DIRECTORATE GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW



Strasbourg, 22 September 2017

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON LEGAL CO-OPERATION (CDCJ)

CONDITIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION OF MIGRANTS

HEARING OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS

22-23 June 2017

Strasbourg

Report of the General Rapporteur Mr Christoph Henrichs (Germany) on the Hearing

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INTRODUCTION

- 1. The European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ) is currently working on a legal instrument which aims at codifying existing international standards on the conditions of administrative detention of migrants. In order to develop this instrument, a committee of experts CJ-DAM (Committee of Experts on Administrative Detention of Migrants) has been set up and has had a number of meetings in order to discuss scope and contents of the instrument envisaged. The current state of work of CJ-DAM is reflected in a 1st draft text of a "Codifying instrument of European rules on the administrative detention of migrants" dated 18 May 2017.
- 2. On 22-23 June 2017, CDCJ held a hearing of key stakeholders and civil society based on the current draft text mentioned above. The hearing fell within the wider framework of a written consultation on the same text which went on until 30 June 2017 and which also gave the opportunity to provide comments on the draft legal instrument. Both the results of the written consultation and the hearing are intended to feed into the work of CJ-DAM in finalizing the draft instrument.
- 3. The oral hearing brought together some 50 representatives from civil society in this field together with representatives of relevant Council of Europe bodies and members of CJ-DAM. The hearing lasted one and a half days. The programme and list of participants can be found in the appendices to this report.
- 4. After introductory remarks by Ambassador Tomáš Bocek, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Migration and Refugees, emphasizing the human rights focus of the activity, the chair and moderator of the 1st session, Ms Zuzana Fišerová Chair of CDCJ) introduced the project and reminded the participants of the purpose and the context of the hearing. She pointed out that the object of the hearing was to provide input and guidance from civil society as regards the structure and contents of the legal instrument. The aim was not to finalize the text or to come to decisions on what line to take on certain issues. Equally, it was not the intention for CJ-DAM to engage in an interactive debate with civil society during the meeting. Nevertheless, the appointed members of CJ-DAM were present at the hearing so as to allow them to listen to the views expressed first hand and to take them into consideration for further reflection and elaboration of the text.
- 5. The hearing was organised into blocks of different topics which were discussed in three sessions. Each of these blocks focused on a particular aspect of the draft legal instrument which had proven to be particularly difficult or disputed in the discussions within CJ-DAM so far. The discussions of each session were led by a chair and moderator who introduced the themes and launched the debate with key aspects and questions to be considered in the contributions from the floor those of the 2nd and 3rd sessions were respectively Ms Tineke Strik (Member of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly) and Mr Gert Westerveen (UNHCR Representative to the European Institutions in Strasbourg). The following contains a summary of the main interventions and points taken during the discussion on each block.

Session 1

Part 1: Scope, structure, standards to be codified and their practical implementation

- 6. In the introductory section, fundamental issues of the structure of the envisaged instrument were discussed. The moderator presented the background of the activity which has its origin in initiatives by the Secretary-General and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. She gave an overview of the development so far and referred to other activities of the Council of Europe in this field including the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child. She reminded participants of the objective of the activity which as laid down in the Terms of Reference of CJ-DAM is to codify existing international standards on the conditions of administrative detention of migrants and not to develop new standards or obligations for Member States.
- 7. As far as the question of the legal form of the codifying instrument is concerned, there was general agreement that the text should take the shape of a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to the Member States. This is the choice that the draft text presented for the hearing had taken, and there was no opposition raised against it.
- 8. The first session gave participants the opportunity to express initial remarks on the draft text in general. It emerged that there was a widespread consensus among speakers on certain points of criticism. Some of these points kept reappearing throughout the debate in the hearing when more specific topics were discussed. These recurring key issues also take centre stage in a Joint Statement "A Fundamentally Different Approach is needed" signed by 53 organisations which was presented by civil society at the beginning of the discussion.
- 9. In substance, three general points of criticism can be identified that were repeatedly addressed throughout the meeting, all of which have also been extensively discussed within CJ-DAM before. These are:
 - The reference to the European Prison Rules as a model for the codification,
 - The need to focus more on alternative measures to detention, and
 - The need for addressing special protection of vulnerable groups, especially children. This issue was the subject of a session specifically dedicated to it, see the summary on Session 3 below.
- 10. The draft text explicitly states that it has taken the existing European Prison rules "as a model" (Preamble paragraph E.). This reference is twofold: In one aspect, this refers to the structure of the document. The European Prison Rules are an instrument of codification of existing standards the Council of Europe and can thus serve as a model for an exercise like the one envisaged here.
- 11. Secondly, reference to the European Prison Rules, as well as to other existing standards for prison detention (eg. the Mandela Rules), is also made throughout the text when it comes to substantive provisions. These existing texts served as a source from which rules were adapted and introduced into the draft text, as quoted in the footnotes. It is this substantive reference that caused general criticism among participants of the hearing. It was widely considered inappropriate to take Prison Rules as a starting point

