

## On the Move – Latest migration news

# MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN CYPRUS

### 10/05/2022-24/05/2022

- On 11 May 2022, a [fire](#) broke out in Pournara camp and at least six people were injured. They were brought to the hospital and their conditions are stable now. The cause of the fire is still to be determined, but conditions in the camp are infamously well-known.

### 5/04/2022-10/05/2022

- On 21 April 2022, EuroMed Rights Thematic Programmes Coordinator, Sara Prestianni, intervened in the LIBE Committee of the European Parliament on the situation in Cyprus, addressing the reception conditions on the island, the issue of pushbacks at sea to Lebanon and the risk of chain-refoulement to Syria. Watch the Exchange of Views [here](#).
- The Republic of Cyprus [announced](#) the instalment of electronic surveillance systems along the green line to control the crossings from the Turkish part of the island. After that, the EU Commission [contacted](#) Cypriot authorities to ask for clarifications about this plan, considering that the Commission does not finance the construction of barbed wires and fences. Meanwhile, the situation for asylum-seekers on the island remains [critical](#), with many struggling with housing, employment and food security.

### 22/03/2022-05/04/2022

- On behalf of the government, Nicos Nouris, the Interior Minister will [ask](#) EU to help with upgrading Pournara and Limnes, which will cost €20 million and €60 million respectively. He also said that a four-year, €34 million contract has been announced for the provision of food for those hosted at Pournara of which the EU will cover €4 million and the Republic of Cyprus €30.
- ECRE published the updated [AIDA Country report on Cyprus](#) including information on pushbacks in 2021.

### 08/03/2022 - 22/03/2022

- On 15 March 2022, the Minister of Interior [briefed](#) the nationalist movement ELAM on migration issues, including the management of the green line and returns.

- On 10 March 2022, Cyprus' commissioner for children's rights [criticised](#) conditions for unaccompanied minors at the Pournara reception center as "miserable" and "unhygienic".

#### **22/02/2022-08/03/2022**

- On 21 February 2022, the European Commission and EU Agencies (EUAA, Frontex, Europol) [signed](#) a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and agreed on a Joint Action Plan to manage the "irregular migration" on the island. The main points agreed concern: enhancing the capacities on first reception of asylum-seekers on the island; achieving an overall improvement in the level of material reception conditions; implementing timely and effective asylum procedures; improving the efficiency of the return system; developing an effective strategy for the integration of third-country nationals.
- Since the beginning of 2022, more than [1,300 asylum seekers have entered the European part of the Cypriot island](#). Frontex, the European border control agency of the European Union, has strengthened its presence, while the authorities say they can no longer cope with the number of migrants, according to Mediapart.

#### **08/02/2022 - 22/02/2022**

- Cypriot Interior Minister [accused Turkey](#) of creating a migration emergency on the island. According to him, 60-80 migrants crossed the buffer zone every day, in an attempt by Turkey to instrumentalise migration.

#### **25/01/2022 - 08/02/2022**

- More than [700 migrants](#) have reached Cyprus since the beginning of the year, and 19,000 asylum applications are still pending from last year. The reception centres on the island are overcrowded and people live [in dire conditions](#) as many people are crossing the buffer zone.

#### **14/12/2021-11/01/2022**

- UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres [recommended](#) the extension of the mission of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus for another six months. While acknowledging the challenging situation that the island is facing due to the large number of refugees and the crossings from the buffer zone, Guterres also reminded the importance of respecting international law and the right to asylum. The harsh situation on the island was also [acknowledged](#) by the European Council, which denounced the crossings of the buffer zone from the Turkish side of the island.
- EuroMed Rights' member KISA [shared](#) a letter by a Syrian refugee living in Chloraka directed to the UNHCR. The letter denounces the constant police

brutality against refugees in the area and asks for an intervention to stop this violence.

- Cypriot MPs [voiced](#) strong concerns and launched alerts regarding the situation in the overcrowded center Pournara after a visit in December 2021. Refugees lack beds to sleep on, even children. Clashes and fights continue to emerge and in early December 2021 some people remained injured after a fight arose among about 300 people.

### **30/11/2021 – 14/12/2021**

- At the beginning of December 2021, Pope Francis visited the Republic of Cyprus and used [strong words](#) to describe the widespread indifference of Europe towards the sufferings of migrants. He compared current migrants' detention centres in neighbouring countries to Nazi concentration camps and talked about a "universal story of slavery" that afflicts migrants. At the end of his visit, he offered [50 migrants](#) and refugees the possibility to relocate to the Vatican.

### **16/11/2021 – 29/11/2021**

- On the 10th of November 2021, Cyprus announced that it was submitting a [request](#) to the European Commission to suspend applications for asylum for all those arriving in the country irregularly.
- On the same day, a group of [61 Lebanese and Syrian](#) asylum-seekers arrived to the island by boat from Lebanon. On the 11th of November 2021, Cypriot authorities informed them of the intention to push them back to Lebanon. After that, the asylum-seekers left Cyprus and started navigating towards Italy. Kisa, a Greek NGO, managed to contact them on the 17th of November when they were "somewhere between Greece and Italy", but did not receive assistance from any authority.

