recommendations in this regard had been implemented. The delegation was encouraged to see that in the "main camp" and "safe zones" tents had been replaced with prefabricated units.⁶⁶ The facility's general state of hygiene was much better; a cleaning programme was in place and refurbishment of the centre was underway. Additionally, the delegation found separate showering and toilet areas for men, women and children, most of which were clean. Despite this, as in 2023, cockroaches continued to be commonplace throughout the facility. **The CPT recommends that further fumigation and additional measures be taken to remove pests from Pournara.**

66. While Rubb Halls continued to be used in the "emergency zones", the delegation was informed that when renovation works are completed, they would no longer be used.

135. Newly arrived asylum seekers were registered and provided with a “first-arrival kit”⁶⁷ before being provided with accommodation in prefabricated containers in the “main camp”.⁶⁸ Four to six persons were accommodated in each room, leaving some persons with less than 2 m² of living space. The management did not provide pillows and, except for one of the safe zones, persons did not have access to laundry facilities.

The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take immediate steps to ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty are provided with sufficient living space as well as a pillow and the use of washing machines to wash their clothes.

136. After registration procedures were completed, persons were moved to the “emergency zones”, the “safe zones” or the section in the “main camp” for vulnerable persons.⁶⁹ The Rubb Halls in each of the three “emergency zones” were comprised of 14 rooms, with up to four persons accommodated in each room, leaving some persons with only 3.5 m² of living space.⁷⁰ Due to the PVC-coated polyester fabric cover of the Rubb Halls, and the rooms not having ceilings, temperature control was a challenge, and detained persons reported feeling cold at night and hot during the day.

137. The “safe zones” for vulnerable women and unaccompanied girls provided better conditions. The zones comprised several two-storey buildings, with girls' rooms offering an adequate amount of space and containing sets of bunk beds, cupboards, and lockers. Windows and air conditioners provided sufficient ventilation and light. A laundry room and kitchen were in place and, as an improvement to 2023, an outdoor gym had been installed.

By contrast, “Safe Zone D” for unaccompanied boys, which consisted of four operational containers accommodating 20 boys at the time of the visit, did not meet such standards. The containers were in a dilapidated and unhygienic state; the mattresses were worn-out and dirty, and the toilets and showers were in a poor state of hygiene.⁷¹ The two additional chemical toilets emitted a strong, pervasive odour throughout the zone.

138. At the time of the visit, apart from the UASC, who had to remain within their zone, all detained persons could move around inside the centre without an escort between 16:00 and 22:00. During the rest of the day, they were confined to their zone.⁷²

The delegation found no regular regime of structured or purposeful activities provided to persons deprived of their liberty. While the presence of a playground and football pitch is positive, detained persons continued to have no access to a radio or television, a library, appropriate means of recreation or a prayer room, and there was still no communal room where persons could associate together. Moreover, other than three Greek language classes offered for children only, no educational or purposeful activities were on offer. The vast majority of detained persons interviewed by the delegation, who had been held in the centre for more than a few days, complained that they had nothing to do to structure their day.

139. The CPT recalls its position that children should not be deprived of their liberty.⁷³ When, exceptionally, children are detained, *inter alia* they should be offered a range of constructive, age-appropriate activities. The delegation found that most children could only attend one Greek language class a week and a couple of children reported not being able to attend any classes at all.⁷⁴ It remained particularly deplorable that no other form of entertainment or schooling was available for children. UASC

67. The kit included: soap, shampoo, a toothbrush, toothpaste, a mug, a fork, a water bottle, a towel and a blanket.

68. Measuring 11 m², some of which contained three sets of bunk beds and lockers.

69. In the “main camp” 14 rooms were allocated for vulnerable persons, including those with disabilities, with wheelchair accessible toilets and showers.

