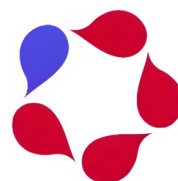


2024

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT Cyprus

Prepared By:



Washington Center
For Human Rights

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Executive Summary

In 2024, Cyprus faced significant human rights challenges, particularly related to the treatment of migrants and refugees, as well as issues concerning enforced disappearances and environmental rights. One of the most severe violations was the government's continued practice of pushbacks and collective expulsions, where migrants and asylum seekers, especially Syrian refugees, were forcibly returned to Lebanon without being given the opportunity to apply for asylum. Many of those returned were then expelled to Syria, facing potential persecution and torture. This practice, accompanied by reports of excessive force used during the operations, drew widespread international condemnation . Additionally, racism and violence against migrants escalated, as seen in August 2024, when violent attacks against migrants in Chloraka and Limassol were met with police inaction, highlighting systemic racism and discrimination .

Another key concern was the suspension of asylum processing for Syrians announced in April 2024, which further exacerbated the refugee crisis in Cyprus. Delays in processing asylum applications resulted in increased waiting times for work permits, leaving many migrants in a precarious legal situation without access to basic support . Progress was noted in environmental rights, with the Administrative Court granting NGOs the right to file public interest claims and access official documents on environmental issues, marking a positive development in environmental governance .

Despite these advancements, ongoing concerns persist, particularly regarding the risk of statelessness for children born to parents with irregular status due to recent amendments to naturalisation rules . Corruption and discrimination within government structures also remain key challenges, further hindering the integration of migrants into Cypriot society .

To address these issues, it is recommended that the Cypriot government cease all pushbacks and collective expulsions, ensuring all individuals arriving in the country have access to asylum procedures. Furthermore, the asylum processing system needs urgent reform to expedite applications, particularly for Syrians. International bodies, such as the European Union, should monitor Cyprus's compliance with human rights obligations and provide resources for integrating refugees into society. Civil society organisations should continue their advocacy efforts to raise public awareness about systemic racism and offer legal support to affected individuals .

Methodology

The methodology used in collecting data for the human rights report on Cyprus involved a comprehensive approach that integrated various sources of information and data collection methods. Here is a detailed overview of the process:

Sources of Information

1. International Organisations:

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) relied on reports and findings from multiple international bodies, including the Security Council and European Union institutions. This included consultations with UN agencies such as the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) [1].

2. Local Stakeholders:

During an official visit to Cyprus from October 16 to 20, 2023, OHCHR representatives engaged with local stakeholders, including both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot authorities. This direct engagement facilitated a nuanced understanding of the human rights situation on the ground [1].

3. Civil Society Organizations:

The report also incorporated insights from local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society actors. For instance, the Human Rights Platform, which conducts monitoring and advocacy on various human rights issues, provided valuable reports on topics such as human trafficking and discrimination [1][2].

Data Collection Methods

1. Interviews:

The methodology included conducting interviews with various stakeholders, allowing for firsthand accounts and qualitative data regarding human rights conditions in Cyprus.

2. Field Research:

The OHCHR's field research involved direct observation and interaction with affected communities, which helped to gather contextual information about human rights practices and violations [1].

3. Document Review:

The researchers reviewed existing documentation from previous reports, both governmental and non-governmental, to triangulate data and ensure comprehensive coverage of issues [4].

Limitations and Challenges

1. Access Issues:

One significant challenge encountered was limited access to certain areas, particularly in the northern part of Cyprus, which is under Turkish control. This restricted the ability to fully assess human rights conditions across the entire island [1][2].

2. Political Sensitivities:

The political context surrounding Cyprus's division posed challenges in terms of dialogue with local authorities, as there were tensions between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots that could affect cooperation during data collection [2].

3. Participation of Civil Society:

Although there was an effort to involve civil society in discussions about human rights, participation was reportedly low during some key dialogues, which may have limited the breadth of perspectives included in the report [2].

This multi-faceted approach aimed to provide a thorough overview of human rights issues in Cyprus while acknowledging the complexities involved in gathering such sensitive information in a politically divided environment.

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Human Rights Overview

The human rights situation in Cyprus for 2024 reflects a complex interplay of political, economic, and social factors that have significantly influenced the landscape. Key issues include the treatment of migrants and asylum seekers, ongoing discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities, and the impact of recent political events.

