

“I CAME
HERE
FOR
PEACE”

**The systematic
ill-treatment
of migrants and refugees
by state agents
in Patras**



GREEK COUNCIL FOR
REFUGEES

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"Welcome to the port of Patras!"

1. INTRODUCTION

“I CAME HERE
FOR PEACE!”

Sudanese refugee in Patras May 13, 2012

Supporters of the extreme right party Golden Dawn¹, which entered Greece’s parliament for the first time in the 6 May elections, have clashed with police in three days of anti-immigrant protests in the western port of Patras.

The clashes followed an invitation from indignant local residents and neighbours to attend a peaceful demonstration following the killing of a 30-year-old Greek national, allegedly by irregular Afghan migrants in Iteon neighbourhood (near the Peiraiki Patraiki factory) on May 19, 2012. According to the Greek authorities, a group of residents accompanied by members of Golden Dawn then converged on the derelict factory inhabited by migrants and refugees seeking to stow away on ferries bound for Italy.

During the march, Golden Dawn militants shouted anti-immigrant slogans, and riot police who were protecting the migrants responded with teargas after demonstrators attacked them with stones and tried to storm the factory with iron bars and truncheons in order to attack the migrants.

Though a 17-year-old Afghan has been arrested for the murder, fascist groups in Patras continued to riot for three days and handed out flyers stating: “Out of Greece illegal immigrant intruders – the Greek fatherland is for the Greeks”. In this explosive and dangerous atmosphere, the Greek police informed the migrants and refugees in the factory that they could not protect them and asked them to leave the area. The migrants were then taken into custody and transferred out of Patras over the next few days.

According to a police press release from the Achaia Prefecture on the riots, around 350 members of Golden Dawn party participated in the violent protest in front of the factory and “repeatedly” attacked the police with “stones, firecrackers, improvised incendiary devices, logs, rods, crowbars and other objects”. In total 22 persons were taken into custody while five were arrested². The Union of Police Employees subsequently condemned the disturbances in a statement proclaiming: “We protest against

the ‘climate of war’ our colleagues had to face!”³.

On May 24, UNHCR Greece stated in a press release “UNHCR calls for an end to the cycle of violence in Patras”:

“Following recent tensions in Patras caused by the murder of a 30-year-old man last Saturday, 19 May, UNHCR condemns all acts of violence and calls for the respect of the rule of law. It also appeals to all concerned in Patras to maintain calm. The anger generated by the murder, for which a criminal investigation is on-going, should not lead to a cycle of violence, with civilians taking the law into their own hands. It can also not serve as an excuse to target and victimize migrants and refugees in Patras or in other regions of Greece. The fact that thousands of migrants and asylum seekers are trapped in Greece creates significant problems that need to be addressed through serious dialogue, through specific and realistic policy proposals and a comprehensive set of measures. UNHCR calls on all political and social stakeholders in Greece to work towards this direction and to unequivocally condemn all acts of violence.”⁴

The rapid escalation of racist violence in recent days was a logical extension of prevailing exclusion, marginalisation, stigmatisation, illegalisation and dehumanization of refugees and migrants in Patras and throughout Greece. Though the police played the role of “protector” during the riots it has been regularly acted as a “perpetrator” in the persecution of the city’s migrant population.

As we document in the following report, state officials systematically ill-treat refugees and migrants in Patras. Throughout the past 15 years hundreds of migrants and refugees (undocumented or not) have been living in Patras in improvised shelters seeking to stow away on ferries bound for Italy. This report contains numerous allegations of the ill-treatment of migrants and refugees by police and other officials, which in some cases are tantamount to torture. All interviewees allege that they had been ill-treated either inside the port after their detection by police and coast guard of-

¹ Golden Dawn on May 6, 2012 picked up over 440,000 votes in general elections and entered parliament for the first time in Greece’s political history. The group has pledged to “scrub the country clean” of illegal immigrants.

² Announcement by the police of Patras concerning the escalation of violence: http://www.dete.gr/news.php?article_id=93684

³ Announcement by the Police Employees’ Union, May 25, 2012: <http://www.thebest.gr/news/index/viewStory/128255>

⁴ <http://www.unhcr.gr/nea/artikel/abbab3147b-2ca66f2a692169dccc9a64e/ekklisi-tis-ypatis-1.html>

ficers or during identity checks or raids in their shelters. The vast majority of those arrested are released after one or two days. In all of the cases either the coast guard or police officers are alleged to have perpetrated ill-treatment, inflicting physical injury or psychological trauma on individual arrestees for the purpose of deterrence, terror and humiliation.

