



## **ONGOING HUNGER STRIKE AT PARANESTI PRE-REMOVAL DETENTION CENTRE**

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20th March 2023

At least 11 people are on hunger strike in Paranesti Pre-Removal Detention Centre (PRDC) located in Drama, northern Greece. The group states that they are protesting against their prolonged detention, dire conditions and the repeated incidents of police violence within the facility.

According to [a statement](#) released by those involved in the protest, the strike started on 16<sup>th</sup> March in response to the ongoing denial of detainees' basic rights at the PRDC, including reports of the authorities denying detainees access to warm water, adequate food, and medicine. Detainees specifically detail that they are forced to sleep on thin mattresses in cells which are dirty and infested with cockroaches.

The statement further highlights the critical lack of information that detainees have received regarding the reasons for their detention, explaining that they have been forced to sign papers in Greek without translation assistance, and reportedly experience physical abuse from police if they refuse to do so. These incidents are not isolated and were evidenced extensively in BVMN partner [Mobile Info Team's recent research](#) where over a third of respondents were forced to sign documents in a language that they did not understand.

A similar hunger strike took place in Paranesti [in 2021](#) in response to people being detained beyond 18 months, and following repeated incidents of violence by police officers including storming of cells and beating detainees with batons. [Research carried out by BVMN](#) in 2022 showed that detainees at PRDCs on mainland Greece routinely face brutal abuse in response to hunger strikes and other forms of protest, with 80% of respondents detained at Paranesti reporting violence by the authorities. One individual described a form of alleged punishment whereby he was taken to a room and beaten by officers with batons while his hands were tied up.

According to EU legislation, detention should be used as a measure of last resort. Yet since the passing of the International Protection Act (IPA) in 2020 and the following amendments, third country nationals are *de facto* detained in view of deportation in Greece, despite the number of removals from Greece declining since 2018. This raises questions regarding the reasonable prospect of removal, proportionality and lawfulness of detention. As a result, people are held for extensive periods of time in appalling conditions. [Mobile Info Team's research](#) indicates that over 60% of respondents reported poor hygiene conditions, and 80% experienced extremely limited access to medical care, or none whatsoever.

The documentation of inhumane conditions and violent abuse of detainees is severely restricted due to the fact that detainees routinely have their mobile devices confiscated and cameras broken when they are taken to Paranesti PRDC.

We, the Border Violence Monitoring Network, put forward our concerns about the severe repercussions of the excessive use of detention on the physical and mental wellbeing of detainees. The frequency of reports pertaining to violent treatment in detention could amount to torture, and subjects detainees to severe violations of their fundamental rights.

We reiterate that Greek authorities are obliged to act in full respect of European Union law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Immigration detention should be used as a means of last resort in compliance with the basic standards of treatment, and should not be applied to vulnerable persons.