Political Context

In 2024, Cyprus is undergoing a critical evaluation of its human rights record through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the United Nations Human Rights Council, scheduled for April 30, 2024. This review will assess the country's adherence to international human rights obligations and its progress since previous reviews in 2009, 2014, and 2019[3]. The political environment has been marked by increasing tensions surrounding migration policies, particularly concerning Syrian refugees. In April 2024, Cyprus announced a suspension of asylum processing for all Syrians, which has drawn significant criticism from human rights organisations[4].

Additionally, incidents of violence against migrants have escalated, with anti-migrant demonstrations leading to physical assaults on individuals and damage to property. These events have raised concerns about the effectiveness of police responses and the government's ability to protect vulnerable populations[1][2].

Economic Context

Cyprus's economic conditions continue to influence its human rights situation. The country has faced challenges related to the integration of migrants into the labor market. Asylum seekers are now required to wait nine months before being allowed to work, a significant increase from one month previously. This delay exacerbates their vulnerability to exploitation and irregular employment[1]. Furthermore, economic pressures may limit the government's capacity to provide adequate support for refugees and asylum seekers, contributing to homelessness among these groups[2].

Social Context

Socially, Cyprus is grappling with issues of discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities. Reports indicate that hate crimes and discrimination against Turkish Cypriots and other minority groups remain prevalent. The Human Rights Committee has urged the Cypriot government to intensify efforts to combat hate speech and ensure that victims receive proper support[2]. The rise in anti-migrant sentiment has been particularly pronounced in areas like Chloraka and Limassol, where violent demonstrations occurred in late August 2023[1][2].

Significant Events

Several significant events have shaped the human rights landscape in Cyprus:

Anti-Migrant Protests:

In August 2023, violent demonstrations against migrants led to attacks on individuals and businesses associated with migrant communities. The police response was criticised as inadequate[1][2].

Suspension of Asylum Processing:

In April 2024, Cyprus suspended asylum processing for Syrians, a move that has drawn international condemnation due to its implications for refugee rights[4].

Ongoing Investigations:

A new inquest into the death of army conscript Athanasios Nicolaou began in late October 2023 after previous investigations were deemed flawed. This case highlights ongoing issues regarding accountability within law enforcement[1].

Environmental Rights Developments:

In May 2023, a landmark ruling allowed environmental NGOs greater access to legal recourse regarding public interest claims. This development reflects a growing recognition of environmental rights within the broader human rights framework[1].

In conclusion, while Cyprus has made some strides in addressing human rights issues, significant challenges remain—particularly concerning migrant rights and discrimination against minorities. The upcoming UPR will be crucial in determining how the country addresses these ongoing challenges and fulfils its international obligations.

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Civil and Political Rights

In 2024, the civil and political rights situation in Cyprus has been characterised by significant challenges, particularly concerning freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and concerns over arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment.

Freedom of Expression

Despite constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression, recent legislative proposals pose serious threats to media freedom. A notable proposal discussed in July 2024 aims to criminalise "fake news," which could impose penalties including imprisonment for up to one year. This legislation has raised alarms from various human rights organisations, including the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR), which argues that such laws could lead to self-censorship among journalists and suppress legitimate dissent [1]. The ambiguity surrounding what constitutes "fake news" could also result in arbitrary enforcement against those critical of the government [1].

Additionally, while the press in Cyprus generally operates independently, there are instances where officials have verbally attacked media personnel, which undermines the overall climate of press freedom [2]. The influence of business interests and the Orthodox Church on media narratives further complicates the landscape, often leading to biased reporting and limited accountability for public figures [2].

Freedom of Assembly

The right to peaceful assembly is constitutionally protected; however, there have been reports of restrictions in practice. Authorities have occasionally used excessive force to disperse protests, particularly those related to socio-economic issues or political dissent. While specific incidents in 2024 are less documented, previous years have seen tensions during demonstrations against government policies [3].

Arbitrary Arrests and Ill-Treatment

Concerns about arbitrary arrests persist, particularly regarding individuals involved in protests or dissenting activities. Human rights organisations have documented cases where individuals were detained without clear justification or due process. Reports indicate that such practices may be more prevalent in Northern Cyprus, where the legal framework is less robust compared to the Republic of Cyprus [5].

Instances of ill-treatment during detention have also been reported. Although comprehensive data for 2024 is limited, previous years have shown that detainees sometimes face harsh conditions and inadequate legal representation [6].