for codification of rules applying to the detention of migrants as this would unjustifiably criminalize migrants from the outset. It was pointed out that migration is not a crime and migrants should not be treated like prisoners by applying rules that were designed for prison settings. The starting point from which rules should be developed should rather be one of respect, protection and care for migrants.

- 12. In the course of the debate, the chairperson of CJ-DAM explained the reasoning behind referring to the European Prison Rules in the draft instrument. Where it was found that there are gaps in laying down standards applicable to administrative detention of migrants, it was considered to be a feasible approach to refer to selected rules in this instrument in order to establish some standards rather than make no provision at all. He pointed out that the reference to Prison Rules was never meant to qualify migrants as criminals or even create such impression.
- 13. While this stance was acknowledged by some speakers, the majority of participants in the hearing maintained their concerns against these references. According to this view, it should be acknowledged if there are gaps in existing instruments concerning detention of migrants. These gaps should be accepted rather than being filled with rules that were not designed for these circumstances and create a wrong impression of criminalizing migrants.
- 14. It is also in this context that the issue of alternative measures was brought up. It was argued that the draft text should emphasize more prominently that priority should be given to alternatives to detention. According to this view, it should be clearly stressed that detention as a measure of deprivation of liberty can only serve as an exceptional measure of last resort.
- 15. It was pointed out that the issue of priority for alternative measures is especially relevant for vulnerable groups. Among those, children, especially when unaccompanied, were identified as a group particularly affected. Reference was made in this context to the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child. Several speakers claimed that these should be reflected better in the text including a general rule stating explicitly that these groups should not be put into administrative detention at all.
- 16. A couple of other issues were mentioned in this introductory session, with participants demanding that these should be addressed in the text: These include:
 - The question of dealing with stateless migrants which does not get mentioned in the draft text so far;
 - Questions of monitoring (external oversight) detention facilities including access by NGOs;
 - The rights of migrants to have communication and legal defence;
 - Some lacking or unclear references in the footnotes.

Session 1

Part 2: Guarantees and protection

- 17. The session dedicated to "Guarantees and protection" reiterated many of the remarks made earlier in the session on the general approach. A widespread view among participants was that the rules should be phrased less prohibitively and restrictively. They should rather take on a more permissive language in the sense that they would stress the migrants' right to liberty, free movement and human dignity as a starting point. This would particularly apply to the heading and the basic principles elaborated in Part B of the draft text as it stands.
- 18. It was also demanded that the rules should contain standards to prevent arbitrary and unlawful detention and that legal safeguards should be strengthened in their wording.
- 19. Also, some material aspects were criticized as insufficiently elaborated in the draft text, including those relating to access to health care, education and the standards protecting migrants with disabilities.

Session 2

Part 1: Administrative detention in other places than closed centres

- 20. This session dealt with the question whether the rules in the instrument should apply only to closed detention centres or also to other places of detention. It was noted that the draft according to its definition in A.2 applies to administrative detention "in a closed detention centre" which then is defined as "a place ... specifically designed for that purpose". This would not cover other places like transit zones, boats, hotspots at points of entry where migrants might be kept in detention, albeit only for short periods of time. This approach in the draft text reflects the outcome of the discussions on this issue held within CJ-DAM.
- 21. While the draft text provides as a rule that migrants should be accommodated in those "specifically designed detention centres" as defined above (B.8), it acknowledges that detention can occur in other places. As it was pointed out during the hearing, the draft does contain provisions for those situations. These provisions are:
 - A general rule on the standards to be kept when exceptionally holding a migrant in detention in any place that is not a specifically designed detention facility (F.18), and additionally
 - Special rules on detention in exceptional circumstances in an ordinary prison or in police detention facilities (B. 11 / 12 of the current draft).
- 22. It was the initial general view among participants of the hearing that the rules should not differentiate between detention in a specifically designed detention centre or not. Rather, the standards should apply regardless of the location whenever a migrant is detained, i.e. deprived of his liberty, pursuant to an administrative decision.
- 23. One of the reasons why CJ-DAM followed the approach to limit, in principle, the application of the draft instruments to detention in closed centres was that it was feared that the opposite approach could legitimize and promote inappropriate (cf. rule