70. Measuring 13 m² and furnished with two sets of bunkbeds, a table, chair and storage lockers.

71. The containers were humid and one of the containers leaked water when it rained

72. Between 22:00 and 07:00 the zones were locked. From 07:00 until 16:00, due to building works, persons could only move between the facility's zones, for example to attend the administration offices, if they requested permission from the management and were escorted by “flow” officers.

73. In line with the principle of the best interest of the child, UASC should not, as a general rule, be detained. See the CPT Immigration Detention Factsheet [CPT/Inf\(2017\) 3](#), page 9.

74. One of the UASC who reported not being able to access Greek language classes had, by the time of the delegation's visit, been detained for over two weeks.

reported to the delegation that in the past they had been frequently escorted to the football pitch but in the week prior to the delegation's visit this activity had ceased.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities end the detention of families with children and of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). Where exceptionally they are detained, the authorities must offer them a range of constructive activities (with particular emphasis on enabling a child to continue their education and to undertake sports).

More generally, **the CPT reiterates its recommendation that a regular programme of purposeful and structured activities (educational, recreational and sports) be implemented for persons detained for longer than a few days.**

140. Food was distributed three times a day by means of scanning individual meal cards. The delegation found that dietary needs were accommodated.⁷⁵ While many persons reported being satisfied with the food, many others, including children, reported that the food provided was insufficient in quality and quantity. Detained persons were permitted to order food via delivery services; however, since the beginning of 2025, strict rules prohibited the entry of most food items.⁷⁶

While the CPT welcomes the accommodation of special dietary needs, **it considers that the current food policy, particularly the restrictions on external food, should be re-evaluated.**

141. Despite efforts by the Red Cross to distribute clothing and other non-food items, persons reported to the delegation that they did not have sufficient, weather appropriate clothing. For example, women and girls, including those who had been detained for weeks, reported to the delegation that they each only had one pair of underwear.⁷⁷

The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities ensure that persons deprived of their liberty in Pournara are provided with clothes and footwear (adapted to the season), according to their needs. Persons deprived of their liberty should be provided with several sets of underwear which are personal to them.

3. Healthcare

142. The Ministry of Health provided healthcare services at Pournara, and staff were employed by the Organisation for State Health Services. The facility had a dedicated healthcare centre, which was well equipped and included an appropriate range of emergency medical equipment.

143. Healthcare staffing levels had improved. One doctor, one nurse and a pool of 12 part-time nurses were employed.⁷⁸ Additionally, a health visitor visited the centre daily to perform childhood immunisations. Persons requiring hospital care were usually sent, without an escort, by taxi to Nicosia General Hospital. Interpretation was available for medical consultations.

However, access to mental healthcare services remained undeveloped, with the psychologist assigned to the facility conducting only pre-screening assessments. **The CPT calls on the Cypriot authorities to remedy this shortcoming. Reference is also made to the recommendation in paragraph 150.**

75. Including vegetarian, religious and medically indicated meals.

76. Uncooked food including fruit, vegetables and biscuits were banned, and visitors were not allowed to bring in cooked items.

77. Additionally, visitors could only bring 10 items of clothing per applicant. Only wet wipes, diapers and roll-on deodorants in plastic containers were permitted. Other items, including hygiene items, were prohibited.

78. From Monday to Friday two nurses were on duty from 7:15-13:30 and one nurse from 19:15-7:45. During the weekend one nurse was on duty for each of the two daily shifts. In 2023 a similar number of healthcare staff were employed but for a much larger population. In 2025, from Monday to Friday a doctor was present from morning to midday, alongside two nurses and a health visitor. One nurse would then be on duty until early evening, and another was on duty from night to morning.

144. During its 2025 visit, the delegation was encouraged to find that detained persons were usually seen within 24 hours of arrival at the centre by a nurse who conducted a medical screening and completed a medical admission form.⁷⁹ If needed, detained persons could then be seen by the doctor.