Government Responses

The Cypriot government has defended its legislative actions as necessary for maintaining public order and combating misinformation. However, critics argue that these measures disproportionately target free speech and dissenting voices. The government's insistence on regulating media narratives under the guise of protecting public interest has drawn condemnation from international bodies like the European Union and the United Nations, which emphasise that such laws are incompatible with human rights standards [4].

Overall Impact on the Population

The cumulative effect of these issues has led to a climate of fear among journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens. Many feel discouraged from expressing their views openly due to potential repercussions from authorities. The chilling effect on media freedom particularly threatens democratic discourse and public accountability in Cyprus [3].

In summary, while Cyprus maintains a formal commitment to civil and political rights, significant challenges remain in practice, particularly regarding freedom of expression and assembly. The proposed legislative changes reflect a worrying trend towards increased control over public discourse, posing risks to the democratic fabric of the nation.

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Rights of Specific Groups

In 2024, Cyprus continues to grapple with human rights issues affecting various groups, including women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, and ethnic or religious minorities. While there have been notable advancements in legal protections, significant challenges remain.

Women's Rights

Legal Protections and Progress:

Cyprus has made strides in promoting women's rights. The 2024-2026 Strategy on Equality between Women and Men aims to address gender disparities and close the gender pay gap, which is gradually decreasing[1]. The government has also recognized **femicide** as a specific offence, enhancing legal frameworks to protect women from violence. The establishment of the House of Women, a crisis centre for victims of violence, provides essential support services[1][5].

Challenges:

Despite these advancements, gaps remain in effectively supporting all victims of gender-based violence. Critics highlight the absence of specialized rape crisis centers and referral systems for sexual violence cases[7]. Additionally, while women are increasingly occupying senior roles in politics and public policy, systemic barriers persist that hinder full equality.

Children's Rights

Legal Framework:

Cyprus has enacted several laws aimed at protecting children's rights, including the Holistic Sexual Education Law, which promotes informed choices regarding sexual health among youth[1]. The government is also working on establishing a second Children's House to provide comprehensive support for child victims of abuse.

Ongoing Issues:

Despite these efforts, child protection services face criticism regarding their effectiveness and accessibility. The focus on juvenile delinquency and the rights of children in conflict with the law remains a priority but requires more robust implementation strategies[1].

LGBTQ+ Rights

Legal Progress:

LGBTQ+ rights have seen significant improvements. Same-sex sexual activity was decriminalised in 1998, and civil unions have been legal since 2015. In May 2023, Cyprus banned conversion therapy, marking a crucial step forward for LGBTQ+ rights[2][4]. A national strategy dedicated to LGBTQ+ issues is expected to be adopted in 2024, which aims to enhance protections against discrimination and violence[1].

Challenges:

Despite these legal advancements, LGBTQ+ individuals still face societal stigma and discrimination. Adoption rights remain limited to heterosexual couples only, reflecting ongoing inequalities within family law[2][3]. Furthermore, while anti-discrimination laws exist in employment contexts, broader protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity are still lacking[2].

Ethnic and Religious Minorities

Cyprus has a complex demographic landscape that includes Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, and various religious minorities. While there are legal frameworks intended to protect minority rights, implementation often falls short.

Case Studies:

Turkish Cypriots:

There are ongoing concerns regarding their political representation and social integration within the Republic of Cyprus. Reports indicate that Turkish Cypriots often experience discrimination in various sectors.

Religious Minorities:

Groups such as Maronites and Armenians have legal recognition but face challenges related to cultural preservation and access to resources.

Conclusion

In summary, while Cyprus has made notable progress in establishing legal protections for women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, and ethnic minorities in 2024, significant challenges remain. Continued advocacy and effective implementation of existing laws are essential for improving human rights conditions across these groups.

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Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

In 2024, Cyprus continues to navigate the complexities of economic, social, and cultural rights, particularly concerning the right to health, education, and adequate housing. This analysis highlights the current state of these rights, including access to healthcare, educational opportunities, and housing conditions, along with barriers and improvements observed throughout the year.

Right to Health

Healthcare Access

Cyprus has made strides in improving healthcare access, yet challenges remain. The healthcare system is primarily public, funded through taxation, which provides universal access to citizens. However, there are reports of disparities in access for marginalized groups, including Turkish Cypriots and migrants. The establishment of a comprehensive health insurance system aims to address these gaps by providing coverage for all residents【1.