- B.8) detention outside those centres. This fear was not shared by the majority of speakers in the hearing. On the contrary, there was more concern about creating gaps in the standard of protection if other locations of detention were left outside the scope of application, especially because migrants in those locations are in particular need of protection. It was doubted whether standards would be kept in facilities outside closed detention centres if the rules did not apply to them.
- 24. In the course of the discussion, it was acknowledged, however, that the standards to be maintained have to meet the principle of proportionality. As a result, these standards may vary according to the individual circumstances of the detention outside a closed centre, including the element of duration. There are basic elements that have to be fulfilled wherever and under whatever conditions the detention takes place. This holds true, for example, for material conditions such as access to meals, health care etc., but also to standards like access to legal advice or procedure. If these minimum standards are not met, the detention can never be lawful.
- 25. On the other hand, there may be standards the application of which only makes sense in certain conditions and cannot be demanded in other situations, for example in short-term detention for several hours only. This would, for example, refer to the right to education. Here, under the principle of proportionality it would not be feasible to demand this standard to be applied.
- 26. It was pointed out that the rule in F.18 in principle follows exactly that approach. It acknowledges a list of minimum standards that have to be applied in any case, even if the migrant is detained in a place that is not a closed detention centre, while on the other hand it is not a comprehensive list of the full standards. Some preference was expressed to keeping this rule drafted as the minimum standard for exceptional detention situations. Generalizing it would carry the danger of lowering the standards for regular centres of detention.
- 27. Summing up, while there seems to be a widespread general common understanding about the scope of application of the rules, there are various ways to reach this result: either the approach taken in the draft, i.e. limit the scope of application of the full set of rules to closed detention centres and complement those provisions with additional rules of appropriate standards applying to other exceptional situations of detention, or set up rules applicable to any occurrence of detention but flexible enough to cover the necessary differentiation according to the circumstances. It appears to be more a question of political and drafting approach as to how this issue should be dealt with in the legal instrument.

Session 2

Part 2: Avoiding a prison-like environment

28. The discussions on this topic went back to the discussion held earlier in the hearing on the use of the European Prison Rules (and the Mandela Rules accordingly) as a model for the codification. It was pointed out that references to the Prison Rules are particularly frequent in Part I of the draft text on "Order, discipline and safety". There was a widespread view that this chapter has been too much inspired by the European Prison Rules thus creating rather than avoiding the impression of a prison-like environment. The references to the European Prison Rules were considered particularly inappropriate here

as there are fundamental differences to prison settings given that there can be no presumption that migrants kept in detention carry a risk for security.

- 29. In terms of drafting it was pointed out that the language used in Part I is too much written from a prison-like restrictive setting and focuses too much on safeguarding, sanctions and disciplinary measures which is giving the chapter the character of internal security regulations. It was suggested that part I should instead be rephrased from the perspective of liberty of the migrants detained, and the rules should be drafted as open and admissible as possible. In this context it was suggested to make use of other non-prison regimes of detention as a source of inspiration, for example rules applicable to elderly care facilities, with a focus on care, protection and sensitivity.
- 30. One particular point of concern raised was the question whether the rules on the use of force are sufficient and adequately defined. They are phrased in rather general terms (I.2, I.4) and lack more detailed provisions on who is entitled to use force, what kind of force and under what circumstances.
- 31. Also, the rule in the draft text which in principle allows the possibility to impose solitary confinement as a sanction (I.13) gave rise to criticism. Even though the purpose of the rule is to limit its use to restrictive exceptional circumstances, it was questioned whether this measure should be allowed at all. Some speakers considered this a particularly inappropriate inspiration taken from the European Prison Rules.
- 32. Various speakers emphasized transparent control and complaint mechanisms as an essential part of the regime. While the draft text contains provisions to this effect in Rules I. 14 17, some participants demanded that the rules on external monitoring and complaint mechanisms as well as on procedural guarantees and access to legal procedures to be enhanced.
- 33. Various remarks were made about other individual provisions in the draft that relate to the question of avoiding a prison-like environment. These referred, for example, to living and sleeping conditions (cf. F.1 F.3) and provisions on health care (Part H).