145. Medical records were poorly maintained. Despite the Cypriot Government stating that steps were being taken to establish a comprehensive medical record,⁸⁰ this was not yet the case by the time of the delegation's visit. **The CPT reiterates its recommendation that a single comprehensive medical record be maintained for each person detained in the Pournara Centre.**

4. Unaccompanied and separated children and other categories of vulnerable persons

146. At the time of the 2025 visit, UASC and other categories of vulnerable persons continued to be deprived of their liberty in Pournara. Indeed, according to data provided by the Asylum Service, in 2024, 23% of persons deprived of their liberty in Pournara were identified as vulnerable.

The CPT wishes to recall its position that every effort should be made to avoid resorting to the deprivation of liberty of a foreign national who is a child. Moreover, the CPT considers that UASC should not be deprived of their liberty.

The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities end the detention of UASC and other categories of vulnerable persons in the Pournara First Reception Centre. The CPT reiterates its recommendation that all such persons be immediately transferred to more suitable accommodation.

a. unaccompanied and separated children

147. At the time of the delegation's visit, of the 25 UASC (20 boys and five girls) being held in Pournara, one boy had been detained for 77 days, four had been detained between 30 and 76 days, nine had been detained between 15 and 30 days, and 11 had been detained for less than 15 days. The primary reason for prolonged detention periods remained the extended duration required to complete age assessments and DNA testing; while those results were still pending, the children were required to stay in the centre with few support mechanisms, limited information on when they would be able to leave and almost no access to education or activities. Many UASC interviewed by the delegation expressed feeling frustrated, stressed and despondent.

For example, an unaccompanied boy, who had been detained for 77 days at the time of the visit, was waiting for the results of DNA testing to confirm his relationship with his mother, who lived in the community. His guardian told the delegation that, due to the timeframe to receive DNA test results, it was predicted that the boy would remain detained for at least two more months, if not longer. Due to concerns around the child's wellbeing, he was not informed of this timeframe. Despite estimating that the boy would be detained for at least four and a half months, alternatives to deprivation of liberty in Pournara were not assessed.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities reduce the delays in the age assessment procedure and in DNA testing.

148. The CPT considers that UASC should be provided with prompt and free access to legal and other appropriate assistance, including the assignment of a guardian or legal representative.

While UASC in Pournara were routinely assigned to a guardian, they did not receive free access to legal assistance. In fact, none of the children with whom the delegation met had contact with a lawyer.

79. The medical admission form included demographic details, medical history, medication and family history. There was a symptomatic screening for tuberculosis, and persons were asked if they had communicable diseases including hepatitis. Blood and Mantoux tests were carried out, and women were offered pregnancy tests.

80. See [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 19](#), page 38.

149. Whenever children are held in dedicated sections in the Pournara First Reception Centre, they must be offered appropriate living conditions and support. Therefore, **the CPT reiterates that the Cypriot authorities must take steps to ensure that all children are:**

- **provided with clothing and shoes appropriate for the weather, as well as sufficient quantities of hygiene products;**
- **provided with sufficient food of a varied nature containing the necessary vitamins and nutrients for growing children and adolescents;**
- **offered activities of a diverse nature including more time to exercise outside, regular activities suitable to their age, organised sport and education;**
- **offered greater age appropriate psychological and trauma-informed counselling support, as required, along with legal advice and information in a language they can understand on the asylum process and their specific situation.**

b. other categories of vulnerable persons

150. The delegation found that vulnerability assessments were not systematically undertaken. Assessments were only performed if a person was flagged as potentially vulnerable during the pre-screening assessment or during the registration procedure. The inconsistent application of vulnerability assessments may hinder the proper identification of vulnerable persons.⁸¹

As regards follow-up, despite the CPT recommending that persons considered vulnerable be regularly visited and checked upon by qualified specialists and staff, the delegation found that limited support was provided to persons found to be vulnerable. This is despite the efforts of care givers from the Centre for Social Cohesion, Development and Care (CODECA) who were contracted to provide services to persons identified as having potential vulnerabilities.⁸²

