

Joint Submission by Mobile Info Team, Border Criminologies and the Border Violence Monitoring Network

To the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)

Report on the conditions in Pre-Removal Detention Centres in Greece

December 2024



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**

About the submitting organisations

Mobile Info Team (MIT) has been working in Northern Greece since 2016, providing vital information and assistance to people on the move about the asylum procedure and related procedures in Greece. MIT raises awareness and advocates for changes to the asylum system in Greece. In relation to this briefing, MIT carried out research regarding access to procedures and the general conditions in detention centres on mainland Greece.

Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) is a coalition of organisations working to document internal violence, illegal pushbacks, collective expulsions, and police violence along the EU's external borders in the Western Balkans and Greece. The collection of data on illegal pushbacks and police violence is done by a consortium of independent field experts who are part of or cooperate with humanitarian support groups united through the Border Violence Monitoring Network. In relation to this briefing, BVMN carried out research into reports of police violence and ill-treatment in pre-removal detention facilities on the Greek mainland.

Based at the Centre for Criminology at the University of Oxford, **Border Criminologies** is an international network of researchers, practitioners, and those who have experienced border control. Established in 2013, we showcase cutting-edge original research from a range of perspectives to better understand the effect and harms of border control and to explore alternatives. Through a range of methods, including visual resources and first-hand accounts, Border Criminologies contributes to a greater understanding of law and policy.

The submitting organisations are united within the ongoing collaborative project, Detention Landscapes. The project seeks to develop and maintain an interactive, open access database of human rights violations inside immigration detention facilities, with an initial focus on Greece.¹

Our submission regarding Pre-Removal Detention Centres (PRDCs) in Greece

During its November 2023 visit, the CPT delegation carried out follow-up visits to Corinth PRDC, Fylakio PRDC, Kos PRDC, Paranesti PRDC, Petrou Ralli (Tavros) PRDC and Xanthi PRDC, and published its findings in a report issued in July 2024.² Between December 2023 and December 2024, the submitting organisations conducted research on the conditions in PRDCs in Greece, the findings of which indicate that the Greek State continues to act in direct violation of human rights standards and recommendations issued by the CPT following its November 2023 and numerous previous visits to PRDCs in Greece. We assert that Greece is subjecting third country nationals undergoing administrative detention in pre-removal facilities to conditions which could amount to torture or inhuman and degrading

¹ The Detention Landscapes platform can be accessed here: <https://detentionlandscapes.uwazi.io/>

² Council of Europe. 2024. Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 20 November to 1 December 2023. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/cocept/2024/en/148303>

treatment. In light of this, we urge the Committee to give special attention to the human rights situation in Greece's pre-removal facilities and to take appropriate action. This is crucial in order to increase pressure on Greece to end these violations that have persisted over the years and have been long documented both by the Committee and civil society organisations.

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I. Methodology

This submission draws on evidence gathered through semi-structured testimony interviews with individuals who experienced detention in pre-removal facilities after November 2023.³ Contact with respondents was facilitated through referrals from organisations that maintain direct contact with people in detention, including MIT. Most interviews were conducted remotely over the phone with the assistance of an interpreter. To ensure the safety of respondents, testimonies referenced in this submission underwent a process of anonymisation.

The majority of interviews were conducted with individuals who had undergone prolonged periods of detention across multiple facilities. The table below outlines the respondents whose testimonies are referenced in this submission.⁴

³ In some cases the individuals we interviewed entered detention before November 2023, see table below.

⁴ Several respondents were detained in police departments, in some cases for up to three months, prior to their transfer to a PRDC. The periods of detention referenced here pertain specifically to their time spent in PRDCs and do not include the total duration of their detention in police departments.

We additionally draw on secondary sources published after November 2023 to contextualise data and evidence the continuity of concerning practices within PRDCs, as well as testimonies collected between 2020 and 2023 which are publicly accessible on the Detention Landscapes website.⁵

MIT contributes valuable insights to this submission based on the daily interactions of our casework team with people in detention through hotlines run in six languages, which enable individuals to seek information and guidance regarding their rights in detention. Further, the submission builds on our collective ongoing monitoring work on pre-removal facilities in Greece, adding to a growing body of evidence regarding widespread human rights violations occurring within PRDCs in Greece⁶ and adding to research members of our organisations have been conducting for the past 10 years.⁷

II. Overview of detainee testimonies

	Age and nationality	Place of detention	Period of detention ⁸	
Respondent 1	24, Morocco	Paranesti PRDC	March 2023-January 2024 (9.5 months)	Link to full testimony
Respondent 2	44, Egypt	Amygdaleza PRDC, Paranesti PRDC	June 2023-March 2024 (8.5 months)	Link to full testimony
Respondent 3	43, Algeria	Amygdaleza PRDC, Corinth PRDC	August 2023-December 2023 (4 months)	Link to full testimony
Respondent 4	22, Egypt	Amygdaleza PRDC, Corinth PRDC	December 2023-August 2024 (8.5 months)	Link to full testimony

⁵ Testimony data published on the Detention Landscapes platform is available via the following link: [https://detentionlandscapes.uwazi.io/en/library/?q=\(allAggregations:!t_filters:\(\)_from:0_includeUnpublished:!t_limit:30_order:desc_sort:creationDate_treatAs:number_types:!\(%276144777f43834d239b3af94c%27\)_unpublished:!f\)](https://detentionlandscapes.uwazi.io/en/library/?q=(allAggregations:!t_filters:()_from:0_includeUnpublished:!t_limit:30_order:desc_sort:creationDate_treatAs:number_types:!(%276144777f43834d239b3af94c%27)_unpublished:!f))

