



Athens, 16 May 2019

Press Release

SUBJECT: Immediate abolition of the use of unsuitable detention facilities

The non-governmental organization AITHMA, along with 15 other Greek and foreign actors from civil society and academia, is addressing an open letter to the leadership of the Ministry of Citizen Protection and the head of the Greek Police regarding the continued detention of irregular immigrants and asylum seekers in inappropriate facilities in violation of Greek, European and international law.

The head of the non-governmental organization AITIMA, Spyros Rizakos, states that: "The administrative detention of migrants and asylum seekers in inhuman and degrading conditions is a black spot for our country which the competent authorities ought to eliminate."

In their letter, the above-mentioned bodies initially refer to a number of problems related to the administrative detention system both with regard to the procedures followed by the competent services and regarding the conditions of detention, stressing that they attach equal weight to all the problems and inviting the competent authorities to deal with them.

However, they are particularly concerned with the use of inappropriate sites for the administrative detention of irregular immigrants and asylum seekers, indicating, as a matter of course, the detention facilities of the Police Departments as inadequately inappropriate facilities, since in such places there is not even the possibility for the detainees to have access to outdoor exercise. As noted in the letter, hundreds of people remain in such places for a period ranging from weeks to months.

This practice of the competent Greek authorities has led to successive rulings by the European Court of Human Rights with which Greece has been convicted of inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees, as well as continuous adverse reports by the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman and Degrading Treatment.

Michelle Le Voy, director of the European PICUM Network, characteristically says: "The findings of the Committee on the Prevention of Torture in Greece sadly confirm similar reports from 2017 and 2014: the Greek authorities continue to detain thousands of people, often repeatedly and only because of their lack of residence status in places with no basic facilities, including in police stations. We call the Greek government to uphold European law and its

international commitments by implementing alternatives to detention, as foreseen in EU law and the Global Compact on Migration”.

The co-signatories call on the Minister of Citizen Protection and the Chief of the Hellenic Police to proceed to the immediate abolition of the use of inappropriate sites for the detention of irregular migrants and asylum seekers so that Greece complies with the relevant legislation, the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and the recommendations of the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman and Degrading Treatment.

The President of the Community of Afghan Migrants and Refugees in Greece, co-signing the open letter, Tahir Aliazanta, stresses that: "Our compatriots who leave Afghanistan to escape war and persecution come to Greece to find protection. Often, however, they are detained in places where they do not even see the sunlight. It is very ugly for Greece to deal with people like this. This has to stop".

The Open Letter co-sign:

AITHMA

GREEK COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

GREEK HELSINKI MONITOR

GREEK FORUM OF MIGRANTS

GREEK FORUM OF REFUGEES

Community of Afghan Migrants and Refugees in Greece

World Without Wars and Violence

PRAKSIS

Solidarity Now

Refugee Legal Support Athens

European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)

International Detention Coalition

Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)

Equal Rights Beyond Borders

Refugee Rights Europe

Border Criminologies-Oxford University

*For more information: Spyros Rizakos: + 30 6977280984

**NGO AITIMA, Tripou 4-6 Koukaki, 117 41, tel.: + 30 210 9241677,
aitima@freemail.gr**