

**HELLENIC REPUBLIC**  
**GREEK NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

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<p><b>Report of the NCHR Special Committee after its Visit to Korydallos Central Prison</b></p>
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*1. Men's prison.* Following a request by the imprisoned members of the "17<sup>th</sup> November" Organization, a sub-committee visited, the facilities, on May 21<sup>st</sup>. Their semi-basement cells are under surveillance on a 24-hour basis, and what is considered particularly inhuman is the narrow yard in which they exercise, with no trace of greenery and very high walls, one of which is covered with metal sheeting with a ceiling of barbed wire.

Nevertheless, each prisoner has his own cell, which is comfortable enough and well-equipped. They are not in isolation, their lawyers and relatives are allowed to visit them, the premises (as well as the surgery and the kitchen) are clean and the catering satisfactory, but the library needs improvement.

In contrast, the conditions of ordinary prisoners' cells are appalling: due to overcrowding, there is no separation of prisoners, even by category, and nearly all of them are drug-addicts. There is also a serious lack of occupational opportunity and the number of wardens is inadequate, but the Prison Council is a very useful institution. In conclusion, the conditions of the "17 November" Organization prisoners were incomparably better than those of the others.

*2. Women's Prison (30 June 2004)* On June 28<sup>th</sup>, the above committee visited the prison, which included, in a special wing containing more than 20 cells, 7 members of the "17N" Organisation. Each prisoner lives in a separate cell with a window looking on to the wing's separate yard; which is more spacious than that of the Men's Prison. Each cell is

clean and well-equipped, has bathroom facilities, and all the prisoners exercise together in the yard. However, because of the height of the walls and the material with which they are constructed (whitewashed zinc), the yard is very hot in the summer and carries heat to the cells through ventilation. Contact with relatives and lawyers is the same as in Men's Prison. Two of the prisoners do artwork, and a request expressed by all of them was that there be a workshop to practice handicrafts, as well as plant-pots in which to grow plants.

In contrast, in the main Women's Prison two to three detainees are housed in each cell (bigger than those in the Men's Prison) with a large window and rudimentary equipment. Prisoners can move about in the corridor separating the cells and there are also tables and seats at which they can sit in groups. Toilets are in a poor condition. The committee also visited two (of sixteen) large wards – with no seats or furniture - where 27 Roma women were packed into one and 35 in the other (there was another ward, in another wing, not in use). It seemed that women with mental illness were not given any special treatment. Most of the women have no occupation except in the laundry and the kitchen. The latter was clean and the food satisfactory. It should be noted that in there are no full-time doctors or a specialist nurse. As a general conclusion, it should be stressed that the prison suffers from overcrowding, while the living conditions of the “17N” Organization members are clearly better than those of the rest.

*3. In response to the NCHR's recommendations* the Ministry of Justice undertook a number of measures to improve the situation. As regards the “17N” Organization men prisoners, the walls have been reduced in height and the metal sheeting removed. In general, steps have also been taken regarding AIDS-infected prisoners, the categorization of prisoners, the decentralization of Agrarian and Closed Prisons, the inclusion of therapeutic institutions in the National Health System, the introduction of more dental clinics in prisons, the educational and professional development of prisoners, the overall improvement of

facilities, and the legislation concerning prison overcrowding and public welfare work.

The following dissenting opinions of members of the Commission should be noted: Ms Divani is of the opinion that, although the cells of the “17N” Organisation prisoners are better than those of others, the isolation to which they are subjected, without any obvious reason, and, the unacceptable conditions of their outside exercise render their detention conditions inhumane.

According to Mr. Papaioannou, it is clear that they are being detained in a Special Security Unit, that is, a prison within a prison. The prisoners have been given no explanation of the reason why they are being considered as “high risk for escape” in relation to other prisoners serving similar sentences. Companionship is restricted to 10 people, usually the same, which in the long term may have a negative impact on their health. They are forbidden to participate in any common prison activity and the space for outside exercise is, to say the least, considered unacceptable. All visits take place within closed quarters. In conclusion, the “17N” Organization prisoners are treated differently, in that they are being detained in a prison within a prison: as far as their cells are concerned, this discrimination it would seem to be beneficial.

According to Mr. Theodoridis’ minority opinion, the detention conditions of the “17N” Organization prisoners lack legality, since the relevant presidential decrees provided for in the law relating to penitentiary confinement have not been promulgated.

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