⁶ Mobile Info Team. 2023. “Prison for Papers” Last Resort Measures Used as Standard Procedure. Available at: <https://www.mobileinfoteam.org/detention/>; Border Violence Monitoring Network. 2023. Dark Rooms, Degrading Treatment and Denial: The Use of Violence in Greece’s Pre-Removal Detention Centres. Available at: <https://borderviolence.eu/reports/detention-violence-greece/>; Detention Landscapes. N.d. Available at: <https://detentionlandscapes.uwazi.io/en/>

⁷ Andriani Fili. 2023. Documenting Immigration Detention in Greece: A Continuum of Extreme Violence and Complicity. Available at: <https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/188329/1/2023FiliPhD.pdf>; Mary Bosworth, Andriani Fili & Sharon Pickering. 2017. Women and border policing at the edges of Europe. Available at: <https://detentionlandscapes.uwazi.io/en/entity/426ejxomtri>; Andriani Fili. 2023. The maze of immigration detention in Greece: A case study of the Athens airport detention facility. Available at: <https://detentionlandscapes.uwazi.io/en/entity/tosmm4tbf>; Border Criminologies. 2019. Monitoring Immigration Detention at the Borders of Europe. Report on Turkey and Greece, 2018. Available at: <https://detentionlandscapes.uwazi.io/en/entity/qyykogksoph>; Mary Bosworth, Andriani Fili, and Sharon Pickering. 2013. Women’s Immigration Detention in Greece: Gender, Control, and Capacity. Available at: <https://detentionlandscapes.uwazi.io/en/entity/5fs3luj13ap>

⁸ This data refers to the period of detention at the time of interview when most respondents were in detention. In practice, the maximum time limit of administrative detention of 18 months, or even 36 months in certain cases, is excessively used and disproportionate. Source: <https://www.mobileinfoteam.org/detention>

Respondent 5	Not disclosed	Xanthi PRDC	January 2024 (2.5 weeks)	Link to full testimony
Respondent 6	23, Morocco	Paranesti PRDC	March 2024-April 2024 (1 month)	Link to full testimony
Respondent 7	22, Iran; 30, Iran ⁹	Paranesti PRDC	March 2024-May 2024 (3 months)	Link to full testimony
Respondent 8	37, Morocco	Amygdaleza PRDC, Paranesti PRDC	April 2024-November 2024 (7 months)	Link to full testimony
Respondent 9	32, Libya	Paranesti PRDC	August 2024-November 2024 (3 months)	Link to full testimony

III. Introduction: The systematic use of administrative detention in Greece

In its latest report on the conditions in PRDCs, the Committee recommended¹⁰ that detention should be used as a measure of last resort as prescribed in EU law.¹¹ It also stressed the importance of regular reviews to ensure detainees' right to be heard in person and that decisions related to detention are well-reasoned. Yet, the use of administrative detention is systematic rather than exceptional in both asylum procedures and return/deportation procedures in Greece. The Hellenic Police issued 12,772 detention orders in the first half of 2024, including 6,815 detention orders in deportation procedures which amounts to a 99.2% detention rate in deportation procedures.¹² According to EuroStat data,¹³ during the same period only 1,105 third country nationals were actually forcibly removed from Greece. An analysis of EuroStat data indicates that persons from nationalities which make up the majority of those in detention in Greece face an extremely low prospect of removal from Greece. Between January 2022 and June 2024, Greece issued 630 return orders to Moroccan nationals, however no Moroccan nationals were removed from Greece to Morocco during this period. The Greek state issued 3,225 return orders to Egyptian nationals during the same period, despite them facing a 0.8% prospect of removal.¹⁴ This reality

⁹ The respondents stated that they were detained for the same amount of time in two separate detention facilities where they shared similar experiences. Therefore, their testimonies were covered in a single interview.

¹⁰ Council of Europe. 2024. Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 20 November to 1 December 2023. P. 12. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/coecpt/2024/en/148303>

¹¹ See Article 15 of the Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast), available at: <https://bit.ly/3Y9xVIp>; See Article 15(1) of the Directive 2008/115/EC laying down standards for detention of third country nationals subjected to return procedures.

¹² Refugee Support Aegean. 2024. Immigration detention in Greece in the first half of 2024. Available at: <https://rsaagean.org/en/immigration-detention-greece-first-half-2024/>

¹³ Eurostat. 2024. Third-country nationals returned following an order to leave, by type of return, citizenship, country of destination, age and sex – quarterly. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_eirtn1_custom_14032505/default/table?lang=en

¹⁴ Mobile Info Team. 2024. [Twitter]. 27th August. Available at: <https://x.com/mobileinfoteam/status/1828438020246098405>

suggests a disregard for the need for individualised assessments and proportionality, which should guide the use of detention; thus, increasing the risk of individuals being subjected to arbitrary detention.

The systematic extension of the length of detention is of further concern, and in particular given the extremely limited prospect of removal for most individuals in detention in Greece. An analysis of 77 testimony interviews published on the Detention Landscapes platform and pertaining to detainees incarcerated in PRDCs between 2020 and 2024, indicates that detention is used systematically where there is no imminent prospect of removal: 18% of those interviewed had been in detention for 4-6 months at the time of interview, whilst 27% had been detained for 6-12 months and 12% for over 12 months. Additionally, detention is often extended due to the common practice of incarcerating third country nationals in police departments prior to their transfer to a pre-removal facility.¹⁵

IV. Reports of physical and psychological abuse in PRDCs

In its visit report, the Committee provided a detailed account of multiple reports concerning physical ill-treatment, verbal abuse, racist insults, and aggressive behavior, perpetrated by police officers towards foreign nationals detained at the PRDCs of Amygdaleza, Corinth, and Paranesti. This mistreatment often occurred in response to detainees' complaints or requests.¹⁶

A critical issue identified by the CPT delegation was the lack of effective mechanisms for detainees to file complaints. The Committee urged the Greek authorities to take stronger action to eliminate ill-treatment of foreign nationals in detention, particularly by the Hellenic Police, and advised that there should be thorough investigations into all allegations of abuse. It further emphasised the need to reiterate to police officers on a regular basis that foreign nationals must be treated with respect, and that any form of ill-treatment, including verbal abuse or racist language, is unacceptable and should be punished.¹⁷

In its response to the Committee's findings and recommendations, the Greek authorities denied any knowledge of complaints related to ill-treatment at Amygdaleza, Corinth or Paranesti, among other PRDCs, stating that no relevant complaints have been submitted by detainees or third parties.¹⁸ No reference was made to the existence of complaint mechanisms or the effectiveness of existing complaint mechanisms in PRDCs.