Barriers

Despite these improvements, barriers such as bureaucratic hurdles and language differences continue to impede access for non-Cypriots. Additionally, the ongoing economic pressures have strained public health resources, impacting service delivery and leading to longer wait times for medical procedures【2.

Right to Education

Educational Opportunities

Education in Cyprus is compulsory and free for children aged 5 to 15. The government has invested in educational reforms aimed at enhancing quality and inclusivity. Initiatives include integrating technology into classrooms and fostering an inclusive environment for students with disabilities【3.

Challenges

However, challenges persist regarding educational access for migrant children and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Reports indicate that these groups often face discrimination and limited support services within the education system. Moreover, the language barrier remains a significant obstacle for non-native speakers【4.

Right to Adequate Housing

Housing Conditions

The right to adequate housing is recognized in Cyprus; however, housing conditions vary significantly across different regions. Urban areas generally offer better housing standards compared to rural regions where infrastructure may be lacking. The government has implemented various housing projects aimed at improving living conditions for low-income families[5].

Improvements and Barriers

Recent governmental initiatives have focused on increasing affordable housing options through subsidies and support for first-time homebuyers. Nonetheless, high property prices and a lack of sufficient rental options continue to pose challenges for many residents[6]. Furthermore, socio-political factors related to the division of the island affect housing security for certain communities[6].

Conclusion

In summary, while Cyprus has made notable progress in addressing economic, social, and cultural rights in 2024—particularly in health care access and educational reforms—significant barriers remain. Ongoing efforts are needed to ensure equitable access for all residents, particularly marginalised groups who continue to face systemic challenges. The government's commitment to improving these rights will be crucial in fostering a more inclusive society.

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Refugees and Migrants

In 2024, the situation for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers in Cyprus remains complex and challenging. The treatment of these groups is influenced by a combination of domestic policies, international obligations, and socio-economic conditions.

Living Conditions

Housing and Basic Needs:

Many refugees and asylum seekers in Cyprus face inadequate living conditions. Reports indicate that overcrowding in reception centres is common, leading to insufficient access to basic services such as healthcare, sanitation, and education. The living conditions are often substandard, with many individuals residing in temporary shelters that lack privacy and security[5][7].

Access to Employment:

Migrant workers frequently encounter barriers to accessing legal employment. While they contribute significantly to the economy, many are employed in low-wage sectors with limited rights and protections. This situation can lead to exploitation, including underpayment and unsafe working conditions[5].

Access to Asylum Procedures

Asylum Process:

The asylum application process in Cyprus has been criticized for being slow and cumbersome. Asylum seekers often experience long waiting times for their applications to be processed, which can extend for months or even years. During this time, many live in uncertainty regarding their legal status and access to resources[6][7].

Legal Support:

Access to legal assistance remains a significant issue. Many asylum seekers do not receive adequate legal support during their applications, which can hinder their ability to navigate the complex legal landscape effectively[5][6].

Instances of Exploitation or Abuse

Human Trafficking:

Cyprus has been identified as a destination and transit country for human trafficking. Vulnerable populations, including women and children from various countries, are at risk of exploitation in sectors such as domestic work and sex work. Reports indicate that traffickers

exploit both domestic and foreign victims within the areas administered by Turkish Cypriots【5】【6】.

Labor Exploitation:

Migrant workers often face labor exploitation, including excessive working hours without appropriate compensation or benefits. Many are subjected to threats or coercion by employers who take advantage of their precarious status【5】.

International and Domestic Responses

Government Initiatives:

The Cypriot government has initiated several policies aimed at improving the integration of migrants and refugees. However, these measures have been criticised for their limited effectiveness and slow implementation. The National Integration Plan for Migrants is expected to be completed by 2025 but has faced delays【7】【8】.

International Oversight:

Various international organisations continue to monitor the situation in Cyprus. Reports from entities like the United Nations highlight ongoing concerns about human rights violations against refugees and migrants, urging the Cypriot government to enhance protections and streamline asylum processes【6】【7】.

In conclusion, while there are frameworks in place aimed at supporting refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers in Cyprus, significant challenges remain regarding living conditions, access to asylum procedures, and instances of exploitation or abuse. Continued advocacy from both domestic stakeholders and international partners is crucial for improving the situation for these vulnerable populations.