151. As mentioned in paragraph 132 above, the delegation was informed by staff and detained persons alike of challenges in finding appropriate accommodation outside the Pournara Centre for vulnerable persons. As an illustration, the delegation met a vulnerable young woman who had been detained for 166 days, of which an extended period had been spent in a psychiatric hospital. The authorities had been unable to find appropriate housing for her and the delegation was informed that she might be transferred to a social care home for older persons with mental disorders.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities take steps to find alternative open facilities where persons with identified vulnerabilities can be provided with support and have their specific needs met.

5. Protective safeguards

152. The CPT considers that asylum seekers, who should only exceptionally be detained as a measure of last resort after a careful and individual examination of each case, should be afforded a wide range of safeguards in line with their status, going beyond those applicable to irregular migrants.⁸³ **The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities cease the practice of routinely depriving asylum seekers of their liberty in the Pournara First Reception Centre.**

The CPT has long held that a proper individual detention order should be issued at the outset of any deprivation of liberty, covering each instance of such detention. All categories of detained persons, including detained foreign nationals, should enjoy from the very outset of their deprivation of liberty three

81. For the identification of victims of trafficking, see Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) report on Cyprus - [GRETA\(2025\)02](#), paragraph 85.

82. Four caregivers worked across three shifts (08:00 to 16:00, 10:00 to 18:00, and 16:00 to 00:00), seven days a week. The delegation formed a positive impression of the commitment of the caregivers, which was reinforced by the comments of the asylum seekers interviewed.

83. CPT Immigration Detention Factsheet [CPT/Inf\(2017\)3](#), section 1.

basic rights: access to a lawyer, access to a medical doctor, and to be able to inform a relative, or third party of one's choice, about the detention measure.

153. During the 2025 visit, the delegation found that foreign nationals continued to be deprived of their liberty in Pournara without a formal decision and without access to the consequent applicable safeguards. Such a situation may amount to arbitrary deprivation of liberty and, given that detention could last for an undefined period of time lasting from a few weeks to several months, this left detained persons in a state of uncertainty.

The CPT reiterates its recommendation that all persons deprived of their liberty in the Pournara First Reception Centre be served immediately upon their arrival with a valid detention order. Further, all persons should be informed about the detention order in a language and form that they understand and provided with information on how to appeal the measure before a judicial body.

154. The delegation also found that information on rights was not provided consistently to detained persons. According to the management, as of 26 March 2025, newly arrived asylum seekers received information sheets detailing the house rules and providing an outline of the asylum procedure and their rights and obligations. Persons were required to sign the documents to confirm their understanding of the content, together with the asylum officer and, if necessary, with an interpreter. The delegation did not find a copy of the signed form in the case files reviewed of persons who had arrived after 26 March 2025. While the information sheets were in various languages, the content was technical and in small font, impacting their accessibility.

The CPT recommends that detained persons be systematically informed of the establishment's house rules, both verbally and in writing. The information brochures should outline the house rules, asylum seekers' rights, legal assistance, and complaints procedures, and be written in simple, accessible language which they can understand. For individuals who cannot understand the brochure, appropriate assistance should be provided, including through alternative communication methods and the provision of accessible formats.

155. At the time of the 2025 visit, the delegation found significant shortcomings in the provision of legal assistance, which was not available free of charge for detained persons, and none of the persons interviewed by the delegation reported being supported by a lawyer.⁸⁴ Moreover, given the *de facto* nature of the detention (that is, without detention orders), it was *per se* impossible for foreign nationals to exercise their right to challenge the detention.

The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities make further efforts to ensure that foreign nationals deprived of their liberty in the Pournara First Reception Centre can effectively exercise their right of access to a lawyer.⁸⁵ This should include the right to have access to legal advice and the right to benefit from access to free legal aid.