¹⁵ Filippou Kourakis. 2024. Immigration Detention in Police Stations in Greece: A Persistent and Cruel Practice. Available at: <https://blogs.law.ox.ac.uk/border-criminologies-blog/blog-post/2024/02/immigration-detention-police-stations-greece-persistent>; Andriani Fili. 2023. Documenting Immigration Detention in Greece: A Continuum of Extreme Violence and Complicity. Available at: <https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/188329/1/2023FiliPhD.pdf>

¹⁶ Council of Europe. 2024. Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 20 November to 1 December 2023. P. 11. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/coecpt/2024/en/148303>

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Council of Europe. 2024. Response of the Greek Government to the report of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) on its visit to Greece from 20 November to 1 December 2023. P.4. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/coecpt/2024/en/148304>

Despite the Greek authorities' lack of awareness regarding the situation, our research conducted in the period following the Committee's visit, when considered alongside previous findings,¹⁹ unequivocally confirms a recurring pattern of violence by police officers in PRDCs, particularly at the facilities in Paranesti and Corinth.

Paranesti PRDC

Respondent 1, a 44 year-old Egyptian national who was detained at Paranesti PRDC for nine and a half months, reported witnessing incidents of violence during which police officers reportedly beat detainees who had participated in protests against the conditions of detention. During these incidents police officers reportedly used batons to beat detainees in front of others, reportedly to make an example of them and, in the words of the respondent, *“to show to people that this is what happens to somebody if they try to resist.”*

The respondent further reported an incident where he was beaten by police officers. He reported that, after another detainee told officers that the respondent had drunk some of their milk, a police officer appeared to insult him in Greek. The respondent stated that he didn't understand what the officer was saying. The respondent then swore at the officer. He then reported the following incident: *“Six police officers took me outside my room and slapped and beat me. They put handcuffs on me very tightly for over one and a half hours. I was screaming from the pain, but they didn't care. They didn't want to open them [the handcuffs].”* The respondent shared his belief that Greek speakers or people who understood Greek were treated less harshly by the authorities in Paranesti PRDC and that the officers were deliberately more intimidating in their behaviour towards non-Greek speakers.

Respondent 9, who entered Paranesti PRDC in August 2024, reported that he had not directly experienced physical abuse but had witnessed the aftermath of beatings reportedly carried out by police officers against other detainees. The respondent recounted instances of detainees being taken to *“secret rooms”* located within the detention facility, by officers and then returning to their cells with visible injuries.²⁰ The respondent reported a specific incident involving a detainee who reportedly returned to his room with a severe eye injury filled with blood. The respondent further reported that such incidents were common and that other detainees had visible signs of abuse such as bruises, indicating that they had been beaten. The respondent reported that such incidents were common though not always witnessed as the officers reportedly acted covertly.

¹⁹ 74% of 77 individuals interviewed between 2020-2024 regarding their detention in PRDCs reported experiencing some form of violence perpetrated by authorities during their detention (in some cases such incidents occurred in a police station prior to the respondent's transfer to a pre-removal facility). Five individuals reported that they witnessed violent incidents perpetrated by authorities against other detainees. Testimony data collected between 2020-2024 may be accessed by filtering by testimony in the following data table:

[https://detentionlandscapes.uwazi.io/en/library/table?q=\(allAggregations:!f, filters:\(\) includeUnpublished:!f, order: desc, sort: creationDate, treatAs: number, types:!\(%276144777f43834d239b3af94c%27\). unpublished:!f\)](https://detentionlandscapes.uwazi.io/en/library/table?q=(allAggregations:!f, filters:() includeUnpublished:!f, order: desc, sort: creationDate, treatAs: number, types:!(%276144777f43834d239b3af94c%27). unpublished:!f))

²⁰ Interviews conducted during 2022 by the Border Violence Monitoring Network indicate a recurring practice of punitive violence carried out by police at Paranesti PRDC: <https://borderviolence.eu/reports/detention-violence-greece/>

Corinth PRDC

Regarding Corinth PRDC in particular, the Committee called for measures to prevent the use of informal punishments in the facility, and for senior management to be held accountable for ensuring the well-being of detainees and enforcing responsible practices.²¹ **Respondent 4** reported that he witnessed the violent repression of a protest in the outdoor area of Corinth PRDC by riot police in early 2024 (see screenshot taken from a video of this incident in Annex (Image 1), shared by the respondent). He further reported witnessing violence by police officers against detainees after they reportedly became agitated due to being denied medical care. In his statement he suggested that such practices by the authorities were commonplace: *“if somebody asks for a doctor, then they are not talked to, they are just being ignored, then this person will start shouting and so on, then they might be taken and beaten up”*.

A. Lack of complaint and accountability mechanisms

In both Paranesti and Corinth PRDCs, detainees confirmed the absence of functional complaint mechanisms and the lack of meaningful accountability for the police officers responsible for violence. Multiple respondents reported that hunger strikes at both facilities were common due to the lack of effective mechanisms for detainees to submit complaints regarding the conditions or to appeal their prolonged detention.

Paranesti PRDC

Respondent 2, an Egyptian national detained for 17 months at Amygdaleza PRDC and subsequently for eight months at Paranesti PRDC, reported that he went on hunger strike twice at Paranesti. The reported reasons for his strikes were to demand his transfer to a hospital for necessary medical treatment, to protest his prolonged detention, and demand release. He reported that police officers made promises relating to addressing the demands of those on hunger strikes, but did not follow through on these promises, subsequently undermining trust in the authorities among detainees. The respondent’s second hunger strike reportedly lasted four days and was prompted by his extended detention.

