

—◆ “*When and how will I get out of here?*”

Statement on the deteriorating mental health of detainees at Corinth detention centre

22 March 2024

In recent days Mobile Info Team has received harrowing messages from tens of people detained at Corinth pre-removal detention centre (PRDC) who report that they are experiencing severe deterioration of their mental health, in some cases leading to suicide attempts.

Several people we are in contact with say they are in desperate situations and are reaching out to us because their requests for information on their detention cases or access to urgent medical care are being ignored by the authorities at Corinth PRDC. We are highly troubled at threats from people we are talking to that they will commit suicide if they are not released.

People tell us that they are being held in appalling conditions in dirty cells and without access to healthcare and basic items such as soap and clothes. Many have been detained for months on end without being informed of the grounds for their detention nor how long they will be deprived of their liberty. They are handed documents in Greek without translation, leaving them in the dark and increasingly frustrated. After months of seemingly endless detention, their mental health is deteriorating, resulting in feelings of despair and desperation.

Many of the people MIT are in contact with have pre-existing vulnerabilities or have developed physical or mental health problems as a direct result of the conditions at Corinth. Some of these people arrived in Greece after experiencing torture in detention centres in Libya, and reported that they were immediately apprehended and detained in Greece, faced with continued incarceration and without access to psychosocial support to deal with their trauma. One person reported that he was informed by the doctor at Corinth that he needs urgent surgery, but the detention officers have refused to escort him to a hospital. He stated: “*The police say: ‘we can’t help, we can’t do anything’. They close the door on us.*” Our caseworkers have received several pictures showing detainees’ skin conditions which they explain have developed as a result of bedbugs in the facility, and have gone untreated as the doctor at Corinth has reportedly not supplied them with medication.

Sadly, similar complaints from detainees at Corinth have been highlighted for over a decade. Already in 2013 - one year after the opening of the facility - three detainee deaths as a result of medical neglect were documented, including an Afghan man who suffered from cancer and was detained at Corinth for four months without treatment for his condition. In 2013, a person detained at Corinth committed suicide by jumping from the roof of a building in the facility. In 2021, a Kurdish asylum seeker committed suicide having been detained at Corinth for 16 months. In March 2024, Solidarity with Migrants reported the suicide of an Egyptian man detained at Corinth.

Already in 2015, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) highlighted serious concerns about conditions in Corinth, including the administration of medical care by untrained detention officers. By the end of 2022, there was still only one doctor present in Corinth despite urges from the CPT to improve the medical situation there. MIT interviewed 17 people detained at Corinth in 2022 and 2023, who highlighted that lack of access to healthcare remained systemic, drastically impacting their wellbeing. Our research also found that individuals in Corinth experienced the longest periods of time in detention, with an average of seven months and with reports of people held for beyond 18 months.

Protests including hunger strikes have occurred consistently at Corinth over the years, often in response to poor living conditions and prolonged detention periods. The latest, reported in March 2024 by Efsyn and Solidarity with Migrants, highlighted the ongoing poor living conditions and reports of abusive treatment by detention staff.

MIT stands in solidarity with people detained in administrative detention and denied their rights to information, legal support and decent living conditions. We are deeply concerned at the utter lack of medical care at Corinth and within pre-removal detention facilities across the Greek mainland.

We call on the authorities to immediately take action to improve conditions in Corinth pre-removal detention and end the arbitrary detention of people on the move.

We call on the authorities to:

- **Immediately grant access to urgent healthcare, legal support and decent living conditions for detainees currently held at Corinth**
- **Immediately end to the arbitrary detention of people seeking asylum and undocumented people in Greece**
- **Implement alternatives to detention which allow people to live in dignified and community-based accommodation**
- **Where detention is absolutely necessary:**
 - **detainees must have adequate and timely access to healthcare, including psychological support and effective translation services**
 - **detainees must have regular recreational activities and are allowed unrestricted access to outdoor space in compliance with European and international law**
 - **detainees must have regular and unhindered access to hygiene items and cleaning products**
 - **detainees must be informed in a language they understand of the reasons for detention and have access to effective remedies against detention orders**