156. The delegation found a continued lack of formally established and effective complaint procedures, including a lack of codification on how complaints should be handled. Internal complaints could either be made orally or through one of three complaint boxes located in different areas of the centre, but no post-boxes or guidelines were in place for persons deprived of their liberty to lodge complaints with external bodies. **The CPT recommends that a complaints procedure be drawn up in order to govern the complaint process, which observes certain basic principles: availability, accessibility, confidentiality/safety, effectiveness and traceability.**

84. The delegation could not find a single personal file which indicated that a person had received the support of a lawyer. The lack of access to a lawyer limited the ability of detained persons to challenge the legality of their detention, to challenge any treatment in contravention of Article 3, and to receive legal support in the asylum procedure, an essential safeguard to ensure people are not subjected to refoulement.

85. Including NGO and private lawyers.

Although information on the presence of complaints boxes was included in the house rules, the majority of persons interviewed by the delegation, including detained persons and staff, were unaware of available avenues to complain. From November 2024 until March 2025, only one written complaint was submitted via a complaints box and oral complaints were not registered. There was therefore no clear understanding of the volume or nature of complaints raised.

157. While the delegation was encouraged to hear from the Asylum Service that there are plans to implement a complaints record, **the CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities take measures to ensure that avenues are readily accessible to persons held at the Pournara Centre, both internally and externally (to an appropriate complaints authority), to make complaints confidentially; that detained persons are informed, orally and in writing (in the most commonly spoken languages), of such avenues of complaint; and that the Asylum Services management team establishes a central register of complaints.**

6. Other issues

158. It is positive that detained persons had access to their mobile phones and that Wi-Fi was operational throughout most of the facility. While persons deprived of their liberty in Pournara could receive two visits a day from family or friends, visits were only permitted to last for 10 minutes and took place at the main gate in a dilapidated, open-sided shelter, furnished with only a few chairs.⁸⁶ The approach to visits should be reviewed, both as regards the amount of time for visits and the conditions in which they take place, which should respect the privacy of persons and be child-friendly in nature. **The CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take the requisite measures in light of these remarks.**

159. The delegation was encouraged to find sufficient staffing numbers.⁸⁷ The CPT positively notes that interpretation services were available either in person or via telephone, and foreign nationals could normally benefit from these services. Additionally, staff-detainee relations had improved, and staff could be found interacting with detained persons throughout the facility. Overall, detained persons described staff as respectful.

160. On the other hand, the delegation found a deficient and fragmented record-keeping system. Key dedicated registries, including for incidents, security measures and use of force were absent. Instead, key information was only documented in the daily logs. Rather than being entered into a central information system, daily logs were kept in PDF format and sent by email. As a result, it was not possible to use search functions or efficiently extract data. Instead, each daily log had to be reviewed individually. The absence of a centralised and integrated database significantly hinders access to critical information and risks undermining effective oversight of the facility.

The CPT recommends that a centralised electronic database be established, wherein all relevant information concerning each resident is systematically recorded, including personal details, case information, accommodation location and relocations, applications, incident reports, disciplinary actions, and any other pertinent data.

161. Due to the lack of official internal procedures for good order and security measures, the delegation found that informal measures were applied. Additionally, while measures were recorded in the daily logs, there was no central register. By way of illustration, designated containers in the "main camp" were used for temporary segregation when tensions arose in the facility. Staff were unable to provide the delegation with the legal basis for the segregation measure, the decision-making authority, the rights of persons to file complaints, or any potential disciplinary sanction resulting from the measure. This information was not included in the house rules and segregated persons were not afforded adequate safeguards, such as being

⁸⁶ Visiting hours were Monday to Friday midday to 16:00 and Saturday and Sunday 09:00 to 16:00.