Corinth PRDC

Respondent 4 reported that detainees in Corinth frequently resorted to hunger strikes as a means of protesting their conditions and particularly their indefinite detention (*“Did we commit a crime? Do we belong in prison? These are the questions. This is why I hear and have to get out of this place and not be held for an unknown period of time”*). He reported that police officers typically referred people on hunger strike to the management of the facility, however no substantial improvement in the conditions of their detention resulted from this action. The respondent reported there was no other way to hold the authorities accountable, or even get their attention.

²¹ Council of Europe. 2024. Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 20 November to 1 December 2023. P. 11. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/coecept/2024/en/148303>

V. Carceral environment and poor material conditions

In its report, the Committee commented on the primary focus on security and containment in the structures of PRDCs, rather than on providing humane conditions for detainees. Paranesti in particular was described as a prison-like environment, surrounded by multiple layers of barbed wire fences and watchtowers (see Annex, Image 7). Further, the Committee found that living conditions across PRDCs were generally very poor and detainees faced unsanitary accommodation facilities, low food quality, limited access to personal belongings, inadequate clothing and limited opportunities for outdoor exercise, as well as overcrowding in some facilities.²²

The Committee issued a number of specific recommendations to the Greek authorities to address these issues directly and improve the living conditions of persons detained in pre-removal facilities. In their response, the Greek authorities asserted that adequate measures are in place to ensure compliance with these recommendations, including regular cleaning, facility maintenance, and disinfection of all areas. The authorities further asserted that detainees are provided with adequate food and personal hygiene items, and that detention wings are equipped with heating, cooling and hot water.²³

Reports from testimonies indicate that the authorities' response does not reflect the reality of pre-removal facilities in Greece and no concrete action has been taken to improve conditions in these facilities along the lines of recommendations issued by the CPT.²⁴

Paranesti PRDC

Respondents **1, 2, 3, 7 and 9** reported that the rooms they were provided with in Paranesti PRDC were often overcrowded. For example, one respondent shared a room with six other people, while another mentioned that rooms sometimes accommodated up to 12 detainees. The rooms were equipped with bunk beds, but space was limited. Beds were described as very uncomfortable, with slats too far apart, causing back pain. Additionally, the bedding was reportedly dirty and infested with bed bugs. Whilst a cleaning team reportedly came on a daily basis to clean communal spaces, respondents reported that the rooms in which they slept remained unsanitary, with reported infestations of cockroaches and bed bugs.

The rooms in Paranesti were reportedly equipped with basic amenities like a fridge, but respondents reported significant issues with heating and comfort. Some respondents mentioned that, while there was hot water, it was available only for limited periods, which impacted detainees' ability to shower regularly.

²² Council of Europe. 2024. Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 20 November to 1 December 2023. PP. 21-24. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/coecpt/2024/en/148303>

²³ Council of Europe. 2024. Response of the Greek Government to the report of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) on its visit to Greece from 20 November to 1 December 2023. PP. 11-18. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/coecpt/2024/en/148304>

²⁴ 81% of 77 individuals interviewed for the Detention Landscapes project between 2020 and 2024 reported low quality or very poor hygiene conditions in pre-removal detention.

Respondents also reported that at times, the electricity would be turned off at night, causing inconvenience. When detainees complained, the electricity was reportedly restored only in the morning. Detainees at Paranesti reported that they did not receive sufficient amounts of hygiene products to help them stay clean. Respondents were reportedly provided with only small amounts of shampoo and soap on a monthly basis.

Respondents also described the food provided at Paranesti to be of poor quality, and often undercooked. Detainees were reportedly given food twice a day, but portions were small, and food distribution was said to be disorganised. One respondent additionally mentioned that when food shortages occurred, detainees had to protest or go on hunger strike to demand sufficient food provision. The quality of tap water was described as extremely poor, and detainees often had to purchase bottled water from a market that visited the facility.

Corinth PRDC

Similar conditions were reported by **Respondents 3 and 4** who were subjected to the detention conditions of Corinth PRDC.

Respondent 3, who spent 28 days at the facility, described overcrowded and prison-cell like rooms (see Annex, Image 3) with up to 25 people sharing a space. Whilst there were sufficient beds, mattresses were reportedly infested with bed bugs, and there was no access to hot water. He reported that detainees are provided with products to clean their rooms once during their detention and thereafter had to purchase these items themselves. The food was described by the respondent as terrible and inedible, and he further noted that detainees were only allowed access to outside spaces for two to three hours per day.

Respondent 4 corroborated these observations, describing the bathrooms and rooms at Corinth as “*disgusting*” and infested with insects (see Annex, Image 2). The food was provided in insufficient quantities, and whilst the respondent reported that two to three meals provided in any given week were acceptable in quality, the vast majority of food was of extremely poor quality, severely impacting the physical and mental wellbeing of detainees.

Amygdaleza PRDC

Respondent 4 also reported extremely poor conditions at Amygdaleza PRDC. Upon arrival, he and other detainees were left without proper clothing for the first 10 days, wearing only the clothes they had when they arrived. Over the 53 days spent at the facility, the respondent described the rooms as filthy and infested with insects. Detainees received only two meals per day, and the overall hygiene and sanitation were extremely poor.

Similar complaints were made by **Respondent 8** who highlighted the lack of hygiene supplies, poor-quality food, and unsanitary living conditions in Amygdaleza PRDC.