### **25/10/2021 – 15/11/2021**

- Cyprus will ask the **European Commission** to put in place measures to curb irregular migration, including "potentially [suspending the examination of asylum requests](#)".
- [Cyprus](#) signed a 27.5 million euro agreement with **Israel** to install a monitoring system along the island's buffer zone. This decision comes after the Cypriot government claimed that **Turkey** sends migrants to the Turkish part of the island in the north to pressure the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, in the south.
- During a visit on the 5th of November, the [French Interior Minister](#) agreed to initiate talks between Cyprus and francophone African countries. The

talks aim to create agreements with African countries to accept their citizens whose asylum application have been rejected in Cyprus.

#### **05/10/2021 – 25/10/2021**

- KISA [denounced](#) the fact that the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) and the EU's border agency Frontex pressured a Syrian woman (who was forcibly separated from her two children and husband – who were pushed back to Lebanon) to withdraw her application for international protection in Cyprus by providing her misleading information.
- On 21 October 2021, KISA denounced that the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights referred to KISA as [the “former” organisation](#) at a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities between Men and Women. According to KISA, by justifying the decision of the Ministry of Interior to deregister KISA from the Register of Associations and by refusing to examine their written complaints about this issue, the Commissioner is complicit in the violation of the freedom of expression.

#### **23/09/2021 – 05/10/2021**

- EuroMed Rights and 15 other members and partners [launched a campaign](#) to call for the [family reunification](#) of the 25-year-old Syrian woman Kawthar Raslan and her baby in Cyprus with her husband, Hasan Khaled Al Ali, and their two children who had been pushed back from Cyprus to Lebanon. The campaign calls on Cyprus to stop these unlawful pushbacks and on the EU to investigate violations committed by the Cypriot border forces.
- A [brutal attack](#) from a group of Cypriot students against a 16-year-old Syrian was reported on 27 September 2021.

#### **6/09/2021 – 22/09/2021**

- On 21 September 2021, a [hearing](#) at the human rights committee of the House of Parliament was held on the latest pushbacks from Cyprus to Lebanon on 22 August 2021 and on the treatment of the 9-month pregnant woman that was forcibly separated from her husband and two children who were pushed back to Lebanon. KISA denounced that the pushbacks and the treatment of the pregnant woman by Cypriot police amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment. KISA also denounced the Cypriot police of failing to rescue a person who had jumped into the sea and who disappeared and is still missing. UNHCR confirmed that the pushed back Syrians had been deported from Lebanon to Syria.

### 19/08/2021 – 06/09/2021

- On 22 August 2021, two boats with approximately 40 and 15 people on board were [located](#) off Cyprus' coasts. One Syrian refugee woman was [evacuated to the hospital](#) and gave birth, but the rest of the people on board were pushed back to Lebanon, including the woman's husband and her two children.

### 27/07/2021 – 19/08/2021

- KISA [denounced](#) yet another pushback of Syrian refugees from Cyprus to Lebanon on 29 July 2021.

### 5/07/2021 – 27/07/2021

- On 20 July 2021, the European Commission published its [2021 Rule of Law Report Country Chapter on the rule of law situation in Cyprus](#), raising concerns regarding “the ability of NGOs to operate in Cyprus and to the implementation of the legislation on associations which has recently led to the de-registration of several NGOs”.
- Human Rights Watch on the deregistration of KISA and Cyprus' effort to shut down and criminalise human rights NGOs in the country.
- Le 20 juillet 2021, la Commission européenne a publié son [chapitre pays du rapport 2021 sur l'État de droit concernant la situation de l'État de droit à Chypre](#), soulevant des inquiétudes concernant “la capacité des ONG à opérer à Chypre et à la mise en œuvre de la législation sur les associations qui a récemment conduit à la radiation de plusieurs ONG”.
- Human Rights Watch [s'inquiète](#) du désenregistrement de KISA et des efforts de Chypre pour fermer et criminaliser les ONG de défense des droits humains dans le pays.

### 21/06/2021 – 05/07/2021

- On 25 June 2021, a boat with 58 migrants, including women and 18 children, was unlawfully [pushed back](#) from Cyprus to **Lebanon**. 25 people who were pushed back were brought in detention in Lebanon. A family, including two children, is still in detention and at risk of deportation to **Syria**.
- On 29 June 2021, the **European Court of Human Rights** (ECtHR) condemned Cyprus over torture and ill-treatment of detainees in the [case of Monir Lotfy v. Cyprus](#).
- On 10 June 2021, the Administrative Court [rejected](#) KISA's appeal against its deregistration from the register of associations, in a decision that “failed to examine or justify key aspects of violations of the constitution and the European Convention of Human Rights, among others”.