The allegations of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, which are documented in this report, raise concerns about the systematic use of physical force by law enforcement officers against migrants and refugees. There seems to be a failure of the authorities to ensure that legal provisions guaranteeing the protection of migrants and refugees during arrest are implemented. The scale of allegations concerning police violence indicates a widespread pattern rather than a few isolated incidents. Furthermore, this pattern suggests a wider policy of repression and fear executed by law enforcement officers, which is aimed at discouraging undocumented migrants and refugees from coming to the port cities and trying to reach Europe through these “gates”. As one of the interviewees told us: **“They want to force us out of Patras!”**⁵

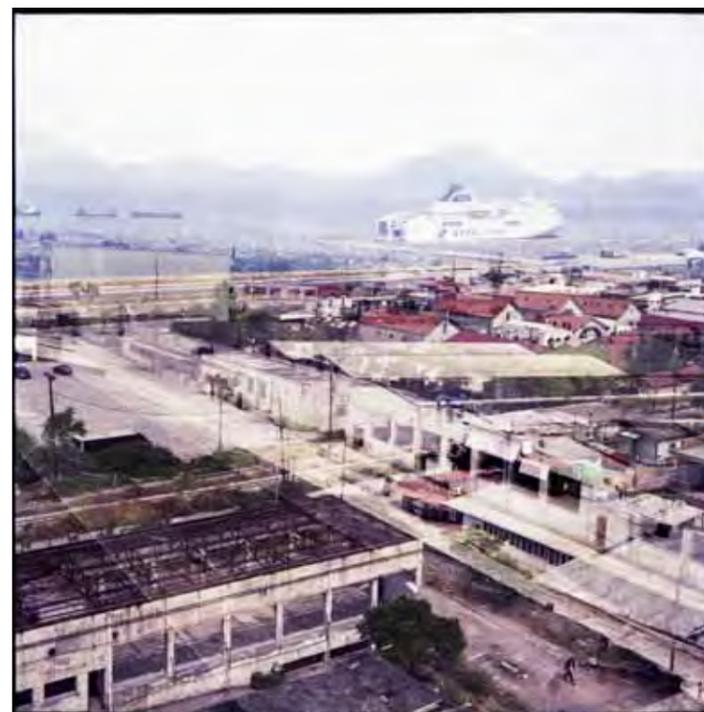
Such treatment constitutes a serious abuse of the hierarchical power relationship between state officials and the *sans-papiers* and refugees, which is likely to persist as a result of the ongoing “climate of impunity within law enforcement agencies”.⁶

These abuses are combined with the absence of access to asylum in Greece, access to information, inadequate reception conditions (housing, nutrition, medical treatment etc.), the lack of humanitarian aid and the total deprivation of rights faced by migrants and refugees in Patras (but also in Athens and other places all over Greece), which have further contributed to their dehumanisation, marginalisation and exclusion. Migrants and refugees are being targeted and ill-treated by state officials precisely because they are migrants and refugees – and also because they are foreigners (“ξένοι”).

A press release from the Racist Violence Recording Network on February 21, 2012 highlighted the overlaps between racist and police violence. Over a period of three months (October - December 2011), the Network cited eight incidents of racist attacks by state agents in Patras:



Fascist graffiti at the southern port of Patras



„ I HAVE TO CHANGE MY LUCK! “

“You who are looking at us now, once will get hungry as we are now!” In the early 1990s, this was the parole of the protesting employees of Peiraiki Patraiki factory, when it closed its doors. It has been once Greece’s largest textile producer owning also factories in Sudan.

⁵ Interview held on May 4, 2012
⁶ CPT 2008

*“There is a distinct category consisting of 18 incidents, where police and racist violence are interlinked (10 in Athens and 8 in Patras). These incidents concern duty police officers, who resorted to illegal acts and violent practices while carrying out routine operations. There are a few recorded cases of migrants and asylum seekers taken to police stations, where they were detained and maltreated during a certain number of hours, as well as cases where legal documents were destroyed during these operations.”*⁷

We see a clear relationship between the social discrimination of migrants in Greece, racist violence and police violence, which reinforce each other by creating through action and propaganda a category of marginalised and rights-less non-citizens, as “the other” or an “enemy within”.

Bearing in mind that hundreds of migrants and refugees are trapped in Greece, and particularly in Patras, we hope that this report will contribute to a better understanding of their situation in Patras as well as the roots of racism in this city.