Xanthi PRDC

Respondent 5 described poor conditions in Xanthi PRDC. Access to hot water was limited to one hour time slots three times per week. The cleanliness of the facility was substandard (see Annex, Images 5-6), and detainees reportedly received minimal hygiene supplies that failed to meet their basic needs. The respondent also noted the presence of cockroaches in the living areas, and whilst the meals provided were edible, the quantity was sometimes insufficient. The respondent's experience did not reflect the Greek authorities' narrative, according to which living areas in Xanthi are disinfected monthly and the detainees receive cleaning supplies, personal hygiene items and regularly cleaned blankets.²⁵

VI. Limited access to healthcare

A. Lack of access to adequate medical examination and assistance

Despite related recommendations in 2016, 2018, and 2020, the Committee confirmed in its July 2024 report that the conditions regarding access to healthcare in Greece's PRDCs remain largely unchanged, with persistent deficiencies that continue to severely compromise detainees' physical and psychological well being.²⁶ Corinth and Paranesti PRDCs were among those found to be facing serious shortcomings that urgently need to be addressed.

The Greek authorities' response to these findings and recommendations fails to concretely address the Committee's concerns. The authorities explain that since 2018, health services in PRDCs have been managed by the Ministry of Health and provided a breakdown of staffing levels at various PRDCs, including those in Amygdaleza, Corinth and Paranesti. Despite expressing its commitment to address the issue and acknowledgement of delays in the recruitment process, no explanation was given as to the reason behind these delays. Indeed, data provided by the Greek government elsewhere²⁷ indicates a severe shortage of medical staff at the end of June 2024:

- 5 medical and psychosocial support staff at Amygdaleza PRDC (2 nurses, 2 health visitors, 1 psychologist) for 647 detainees;
- 6 medical and psychosocial support staff at Corinth PRDC (1 doctor, 2 nurses, 2 health visitors, 1 psychologist) for 493 detainees;
- 4 medical and psychosocial support staff at Paranesti PRDC (3 nurses, 1 psychologist) for 303 detainees;
- and 3 medical and psychosocial support staff at Xanthi PRDC (1 doctor and 2 nurses) for 216 detainees.

²⁵ Council of Europe. 2024. Response of the Greek Government to the report of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) on its visit to Greece from 20 November to 1 December 2023. P. 12. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/coecept/2024/en/148304>

²⁶ Council of Europe. 2024. Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 20 November to 1 December 2023. P. 26. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/coecept/2024/en/148303>

²⁷ Council of Europe. 2024. Communication from Greece concerning the group of cases of M.S.S. v. Greece (Application No. 30696/09). Available at: [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22DH-DD\(2024\)934E%22%5D%7D](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22DH-DD(2024)934E%22%5D%7D)

Our research confirms²⁸ that the healthcare challenges identified in the Committee’s last and previous reports continue to persist in Greek PRDCs, with deeply entrenched barriers to timely and effective medical intervention.

Paranesti PRDC

Respondent 1 described the medical staff at Paranesti as extremely limited, consisting of just one doctor and four nurses. The respondent explained that detainees had to rely on police officers to write their names down if they wanted to see a doctor. However, many detainees including the respondent were reportedly told they were on the list but did not ever see a doctor. At the time of the respondent’s detention, there was also a reported shortage of medicine and detainees with specific medical needs had to wait for extended periods of time to access treatment. **Respondent 6** also noted long waiting times to see a doctor at Paranesti. **Respondent 7** reported that he believed there was no doctor present at Paranesti during his detention there from March to May 2024.

Additionally, both **Respondent 1** and **Respondent 6** reported that there were several suicide attempts and incidents of self-harm among other detainees during the time they were incarcerated at Paranesti. One respondent reported his belief that priority for accessing medical attention was given to detainees who had attempted suicide, engaged in self harm or participated in a protest, while others’ medical needs were generally not met. According to **Respondent 7**, only basic medication, like paracetamol, was provided by staff working at Paranesti. According to the respondent, one detainee suffered from severe toothache for two months but was denied access to a dentist.

Corinth PRDC

Respondent 3 described the medical care at Corinth as inadequate, with most health issues being treated with basic medications such as paracetamol. The respondent reported that serious medical conditions were often ignored or inadequately addressed. **Respondent 4** also confirmed the poor access to medical care at Corinth. Despite requesting medical assistance multiple times, the respondent reported that the medical staff were either unavailable or took a long time to tend to his needs. He mentioned that the detainees who needed medical attention often had to wait for days, and only a few detainees were able to see a doctor. He described the situation as frustrating and harmful, with medical needs of detainees routinely left unmet.

Amygdaleza PRDC

Respondent 3 described his experience at Amygdaleza as “catastrophic”, particularly pointing out the poor mental health of many detainees in the facility. The respondent witnessed deteriorating mental health conditions among detainees, exacerbated by the prolonged detention and lack of adequate healthcare.

²⁸ 21% of 77 individuals interviewed for the Detention Landscapes project between 2020-2024 regarding their detention in a PRDC, reported that they had no access at all to medical aid during their detention; 60% reported that they had some access to healthcare in detention, but limited and insufficient to meet their needs.

Respondent 4 emphasised the lack of access to medical care at Amygdaleza, reporting that detainees were routinely told “*tomorrow, tomorrow*” by police officers when requesting medical assistance, but never actually received help. Despite requesting medical care several times, the respondent and others in his group were left untreated, with only a few detainees able to see a doctor.

Xanthi PRDC

Respondent 5 reported having relatively better access to healthcare at Xanthi compared to other centres. He reported access to both a psychiatrist and a psychologist, and when needed, he was taken to hospital for treatment. However, he mentioned a lack of adequate medication for his needs. Despite seeing medical professionals, the respondent was not provided with the correct prescription for his condition, indicating that the healthcare system at Xanthi, though better than others, still had notable shortcomings.