⁸⁷ The centre was run by the Asylum Service, including a coordination team of one manager and eight officers with dedicated areas of responsibility (for example, reception, food and healthcare). The Asylum Service was supported by 50 staff members from the CODECA management partner. External security staff were contracted along with eight police officers responsible for external security. There was a medical team (see section 5. *Healthcare*) and an 18-person social services team. On site interpreters provided support in a total of eight languages. There was also a regular presence of other stakeholders including, *inter alia* the European Union Agency for Asylum, UNHCR, and Frontex.

informed in writing of the procedure in force. While staff indicated to the delegation that placement was based on consent, there was no protocol in place in the event of refusal. Another example of the informal measures in use was the requirement for a person, who reportedly exhibited violent behaviour during a sports event, to clean common areas of the establishment for three hours a day over the course of one week.

In the CPT's view, it is in the interests both of the persons deprived of their liberty and the staff that clear procedures for good order and security be formally established and applied in practice; any grey areas involve the risk of an unofficial (and uncontrolled) system developing. Such procedures must be proportionate and surrounded by effective safeguards. **The CPT recommends that such procedures be formally established.**

In this context, **the CPT recommends that if a measure of segregation is imposed, the foreign nationals concerned should be provided with a copy of the relevant decision and information on the possibilities to appeal the measure to an outside authority. Any measure of segregation should be time-limited, and a separate register should be established (setting out full information such as the date and time of entering and leaving, grounds for segregation, etc.)**

(ii) Airport short-term point of entry facilities

162. The delegation visited the short-term point of entry facility at Larnaca International Airport to assess the conditions of all persons deprived of their liberty there. Those who had been refused entry into Cyprus, but who could not be put on a return flight, were held in one of the three holding rooms designated for *de facto* short-term deprivation of liberty. One room was reserved for men, one for women and one for families, with an overall official capacity of 22 persons.

163. As stated by the CPT in its previous visit reports, the conditions of detention in the holding facilities at airports remain acceptable only for holding persons for less than 24 hours.⁸⁸ The three rooms were always locked and were without windows or access to natural light. There was no possibility for detained persons to access activities, fresh air or an outdoor exercise area. Persons could use their phones and laptops, had free access to Wi-Fi and could communicate freely with the outside world. Three meals a day were provided. As for safeguards, there had been no change since the 2023 visit.⁸⁹ The information booklet only existed in Greek and English and was written in small font and technical language.⁹⁰ Interpretation services were not available.

164. In 2024, 735 individuals were refused entry at Larnaca International Airport, and in the first quarter of 2025, 267 foreign nationals were denied entry. According to the registers consulted by the delegation, on average people were detained for between several hours and three days, and some persons had been detained for around one week. Nevertheless, a Congolese family had been detained for several weeks and in another case, from November 2024 to January 2025, a Ugandan national was detained, without fresh air, activities or outdoor exercise, for 74 days.

165. **The CPT reiterates its recommendation that the Cypriot authorities take steps to limit the detention of foreign nationals in the airports' holding facilities to no more than 24 hours and, in the event that it is not possible to respect this limit, that they be transferred to another, suitable holding facility. Pending these arrangements, all detained persons should be offered at least one hour of access to fresh air every day and arrangements put in place for them to be able to receive visits from relatives, close acquaintances, and a lawyer.**

88. See [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#), paragraph 235 and [CPT/Inf \(2018\) 16](#) paragraph 72.

89. See [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 18](#), paragraph 236.

90. Titled "Rights of Persons Under Arrest/ Detention".

Further, the CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take the necessary steps, including by amending the relevant legislation, to clearly regulate by law the grounds for the detention of foreign nationals refused entry into Cyprus and deprived of their liberty in airport holding facilities. This should include the maximum length of detention (24 hours) as well as judicial control of, and possibilities for appeal against, their detention.

