

**Press release – Friday, March 27, 2015****Visit of KISA delegation to the detention center of Mennoyia**

On Tuesday, March 24, 2015, a delegation of KISA- Action for Equality, Support, Antiracism visited the detention center in Mennoyia and talked to 20 detainees, the big majority of which were in hunger strike.

Based to what was stated by the detainees, the conditions of detention have improved, but some members of the detention staff continue to have a bad behavior towards detainees. Particularly worrying is the complaint by a detainee concerning abuse by police officers of the Aliens and Immigration Office of the Police and incarceration to the Center of Mental Health as a means to repress his protest against his long-term detention, which, according to the European Court of Human Rights, constitutes an inhuman and degrading treatment.

The main comment of KISA delegation is that even though the conditions of detention have partly improved, violations of the basic rights of detainees persist. Most importantly, the Civil Registry and Migration Department continues to issue arrest and deportation orders illegally and long-term detention continues to be common in cases there is no prospect of deportation for various reasons.

More specifically, the delegation met a person, who lives in Cyprus for more than 10 years and has a minor child, who is a Cypriot citizen. He has been arrested in a completely arbitrary way by the police and is detained for deportation following actions of the mother of his child, who is Cypriot and seems to have access to power centers. As she herself told us *“we cannot protect him, because the Ministers of Interior and Justice decided to deport him”* after her actions and by violation of all laws and international conventions also guaranteeing, amongst others, the rights of the child itself.

A stateless Russian businessperson is detained for deportation purposes, for political reasons, as he claims, whereas at the moment there is no prospect of deporting him, since the Russian government has revoked his citizenship on vindictive grounds, as he claims. As a result of him being forced to conduct his businesses in Cyprus and abroad, from the detention center.

Many asylum seekers, whose applications for international protection are currently pending for examination, are illegally detained in Mennoyia detention center. The law forbids their deportation before the completion of the examination of their asylum applications.

Illegal is also the detention of a person, who has experienced trafficking. The office of the Ombudsperson has requested the competent authorities to release him and grant him permission to register his resident and work permit with another employer.

One of the hunger strikers with whom KISA met, lives in Cyprus along with his family for a long period of time. He has a minor child, who has been born in Cyprus and attends a public school here and one of his daughters is married to a Cypriot citizen. His detention results in the violation of his right to private and family life.

Moreover, a woman, who may have experienced trafficking for sexual exploitation and who has also filed an asylum application, is also detained in Mennoyia detention center. The Office of Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Police examines the possibility to recognise her as a victim of trafficking and the examination of her asylum application is still pending and therefore, the law forbids her deportation. Instead of providing her with psychological and other forms of support and protection, she is detained for the last three months for deportation purposes.

In the light of the above, KISA:

- Condemns the aforementioned illegal detentions and will proceed to represent individuals submitting complaints and taking any appropriate measures in Cyprus and internationally, so as to achieve their immediate release.
- Condemns and denounces the failure of the Republic of Cyprus to implement its obligations that derive from the Directive 2008/115/EC in regards to the returning of undocumented migrants, continuing to practice arbitrary arrests, detention, and deportations of migrants and thus violating the principles underlying the Directive and also the international law.
- Calls on the Minister of Interior to organise immediately a meeting to discuss the correct implementation of the Return Directive and the compliance with the legal procedures and frameworks for the effective implementation of the principles of the Directive 2008/115/EC, according to which:
 - The returns must be done with full respect of the fundamental rights of undocumented migrants and in accordance with just and transparent procedures.
 - The deportation constitutes the ultimate measure taken after exhaustion of voluntary departure procedures.
 - The detention constitutes the ultimate measure and can be ordered only if other less restrictive measures have been exhausted.
 - No person is arrested and detained without the existence of reasonable prospect of removal.

KISA Steering Committee