B. Lack of access to adequate psychosocial support

The Committee recommended the presence of part-time psychiatric care in all PRDCs. It urged the Greek authorities to improve psychiatric care in Corinth in particular, ensuring that detainees receive adequate follow-up care for mental health conditions, which according to the Committee had been grossly neglected.²⁹

In their response, the Greek authorities failed to acknowledge the severity of the situation. Our research indicates that across all PRDCs, detainees consistently reported a pervasive lack of provision for mental health care. This severe neglect of mental health issues may be linked to instances of self-harm and deterioration in the psychological wellbeing of detainees.

Paranesti PRDC

Respondent 2 detailed the severe psychological toll of detention on detainees at Paranesti, including frequent incidents of self-harm. He described seeing detainees attempting suicide, stabbing themselves with knives, and cutting themselves with razors. The respondent explained that the medication provided by the authorities, intended to calm detainees, often had the opposite effect, making them agitated.

Respondent 8 reported that detainees at Paranesti, after prolonged stays, often experience severe mental health issues. In extreme cases, as he reported, detainees engage in self-harm as a coping mechanism. One example given was a detainee who cut a vein in his hand. This individual, according to the respondent’s testimony, was taken to hospital for treatment, but later returned to the detention centre without adequate follow-up care.

²⁹ Council of Europe. 2024. Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 20 November to 1 December 2023. P. 27. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/coecpt/2024/en/148303>

Respondent 6 also provided reports of incidents during which his fellow inmates attempted suicide. In one of these incidents, a man of Syrian nationality attempted suicide by hanging but was saved when the string broke. This individual was reportedly subsequently injected with medication by authorities at Paranesti and left bedridden for days, showing severe mental distress. This respondent reported another case in Paranesti of a Moroccan detainee who drank cleaning liquid in an attempt to harm himself.

Complaints of severe physical and psychological suffering have also been received on multiple occasions by detainees reaching out to the MIT hotlines. One individual in detention in Paranesti reported that many detainees, especially young people, displayed extreme psychological distress and in some cases attempted suicide while incarcerated. The respondent specifically linked these incidents to the systematic lack of access to adequate psychiatric care and support for detainees in Paranesti, in addition to the poor conditions in which they are held for extended periods of time. In the context of this complaint, the respondent reported feelings of being trapped and in a state of severe despair, with no apparent possibility to escape or improve the conditions in which he was held. Another individual reported to MIT that he had attempted suicide due to the severe psychological toll caused by his prolonged detention in Corinth and Amygdaleza PRDCs. Despite having received medical documents attesting to his poor mental health condition, the respondent reported that he had not received any specialised care in detention.

Corinth PRDC

MIT received several more complaints after November 2023 of detainees in Corinth reporting inadequate medical and psychological care.³⁰ One case concerned an individual suffering from a heart condition, who reported that he had not been transferred to a hospital for necessary medical attention and also reported suicidal thoughts due to the living conditions in Corinth. He reported that he requested on multiple occasions to see a psychiatrist but the authorities at Corinth had not made a referral. A second complainant also highlighted a lack of access to healthcare, with only painkillers being provided by the detention centre staff. He also reported that he had a psychological disability but had not received adequate care or support for this.

VII. Limited access to legal assistance and information

The Committee found that in PRDCs detainees often experience severe uncertainty and distress due to a lack of information regarding their rights, detention status, and legal procedures. The Committee issued recommendations related to ensuring that detainees are informed of their rights in a language they can understand and have free and unhindered access to legal assistance throughout their detention.

In response to these recommendations, the Greek authorities submitted that information leaflets are available in multiple languages and displayed prominently in detention facilities, and that copies of these leaflets are given to detainees upon arrival. According to the authorities, all detainees are entitled to be visited by a lawyer, and there are no time restrictions placed on the lawyer's contact with detainees, apart from security measures and facility operating rules. They further asserted that various organisations are

³⁰ Mobile Info Team. 2024. "When and how will I get out of here?" Deteriorating mental health of detainees at Corinth detention centre. Available at: <https://www.mobileinfoteam.org/corinth-mental-health>

involved in providing legal assistance, and are granted daily access to detention facilities. Additionally, the authorities suggest that hiring of legal practitioners to support people in detention has been implemented under a “free legal assistance” project funded by the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).³¹

Regrettably, our research indicates that since the Committee’s visit and follow-up recommendations issued to the authorities, individuals in detention have continued to report a severe lack of access to clear and accessible information and assistance to help them understand their legal status and rights in detention.

Paranesti PRDC

Respondent 1 described the legal assistance available to people detained under the asylum procedure at Paranesti as “*useless*” and reported that detainees do not use this provision due to the low quality of aid provided. As a result, the respondent reported that detainees at Paranesti frequently pay large sums to hire private lawyers, in some cases thousands of euros.

Respondent 9 reported receiving limited information from the authorities regarding the asylum process at Paranesti, and further stated that he was unable to contact a lawyer or access external support during his detention, despite applying for asylum.

Respondent 7 and **Respondent 6** reported still being uncertain of the reasons for their detention and felt they were not receiving adequate legal information or support.

Corinth PRDC

Respondent 4, who was transferred from Amygdaleza to Corinth, reported receiving no prior information about the reasons for his transfer or the procedures he would face. On the day of the transfer, facility staff woke him up at 5am and informed him that he was being transferred, without any warning or preparation. Additionally, he had not received any document outlining how long he would be detained or the specifics of his forced deportation. The respondent further reported that during his detention at Corinth, there was a lack of information provided regarding his legal situation. He was informed by a translator working at the facility that he could be detained in Corinth for up to 18 months, but reported that no further information was provided about his legal rights. After appealing the rejection of his asylum claim in February 2024, he did not receive any further legal advice or updates. The only document he received was related to the extension of his detention, without receiving any substantial guidance on how to proceed with his legal case.

³¹ Although we cannot confirm whether or not this has been implemented in practice, in the next section on interpretation we outline some concerns regarding the general administration and financial management of AMIF-funded projects in Greece.

