



## REPORT

### **Visit-Autopsy of the MFHR delegation to the Immigration Pre-removal Detention Centre (YFEKA), Amygdaleza, Athens, Greece**

On 9 October 2014, a delegation from the Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights visited the pre-removal centre for the detention of aliens at Amygdaleza, Athens, Greece. The delegation consisted of Mr S. Mousouris, member of the Board of the MFHR and former UN Assistant Secretary-General, Mr P. Damianos, member of the Board of the MFHR and Director of the High School at the Special Juvenile Detention Centre, Avlona, Mr M. Margaritis, member of the MFHR Legal Committee and em. Judge of the Supreme Court of Greece (Areios Pagos) and Messrs K. Kazanas and G. Karavokyris, lawyers and MFHR research fellows.

During the visit, it was established that approximately 1,800 detainees are held at the above detention centre, among them approximately 90 juveniles, aged from 15 to 17, coming principally from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Somalia, and Nigeria.

It should be noted that the aliens who are held at the above mentioned pre-removal detention centre are detained pending deportation with full prisoner (and not 'guest') status and that in the case of many of them, their deportation is impossible because of the absence of diplomatic authorities of their country in Greece, the state of war existing in their country, the impossibility of checking their identity, etc. We would add that many of the aliens have been held there for more than 18 months (**cases of detention for up to 25 months have been discovered**).

The detention centre is divided into three sections; the juvenile aliens are detained in the third. The premises of the centre are completely fenced in with barbed-wire. The police force present numbers 400 police officers. The police officers service is supported

by 10-12 psychologists and interpreters. In addition, 8-10 individuals form the medical and nursing staff.

All the detainees live in containers; all the centre's services are also accommodated in containers. There are 6-8 detainees to each container and the container has air conditioning; the toilet is located inside it.

The detainees have to clean the interior of the container and its small forecourt on their own, as there are no cleaning staff. There is a strong unpleasant smell within the container and many of the detainees complained that they are not given cleaning materials. The medical services are totally inadequate. It is indicative that medical services are housed in a container in which 8-10 individuals form the medical staff which has to serve some 1,800 detainees, some of whom, according to the information supplied by the centre's doctors, suffer from **tuberculosis** and other infectious diseases.

The detainees are given three meals a day of a total value of **5.80** euro. The detainees complained of the small quantity and very poor quality of the food.

The detainees complained that the tension of the electric current frequently falls, so that the air conditioning within the container does not work and this gives rise to a stifling atmosphere. Some of the detainees complained of violent behaviour on the part of the police officers and of their unwillingness to accompany them to the doctor's surgery when they report some health problem. It was established that structures and equipment for exercise or for any kind of **recreational and educational activity are totally lacking**.

Although the above visit to the detention centre established that a little progress had been made in the conditions of detention as compared with the original situation and that prevailing at the rest of such centres in Greece, nevertheless, a shared attribute of these centres is the poor-quality infrastructures and the technical malfunctions. **The commonest problems are the restricted space, lack of natural lighting, heating, ventilation and cleaning facilities, poor workmanship, non-functioning equipment, lack of medical equipment, of space for exercise, of educational activities, of psychological support, etc.** The overcrowding of the detainees intensifies the obstruction of their enjoyment of even their most fundamental rights, while there is a considerable number of instances of negative and arbitrary conduct on the part of police officers. Nor should it be omitted that the cases of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases bear witness to the absence of cleanliness and hygiene on these premises.

The treatment accorded to these aliens is completely imbued by the spirit of (long-term) detention and in no way by that of (temporary) accommodation, even though they are

not convicts, but exclusively people as to whom the administrative measure of deportation is pending and, moreover, people who were **simply in pursuit of hope for a better life.**

Taking into consideration that respect in practice, without any discrimination, for the human rights of all those who live in a country is a fundamental value of a democratic society, the MFHR would point out that Greece has been repeatedly condemned by the European Court of Human Rights for degrading and inhuman treatment of detainees, particularly aliens, by reason of the conditions of detention.

It should be noted that the excessive number of aliens in Greece is disproportionate to the country's care facilities and that therefore it is essential that the Greek and European authorities take the indicated measures.

Our Foundation calls upon the Greek and European authorities to take all the necessary measures in order to put an end immediately to this inhuman state of affairs, particularly where it involves juveniles, which is a disgrace to Europe and its humanistic civilisation and to devote care to providing living conditions for these people consistent with human dignity.

The principle of solidarity is a fundamental value of the European Union and it is a common duty for the competent Greek and European authorities to work together for an improvement in this harsh situation.