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Legal Framework and Accountability

The human rights situation in Cyprus in 2024 presents a complex landscape marked by legislative advancements, ongoing challenges, and persistent issues of impunity. While there have been notable reforms aimed at enhancing the legal framework for human rights, significant gaps remain, particularly concerning accountability and the treatment of vulnerable populations.

Legislative Developments and Their Impact

Recent legislative efforts have aimed to bolster the independence of the judiciary and the prosecution service. The separation of advisory and prosecutorial roles within the Law Office is a commendable step towards reducing conflicts of interest and enhancing the impartiality of legal proceedings. However, the effectiveness of these reforms is contingent upon their implementation and the political will to uphold them¹.

Despite these positive changes, the lack of a mechanism for reviewing decisions made by the Attorney General not to prosecute cases raises serious concerns about accountability. This absence effectively shields prosecutorial decisions from scrutiny, potentially allowing for arbitrary or biased decisions to go unchecked. Such a gap undermines public confidence in the justice system and perpetuates a culture of impunity².

Role of the Judiciary

The establishment of the Supreme Constitutional Court and the Court of Appeal is a significant milestone in Cyprus's judicial reform. These institutions are expected to enhance access to justice and ensure that human rights are protected under the law. However, their success will largely depend on their operational independence from political influence and their ability to address cases involving human rights violations effectively³.

For instance, while there have been cases where perpetrators of human rights abuses were brought to justice, such as instances involving police misconduct, there remain numerous cases where victims have not received adequate redress. The judiciary's response to these violations has been inconsistent, often influenced by public sentiment or political pressure rather than a steadfast commitment to upholding human rights⁴.

Impunity for Human Rights Violations

The issue of impunity remains a critical concern in Cyprus. Reports from various human rights organisations indicate that many victims of abuses—particularly marginalised groups such as asylum-seekers and migrants—often face significant barriers in seeking justice. The UN Human Rights Council has highlighted systemic issues regarding access to asylum procedures, noting that many individuals are denied their rights at crossing points. This denial not only violates international norms but also exposes vulnerable populations to exploitation and abuse⁵.

Moreover, while there have been instances where perpetrators were held accountable—such as police officers facing disciplinary action for excessive use of force—these cases are often exceptions rather than the rule. The lack of comprehensive mechanisms for oversight and accountability means that many violations go unpunished, fostering an environment where human rights abuses can occur with little fear of consequence⁶.

Conclusion

In summary, while Cyprus has made strides in reforming its legal framework related to human rights in 2024, significant challenges remain. The lack of accountability mechanisms for prosecutorial decisions, inconsistencies in judicial responses to human rights violations, and ongoing issues surrounding the treatment of asylum-seekers highlight critical areas needing urgent attention. Moving forward, it is imperative for Cyprus to not only enact laws but also ensure their effective implementation and oversight to foster a culture of respect for human rights that genuinely protects all individuals within its jurisdiction.

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International Relations and Human Rights

Certainly! Here's a critical analysis of Cyprus's international relations regarding human rights in 2024, focusing on its engagement with UN bodies, international pressures, and the implications for domestic human rights practices.

Engagement with UN Bodies: A Double-Edged Swor

Cyprus's proactive engagement with UN bodies, particularly the upcoming Universal Periodic Review (UPR), presents both an opportunity and a challenge. While the UPR allows Cyprus to showcase its commitment to human rights, it also exposes significant gaps in its practices. The government's delegation, led by Deputy Minister Andreas Kakouris, may present an optimistic narrative about progress. However, the reality on the ground tells a different story (1).

Reports from human rights organisations indicate systemic issues, particularly concerning the treatment of migrants and Turkish Cypriots. The government's responses to these concerns often appear reactive rather than proactive, suggesting a lack of genuine commitment to reform. For instance, while Cyprus has made strides in integrating EU human rights standards, the implementation of these standards remains inconsistent. This discrepancy raises questions about the sincerity of its engagement with international mechanisms and whether it is merely a façade to appease external critics (1).

International Pressure: A Catalyst for Change or Stagnation?

International pressure on Cyprus regarding its human rights record has intensified, particularly from organisations like Amnesty International and the UN's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). While this scrutiny can serve as a catalyst for reform, it can also lead to a defensive posture among policymakers. The Cypriot government may prioritise damage control over substantive change, fearing that acknowledging flaws could undermine its legitimacy (2).