Amygdaleza PRDC

Respondent 2 reported that his wish to apply for asylum in Greece was disregarded by the authorities: “[i]t was clear since day one that I am a political refugee and that I want to apply for asylum in Greece, but they didn’t listen to me at all and I told them that I was in prison in my country and that’s why I left there. It was clear for them”. He explained that he managed to apply for asylum only once he was transferred to Paranesti PRDC. He further reported that he did not receive any legal support or translation assistance at Amygdaleza, which left him at a disadvantage in presenting his asylum claim.

VIII. Limited access to interpretation services

The Committee found that there continues to be a significant shortage of interpretation services across all detention facilities in Greece, a problem also identified in its previous visits in 2018 and 2020. The Committee noted how staff, including police officers, often struggled to communicate with detained foreign nationals, relying on detainees themselves who spoke English or Greek to interpret, including for medical consultations.

In relation to these findings, the Committee urged the Greek authorities to ensure that all foreign nationals in detention have access to qualified interpreters, including via phone or video-conferencing when in-person interpreters are unavailable. According to the Committee, detainees should also not be required to sign documents in Greek unless they understand the contents. They should be provided with translated documents or have the content explained to them in a language they understand.

According to data provided by the Greek government,³² at the end of June 2024 there were two interpreters for 647 detainees at Amygdaleza PRDC, one interpreter for 493 detainees at Corinth PRDC, and one interpreter for 216 detainees at Xanthi. At this time there were no interpreters present in Paranesti PRDC for the 303 individuals detained there.

In their response to the Committee, the authorities reported that under the EU Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) for the 2021-2027 period, “specific provisions have been made” for linguistic assistance to third country nationals under return procedures, and that this funding supports the recruitment of interpreters to facilitate communication between detainees and authorities.³³ However, a communication sent from the government to the Council of Europe in relation to the supervision of the cases of *M.S.S. v. Greece* indicates that this provision is planned for 2025 and is not yet implemented.³⁴ Moreover, whilst we note that the government has issued an invitation to the Hellenic Police to submit a

³² Council of Europe. 2024. Communication from Greece concerning the group of cases of *M.S.S. v. Greece* (Application No. 30696/09). Available at: [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22DH-DD\(2024\)934E%22%5D%7D](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22DH-DD(2024)934E%22%5D%7D)

³³ Council of Europe. 2024. Response of the Greek Government to the report of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) on its visit to Greece from 20 November to 1 December 2023. P.7. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/cocept/2024/en/148304>

³⁴ Council of Europe. 2024. Communication from Greece concerning the group of cases of *M.S.S. v. Greece* (Application No. 30696/09). Available at: [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22DH-DD\(2024\)934E%22%5D%7D](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22execidentifier%22:%5B%22DH-DD(2024)934E%22%5D%7D)

proposal for this project, with a deadline of end of 2024,³⁵ there are a number of well-founded concerns regarding the use of AMIF funding by the Greek government, following the extensive interruptions to services funded under this stream during 2024.³⁶ It should also be noted that this funding is intended to support the expansion of the Greek detention estate by creating 400 new spaces in detention,³⁷ which indicates that the authorities intend to continue the widespread and systematic use of detention for third country nationals and asylum seekers without individualised assessment.

In contrast to Greece's response, which by no means acknowledges the severe lack of interpretation in its PRDCs, the testimonies we collected clearly demonstrate the ongoing issue of inadequate access to interpretation services, which directly impacts the ability of detainees to understand their legal status, communicate their needs to the authorities and access critical medical care.³⁸

Paranesti PRDC

Respondent 2 reported that there were no translators available in Paranesti during his detention there in early 2024. **Respondent 1**, who was detained at Paranesti at the end of 2023, reported that he relied on other detainees to interpret for him during medical appointments held at the facility. The respondent shared that the lack of interpretation impacted all detainees, who reportedly relied on other detainees or physical gestures in order to communicate with the authorities working at the detention centre.

Respondent 7 reported that he worked unofficially as a translator for police officers in Paranesti, however he did not receive any compensation for his work.

Amygdaleza PRDC

In Amygdaleza, **Respondent 8** highlighted the absence of information provided in a language he understood, particularly regarding the duration of his detention, contributing to uncertainty and confusion about his legal status and future in Greece. **Respondent 2** was not provided with explanations or translations in a language he could understand either, leaving him unaware of his rights.

³⁵ Ministry of Citizen Protection. 2024. Structures and Functionality of Pre-Removal Detention Centers – Sub-project: Operation Prokeka. Available at:

<https://diavgeia.gov.gr/decision/view/91%CE%A3%CE%9946%CE%9C%CE%A4%CE%9B%CE%92-%CE%93%CE%98%CE%9B>

³⁶ See, for example, NGO statements highlighting interruptions to EU-funded cash assistance payments:

https://refugeelegalsupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Joint-NGO-Statement-Cash-Assistance-Stop_Sep-24.pdf; and severe gaps in EU-funded interpretation provision for asylum procedures and reception facilities in Greece:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/597473fe9de4bb2cc35c376a/t/6724cfe1e69d816ccab4a158/1730465762167/Open+letter+on+Interpretation+Services.pdf>

³⁷ Ministry of Citizen Protection. 2024. Structures and Functionality of Pre-Removal Detention Centers – Sub-project: Operation Prokeka. Available at:

<https://diavgeia.gov.gr/decision/view/91%CE%A3%CE%9946%CE%9C%CE%A4%CE%9B%CE%92-%CE%93%CE%98%CE%9B>

³⁸ 44% of 77 individuals interviewed for the Detention Landscapes project between 2020-2024 reported being forced to sign documents in a language they did not understand during their detention in a PRDC; furthermore, 32% reported being forced and without the assistance of a translator to help them understand the documents.

Respondent 4 described a particularly concerning incident in which he was pressured into signing documents written in Greek which were not translated and without the assistance of an interpreter to help him understand their contents. He explained that he was required to sign these documents shortly after arriving in Amygdaleza and he only later learned that one of the documents was a six-month detention order. The respondent further reported that he felt coerced into signing due to threats of deportation by police officers working at the facility.