Session 3: Persons in a specific situation of vulnerability

- 34. This session focused on the specific situation of people that belong to a particularly vulnerable group, a topic that had been discussed in detail in the internal debates of CD-DAM as well.
- 35. The draft legal text contains an abstract definition of "vulnerable person" in rule A.2.vi without, however, defining any specific groups as vulnerable. The chairperson of CJ-DAM pointed out that it is nevertheless the intention to include a non-exhaustive list of vulnerable groups in the explanatory memorandum accompanying the legal text. Also, CJ-DAM after extensive debate decided not to have a specific chapter on vulnerable persons in the legal instrument but decided rather to incorporate relevant aspects throughout the text wherever it was necessary and appropriate in the context of the respective subject-matter dealt with.
- 36. The approach taken by CJ-DAM evoked several points of discussion. It was debated during the hearing whether the text should include a list of vulnerable groups

naming them beyond the abstract definition which is contained in the current draft. Pros and cons of a listing were discussed. Some speakers stressed that naming and defining vulnerable groups could raise awareness which might be particularly helpful for practitioners working in the detention facilities. Others argued that it is not necessarily groups as such that are vulnerable but individual persons in a specific situation exposed to threat or violence. This would speak against having a fixed list of vulnerable groups. In this context, it should be remembered that the current draft text in fact refers to "vulnerable persons" and not to "vulnerable groups", thus taking into account the concept that specific vulnerability is always connected to individual circumstances.

- 37. Also the question whether a separate chapter on vulnerable groups should be included in the legal text, was debated during the hearing with varying views. While some speakers argued again that a separate chapter could lead to higher visibility of and thus better practical awareness for the specific needs of vulnerable persons, other participants expressed their preference for the approach taken by CJ-DAM, i.e. to address issues of specifically vulnerable groups throughout the document in the context of the respective provisions.
- 38. As one possible compromise solution, it was suggested to develop a combined approach in the sense that the obligation to specifically protect vulnerable persons could be highlighted in a separate rule whereas details would remain in the context of each subject-matter.
- 39. As far as the content is concerned, the draft contains numerous provisions dealing with vulnerable persons, especially children, including rule B.14 stating that children shall only be held in administrative detention as a measure last resort and rule B.15 stipulating that the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration for all actions. However, there was a widespread view that the rules on protection, especially for children, contained in the draft text were drafted too weakly, did not reflect enough the obligation of states to protect these groups, and were not in consistency with the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child.
- 40. It was argued that the criterion of the 'best interest of the child' as the leading consideration is not get complied with sufficiently in the draft text. According to this view, keeping a child in detention can never be in his or her best interest. Correspondingly, it was suggested that more emphasis must be given in the text to alternative measures to detention for vulnerable groups. Considering that detention is qualified as a measure of last resort for everyone as it is aptly done in rule B.1 of the draft text, rules like B.14 do not add anything for vulnerable groups. Hence, special provisions increasing the level of protection for vulnerable groups are required. In the absence of such provisions, there is the danger of 'normalisation', and special vulnerability not being adequately addressed. In this context, some speakers called for an explicit rule that children and other vulnerable persons should not be detained at all.

- 41. Similar positions were taken towards pregnant women where it was argued that the reference to the European Prison Rules is particularly inappropriate. For this group, detention should be excluded completely and not only under certain conditions as the current draft provides (cf. rule B.13). The same was argued for people with disabilities and impairments where it was felt that the current rule as it stands in the draft text (B.20) is not protective enough.
- 42. Remarks in view of vulnerable persons were also made on other aspects of the draft text. Several speakers criticized the lack of any mentioning of sexual orientation (e.g. in rule B.9). Other interventions suggested that the specific protection of women's needs, especially with view to the risk of gender-based violence in detention, should be better reflected in the text. Also, the rules on health care (part H) were criticized as too minimal, in particular regarding preventive care and mental health care given the specific situation in detention facilities.
- 43. Finally, it was suggested that the rules on screening to assess whether or not migrants are vulnerable (cf. B.6) should be enhanced in order to detect all persons affected. A screening procedure is required before the decision on detention is taken, on admission to the facility and also especially with a view to violations taking place during detention as an on-going assessment while detention continues.