The CPT would also like to be provided with an update on the legal advice provided by the Attorney General of the Republic on the transfer of persons refused landing to another suitable place outside the airport.⁹¹

166. At the time of the visit, three men and three women were being held in two separate rooms. The delegation was concerned that the three women from Nepal, who had been detained for three days, were possibly victims of trafficking in human beings. They had been domestic workers in private households in Cyprus and, according to their accounts, their employment had been highly exploitative, and they owed the agency that bought them to Cyprus several thousand euros.⁹² Despite indicators suggesting that the women could be victims of human trafficking, the police officers responsible for the holding facility had not initiated investigations into the women's status. The women reported to the delegation that they had asked for a lawyer but that this request had been refused.

167. In light of the above, **the CPT recommends that the Cypriot authorities take the necessary steps to ensure that in all airport holding facilities:**

- **every foreign national subjected to a refusal of entry decision and detained in holding areas be provided, without delay, with an individual detention order;**
- **all foreign nationals deprived of their liberty be systematically and fully informed, without delay and in a language and format they can understand, of their rights and the procedure applicable to them. Detained persons should especially be informed of their right to have access to a lawyer, which includes access to free legal aid, and be placed in a position to effectively exercise this right in practice as from the very outset of deprivation of liberty. To this end, a list of organisations providing legal aid should be made available in all detention areas;**
- **every foreign national detained for more than 24 hours is subjected to health screening (for example, by means of a standardised questionnaire completed by healthcare staff) as soon as possible after their admission, by a doctor or a nurse reporting to a doctor;**
- **the screening includes a physical examination of the person concerned and is carried out in close cooperation with a (clinical) psychologist in order to assess the following issues: chronic illnesses, medication, infectious diseases, substance use, physical disabilities, mental disorders, suicide risk, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of having been a victim of violence (including sexual or gender-based violence) or human trafficking.**

91. See [CPT/Inf \(2024\) 19](#), page 49.

92. See Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) report on Cyprus - [GRETA\(2025\)02](#), paragraph 45.

APPENDIX I – ESTABLISHMENTS VISITED

The delegation visited the following places of detention:

Police establishments

Nicosia Division

- Nicosia Criminal Investigation Department
- Lakatamia Police Detention Station
- Nicosia Central Police Station

Prison

- Nicosia Central Prisons

Immigration detention facilities

- Holding facilities for immigration detainees at Larnaca Airport
- Kokkinotrimithia Initial Registration Centre "Pournara"

APPENDIX II – List of the Authorities met during the visit

National authorities

Ministry of Justice and Public Order

- Marios Hartsiotis, Minister of Justice and Public Order
- Fedra Gregoriou, Acting Permanent Secretary and Head of the Justice Department Name, Title
- Constantinos Constantinides, Acting Director of Cyprus Prisons Department
- Natasa Savvopoulou, Liaison Officer

Deputy Ministry of Migration and International Protection

- Nicholas Ioannides, Deputy Minister of Migration and International Protection

Other authorities

Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsperson, NPM)

- Maria Stylianou-Lottides, Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsperson)

International and civil society organisations

- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Office in Cyprus
- Cyprus Refugee Council
- KISA

“NO ONE SHALL BE SUBJECTED TO TORTURE OR TO INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT”

Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights

Established in 1989 by the Council of Europe Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the CPT's aim is to strengthen the protection of persons deprived of their liberty through the organisation of regular visits to places of detention.

The Committee is an independent, non-judicial preventive mechanism, complementing the work of the European Court of Human Rights. It monitors the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty by visiting places such as prisons, juvenile detention centres, police stations, immigration detention facilities, psychiatric hospitals and social care homes. CPT delegations have unrestricted access to places of detention, and the right to interview, in private, persons deprived of their liberty. They may access all the information necessary to carry out their work, including any administrative and medical documents.

The CPT plays an essential role in promoting decency in detention, through the development of minimum standards and good practice for states parties, as well as through coordination with other international bodies. The implementation of its recommendations has a significant impact on the development of human rights in Council of Europe member states and influences the policies, legislation and practices of national authorities regarding detention.



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