IX. Restrictions on mobile phone use at the Paranesti facility

The Committee's report of July 2024 recommended that detainees should have regular access to their mobile phones to ensure they are able to do so as to not be limited in their ability to communicate effectively with the outside world, and questioned the Greek authorities' differing policies on the use of mobile phones with cameras in PRDCs.³⁹

In their response, the Greek authorities make minimal reference to the issue of access to mobile phones. Regarding Paranesti, the authorities asserted that "the detained foreign nationals can make use of their mobile phones."⁴⁰

We would like to highlight to the Committee the ongoing systematic practice of removing cameras from detainees' phones in the Paranesti facility, not only limiting their means of communication with the outside world, including their family and loved ones, but also limiting their ability to document the violations and the inhumane living conditions they are subjected to.

Paranesti PRDC

All respondents who were detained in Paranesti specifically reported that phones are systematically confiscated on arrival at the facility and, when returned to detainees, phone cameras are either smashed or removed.

Respondent 1 reported that upon arrival at Paranesti PRDC in April 2023, his and other detainees' phone cameras were smashed. **Respondent 7**, who entered Paranesti in March 2024, reported that the removal of cameras prevented detainees from sending photos or making video calls to their families, leading to their further isolation from support networks.

During 2024, MIT supported several clients in the Paranesti detention centre who were not able to send key documentation related to their legal case, due to the removal of phone cameras by the authorities.

³⁹ Council of Europe. 2024. Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 20 November to 1 December 2023. P. 15. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/cocept/2024/en/148303>

⁴⁰ Council of Europe. 2024. Response of the Greek Government to the report of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) on its visit to Greece from 20 November to 1 December 2023. P.12. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/cocept/2024/en/148304>

This practice in Paranesti, which appears to be systematic, limits the detainees' ability to both communicate with the outside world and access legal assistance.

X. Conclusion

This extensive report aims to document the dire conditions prevalent within Greek pre-removal detention facilities, presenting an alarming account of the severe human rights violations occurring within these centres. The testimonies collected from detainees illustrate the pervasive issues of ill-treatment, with conditions that, we assert, could amount to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment. Key concerns highlighted in this submission include the alarming prevalence of physical abuse inflicted by authorities, dehumanising living conditions, insufficient provisions of food and medical care, and incidents of discrimination against detainees.

These findings underscore an urgent need for immediate and decisive action from the European Council's Committee on the Prevention of Torture. The documented violations not only contravene established human rights standards but also place detainees in continual states of jeopardy, risking their physical and mental well-being. Yet, despite the sheer number of human rights violations and their consistency, the Greek authorities have been consistently denying this reality. Officials claim that the existing legal framework for the protection of human rights is sufficient to ensure the rights of detainees are upheld. Furthermore, they contend that any reported abuses are merely isolated incidents attributed to "rogue" police officers,⁴¹ dismissing the accounts of detainees as fabrications aimed at securing their release.⁴² An illustrative example can be seen in the ongoing issues reported at the Petrou Ralli facility. Despite numerous monitoring visits and a series of reports documenting violent incidents, the facility's director adamantly assured one of our members that there had been no oversight or reports of problems, reflecting a troubling complacency with and denial of systemic issues within the centre.⁴³ Given the severity and historical prevalence of these human rights abuses, the intervention of the Committee is essential. Such action is crucial to initiate reforms aimed at addressing these human rights abuses and to ensure that those who are deprived of their liberty are treated with the dignity and respect that they inherently deserve.

⁴¹ For example: Council of Europe. 2010. Report to the Government of Greece on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 17 to 29 September 2009. Available at:

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806965ee>

⁴² For example: Council of Europe. Report to the Government of Greece on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 26 October to 2 November 1999. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16806964f0>

⁴³ Andriani Fili. 2023. Documenting Immigration Detention in Greece: A Continuum of Extreme Violence and Complicity. Available at: <https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/188329/1/2023FiliPhD.pdf>

XI. Annex: Photos of Pre-Removal Detention Centres in Greece

Image 1:

Screenshot of video showing riot police suppressing a protest in Corinth PRDC. Early 2024. [Link to full video.](#)



Image 2:

Screenshot of video showing bathroom facilities for detainees in poor condition, Corinth PRDC. February 2023. [Link to full video.](#)

**Image 3:**

Screenshot of video showing prison-like cells inside Corinth PRDC. February 2023. [Link to image source.](#)

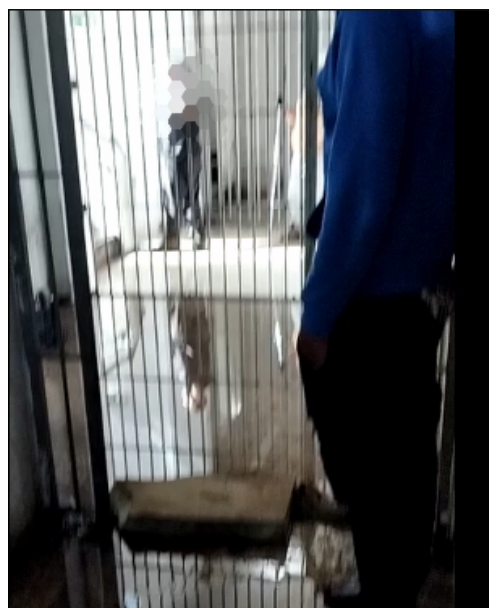


Image 4:

Dilapidated container in Amygdaleza PRDC. December 2022. [Link to image source.](#)

**Images 5 and 6:**

Shower and dilapidated room in Xanthi PRDC. 2022. Link to image sources [here](#) and [here](#).



Image 7:

Detainees in Paranesti PRDC, showing carceral infrastructure. Unknown date. [Link to image source.](#)