CONCLUSION

- 44. The hearing provided a very fruitful opportunity for the members of CJ-DAM working on the legal instrument to receive the views and concerns from stakeholders of the civil society on the draft text. What was found particularly useful was the fact that many of the concerns addressed revolved around a limited number of topics (cf. paragraph 9 above). In this way, a very clear picture emerged where according to civil society the key issues of the project lie.
- 45. These key issues had been discussed extensively in the internal debates of CJ-DAM before. This was considered reassuring in the sense that it confirmed that CJ-DAM was dealing with the relevant aspects of the activity. The interventions of the participants in the hearing now provide more substance to go back to these debates and re-consider them in the light of the contributions received.
- 46. As it was not the intention for CJ-DAM to engage with the participants of the hearing in a debate or to take decisions on possible amendments on the text there and then, the hearing, together with the on-going written consultation, fully served its purpose to provide substantive aspects to be carefully taken into account in the further discussions on the draft recommendation.

APPENDIX I

Programme

Thursday 22 June 2017 - Morning session

9.30 Opening session

Opening remarks & introduction to the context and objectives of the meeting

- Ms Zuzana Fišerová, Chair of the European Committee on Legal Cooperation (CDCJ)
- Mr Tomáš Bocek, Special representative of the Secretary General for migration and refugees

10.00 Session 1

Chair / moderator - Ms Zuzana Fišerová, Chair of the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ)

Scope, structure, standards to be codified and their practical implementation

Introductory remarks

11.00 Coffee break

Guarantees and protection

Introductory remarks

13.00 Lunch

Thursday 22 June 2017 - Afternoon session

14.30 Session 2

Chair / moderator: Ms Tineke Strik, Member of the PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Member of the Dutch Senate

Administrative detention in other places than closed centres

Introductory remarks

16.00 Coffee break

Avoiding a prison-like environment

Introductory remarks

18.00 Close of day one

Friday 23 June 2017

9.30 **Session 3**

Chair / moderator. Mr Gert Westerveen, UNHCR Representative to the European Institutions in Strasbourg

Persons in a specific situation of vulnerability

Introductory remarks

11.00 Coffee break

Continuation of the debate

12.30 Closing session by:

- Mr Christoph Henrichs, Representative of Germany to the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), Rapporteur of the Hearing
- Ms Zuzana Fišerová, Chair of the European Committee on Legal Cooperation (CDCJ)

13.00 Close of hearing

APPENDIX II

List of Participants

MEMBER STATES / ETATS MEMBRES

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON LEGAL CO-OPERATION / COMITE EUROPEEN DE COOPERATION JURIDIQUE: CDCJ

COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION OF MIGRANTS / COMITE D'EXPERTS SUR LA RETENTION ADMINISTRATIVE DES MIGRANTS: CJ-DAM

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Member of the CJ-DAM / Membre du CJ-DAM

Federal Ministry of the Interior Department III/10

Fundamental and Human Rights

BELGIUM / BELGIQUE

Colette VAN LUL

Member of the CJ-DAM / Membre du CJ-DAM

Attaché, Droit européen (J2)

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CROATIA / CROATIA

Anita DAKIĆ

Member of the CJ-DAM / Membre du CJ-DAM Apologised - excusé

CZECH REPUBLIC / REPUBLIQUE TCHEQUE

Zuzana FIŠEROVÁ

Chair of CDCJ / Présidente du CDCJ Moderator of the Hearing / Modératrice de l'audition

Director, International Department for Civil Matters Ministry of Justice

Petr KONŮPKA

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Katrine BUSCH

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Deputy Head of Division

Division for Humanitarian Residence Permit and Return

Ministry of Immigration, Integration and Housing

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Member of the CJ-DAM / Membre du CJ-DAM

Apologised - excusé

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Senior Ministerial Counsellor

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EQUALITY DIVISION

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SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY I ORIENTATION SEXUELLE ET IDENTITÉ DE GENRE

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