Moreover, the absence of formal sanctions against Cyprus creates a paradox. Without tangible consequences for failing to address human rights violations, there is little incentive for meaningful reform. The EU's approach—balancing criticism with diplomatic relations—often results in hollow commitments rather than actionable change. This dynamic risks entrenching a status quo where human rights abuses continue unchallenged (3).

Domestic Implications: A Troubling Reality

The impact of international actions on Cyprus's domestic human rights situation is complex. On one hand, increased awareness and advocacy from civil society groups have emerged in response to international scrutiny. These organizations play a crucial role in holding the government accountable and pushing for reforms. However, their efforts are often met with

resistance from state institutions that may view them as adversaries rather than partners in promoting human rights (4).

Recent incidents of racial violence against migrants further illustrate the troubling reality within Cyprus. The government's inadequate response not only reflects poorly on its commitment to protecting vulnerable populations but also exacerbates societal divisions. The normalisation of xenophobia and discrimination poses significant risks to social cohesion and undermines efforts to foster an inclusive society(5).

Conclusion: The Path Forward

In conclusion, while Cyprus's engagement with international bodies in 2024 presents an opportunity for dialogue and potential reform, it is marred by systemic issues and defensive governmental attitudes. The interplay between international pressure and domestic realities reveals a complex landscape where genuine progress is often stifled by political expediency.

For Cyprus to improve its human rights record meaningfully, it must move beyond superficial compliance with international norms and embrace a culture of accountability and inclusivity. This requires not only addressing specific violations but also fostering an environment where civil society can thrive and contribute to the ongoing dialogue about human rights in the country.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of international actions will depend on Cyprus's willingness to confront uncomfortable truths about its human rights practices and implement lasting changes that protect all individuals within its borders.

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Recommendations

Based on the findings from 2024 regarding human rights violations in Cyprus, the following recommendations are directed towards the government, international bodies, and civil society organizations. These recommendations aim to address critical issues related to the treatment of migrants, refugees, and other vulnerable groups.

Recommendations to the Government of Cyprus

1. End Pushbacks and Collective Expulsions

The government must immediately cease all pushbacks and collective expulsions of migrants and refugees, particularly Syrians. This practice not only violates international human rights obligations but also endangers lives. It is imperative that individuals are allowed to claim asylum upon arrival in Cyprus. [1]

2. Improve Asylum Processing

The suspension of asylum processing for all nationalities, especially Syrians, since April 2024 is unacceptable. The government should prioritise resuming these processes and streamline applications to reduce backlogs. Timely access to work permits for asylum seekers must also be ensured to facilitate their integration into society. [2]

3. Strengthen Police Response

There is a pressing need for enhanced police training and protocols to effectively respond to hate crimes and attacks against migrants and racialized communities. The current inadequacies in law enforcement responses contribute to a climate of fear and discrimination, undermining social cohesion. [3]

4. Revise Naturalisation Rules

Recent changes to naturalisation laws that restrict access based on irregular entry must be revised. It is unjust to deny citizenship rights to children born in Cyprus due to their parents' immigration status. This policy risks creating a generation of stateless individuals and perpetuates cycles of marginalization. [4]

5. Increase Support for Asylum Seekers

The government should provide adequate social support systems for asylum seekers to prevent homelessness and destitution. Current provisions are insufficient, leaving many vulnerable individuals without access to basic necessities such as housing, healthcare, and legal assistance. [5]

6. Address Impunity in Human Rights Violations

The lack of accountability for past human rights violations, such as the death of army conscript Athanasios Nicolaou, reflects a troubling culture of impunity within law enforcement agencies. Thorough investigations must be conducted, and those responsible must be held accountable to restore public trust in state institutions. [6]

Recommendations to International Bodies

1. Monitor Compliance with Human Rights Standards

The European Union (EU) should take a more active role in monitoring Cyprus's compliance with human rights standards related to asylum seekers and refugees. Funding for border management should be contingent upon adherence to international obligations, ensuring that financial support does not enable further violations. [7]

2. Support Refugee Protection Initiatives

Increased funding for programs aimed at enhancing the capacity of Cypriot authorities to process asylum claims fairly is essential. International bodies must prioritise refugee protection initiatives that align with human rights standards rather than merely focusing on border control. [8]

3. Promote Dialogue on Migrant Rights

Facilitating dialogues between Cyprus and Lebanon regarding the treatment of refugees is crucial. Emphasising adherence to non-refoulement principles during these discussions can help ensure humane treatment during border management operations. [9]

Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations

1. Advocate for Policy Change

Civil society organisations must engage in robust advocacy efforts aimed at reversing harmful policies affecting migrants and refugees, particularly those related to pushbacks and restrictive naturalisation laws. Collaborating with legal experts can strengthen proposals for legislative reform. [10]

2. Raise Awareness on Human Rights Violations

Public awareness campaigns highlighting the plight of migrants and refugees in Cyprus are necessary to mobilise public support for their rights. Increased visibility can pressure the government to take accountability for its actions. [11]

3. Provide Direct Support Services

Establishing or enhancing support services for migrants and refugees is essential. Legal aid, psychological support, and integration programs can significantly improve the quality of life for these vulnerable populations while promoting social cohesion within communities. [12]

4. Document Human Rights Abuses

Systematic documentation of human rights abuses against migrants and refugees will provide crucial evidence for advocacy efforts. This information can inform international bodies about the situation on the ground and drive action toward accountability. [13]

By implementing these critical recommendations, stakeholders can work towards improving the human rights situation in Cyprus, ensuring protection for vulnerable populations while fostering a more inclusive society. The time for action is now; complacency will only perpetuate existing injustices. [14]

Citations:

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Conclusion

The human rights report on Cyprus for 2024 reveals significant challenges and ongoing violations that necessitate immediate attention. Key issues highlighted include the troubling treatment of migrants and refugees, the alarming rise in hate crimes, and the pervasive lack of accountability for historical human rights abuses. Each of these areas not only reflects systemic flaws within the country but also signals a broader disregard for fundamental human rights that must be urgently addressed.

The report emphasises the continued practice of forcible returns of migrants and refugees, particularly targeting Syrian individuals. This practice places many at severe risk of persecution and violence upon their return to Lebanon or Syria. The lengthy waiting periods faced by asylum seekers before they can secure the right to work further exacerbate their vulnerabilities, creating an environment of uncertainty and fear. Additionally, the increase in hate crimes and racial discrimination against migrants and racialized communities is alarming. The inadequate response from law enforcement raises serious concerns about systemic bias and the protection of these vulnerable populations.

Moreover, the report highlights the ongoing impunity surrounding past human rights violations, particularly enforced disappearances stemming from historical conflicts. The lack of resolution in many cases contributes to a culture where accountability is absent, further entrenching a cycle of violation and neglect. While the recognition of environmental NGOs' rights to engage in public interest litigation marks a positive step, significant challenges remain unaddressed in environmental rights, particularly concerning energy production and habitat conservation.

In conclusion, the situation in Cyprus underscores the urgent need for continued monitoring and proactive measures to address these pressing human rights issues. The report calls for a coordinated response from national authorities and international organisations to ensure adherence to human rights standards. Sustained advocacy is essential to protect vulnerable populations, combat discrimination, and ensure accountability for past abuses. Only through concerted efforts can Cyprus hope to improve its human rights landscape and fulfil its obligations under international law, paving the way for a more just and equitable society.

Appendices

Statistical Data on Human Rights Issues

1. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):

- As of 2022, Cyprus had approximately **246,000 IDPs**, making it one of the countries with the highest number of internally displaced persons in Europe and Central Asia .

2. Trafficking in Persons:

- The 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report highlighted ongoing issues with human trafficking, particularly concerning women and girls, noting gaps in victim identification and low investigation rates .

3. Violence and Discrimination:

- Reports indicated an increase in incidents of violence and discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities, emphasising the need for enhanced measures to combat hate crimes .

4. Missing Persons:

- The Human Rights Committee expressed concern over the lack of prosecutions related to missing persons from the conflicts in the 1960s and 1970s, urging Cyprus to support initiatives for truth and reconciliation .

Glossary of Legal and Human Rights Terms

- **Universal Periodic Review (UPR):** A UN mechanism for reviewing the human rights records of all UN member states.
- **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** Individuals forced to flee their homes but remain within their country's borders.
- **Non-refoulement:** A principle in international law that prohibits returning refugees or asylum seekers to a country where they may face harm.
- **Hate Speech:** Any form of communication that belittles or discriminates against individuals based on attributes such as race, ethnicity, or religion.
- **Trafficking in Persons:** The illegal trade of humans for the purposes of forced labor, sexual slavery, or commercial sexual exploitation.