1.1. Methodology

Pro Asyl in co-operation with the Greek Council For Refugees, conducted research in the port city of Patras during April (2.4-5.4) and May (11.5-15.5) 2012⁸. During these missions the team visited various sites, where undocumented migrants and asylum seekers live while “in transit”.⁹

Thirty-one individual interviews were conducted with victims of ill-treatment by state agents. Eleven of them were unaccompanied minors. Anonymity was a crucial precondition for the report, in order to protect the interviewees. Interviews were held in Dari, Arabic, English and French. In addition, the team held group discussions with larger numbers of migrants and refugees as well as meetings with staff from the NGO Praksis, the Greek Red Cross and the UNHCR, and the solidarity group “Kinisi” – Motion for the defence of refugees’ and migrants’ rights – who work with migrants and refugees in Patras, in order to confirm the information collected.

Because of the delicate subject matter, the precarious living conditions of the migrants and refugees in Patras, the transitory nature of the makeshift camps they live in, their permanent fear and feeling of being persecuted, the lack of any institutional protection, the high level of mistrust expressed by some of them towards the team (and any “outsiders” in general), and the difficult environment in which these interviews were conducted (outside areas), the team recommends that the physical and psychological violence to which migrants have been subjected by the Greek authorities both inside and outside the detention centres in Patras warrants further investigation and documentation.

This report contains the exact testimony of the victims themselves. Dozens of other migrants interviewed by the team also confirmed that few migrants and refugees in Patras have not been victims of police violence and ill-treatment, at least once and often on repeated occasions.

The large number of cases and the similarity between so many of these testimonies suggests a systematic pattern of violence.

⁷ <http://www.1againstracism.gr/index.php/en/component/k2/itemlist/category/26-racist-violence-recording-network>

⁸ The Team consisted of two lawyers (M. Tzeferakou and K. Tsapopoulou), a social anthropologist / interpreter for Farsi and an interpreter for Arabic.

⁹ We visited the following places: Peiraiki Patraiki Factory, olive fields near Rio

2. Patras: From a Port of Transit to a Border City



For more than ten years, Patras has been the main port of exit to Italy, with a constant flow of undocumented migrants passing through the city on their way to Europe. The daily ferry connections between Patras and the Italian ports of Venice, Ancona, Bari and Brindisi attract those who want to leave Greece hidden inside or under trucks. Apart from Patras, the other main exit-ports to Italy are Igoumenitsa, Corfu and Corinth – though maritime traffic to Italy is less significant in the last two places.

At the same time, Patras has always hosted the poorest migrants who have not been given any opportunity to access their basic rights in Greece, and therefore survive on the margins of society without resources, support and protection.

As a reaction to the constant and persistent influx of migrants into Patras, the city was transformed from a transit point to a highly militarized border area. The Greek government and the local authorities have generally concentrated their efforts on combating migration in this city, rather than providing migrants with rights and protection. Thus, over the last years, the Greek authorities have managed to transform Patras into a fortified port city, but never really shown any willingness to deal with migration from the perspective of reception and integration.

Both the city and the port are constantly patrolled and monitored by the police and the coast guard. Even though the improvised shelters inhabited by migrants have been raided and destroyed on numerous occasions during the last five years, and hundreds of migrants and refugees arrested, detained and even illegally deported to Turkey¹⁰, the transient population continues to search for new temporary “homes” and new ways to go to Italy. During the last decade some have succeeded in leaving, some have failed and others have died trying.¹¹

The opening of the New (Southern) Port in the summer of 2011 has changed the geographical location of the city’s migrant population. Some migrants live scattered around the new city’s port in order to stay close to it. During the last five years, migrants and refugees have been expelled from the city centre. Nowadays, the few who stayed in Patras after

the fascist riots are even more marginalized and hidden than they were before, and live dispersed in remote areas all over the city.

Almost all migrants and refugees in Patras are homeless. They live in the most wretched and inhumane conditions, without access to any sanitary infrastructure, electricity or protection, in abandoned houses, industrial areas, construction sites, olive fields, under bridges, in train wagons or simply in the streets. In most cases, they have no money or financial support from relatives and are therefore obliged to search for food in the garbage bins, or rely on support from local solidarity groups and the church.

Until the recent fascist attacks, the industrial area of the Peiraiki Patraiki factory was been one of the main migrant settlements in 2012. The abandoned and rundown factory buildings have been home for hundreds of migrants and refugees. Over the past few months the authorities have been trying to clear the area of migrants, by initially cutting off the water supply (and consequently forcing them to drink from the sewage water), with daily raids and other forms of harassment in order to drive the transient population from the city. A private security company is patrolling the whole area, while police in motorcycles and cars arrest migrants and transfer them to detention centres. Since the beginning of 2012 most migrant detainees were transferred to Athens or other prisons, from where the majority seems to be then released after an undetermined period (varying on average from a few days to some months). Since most of them cannot find any other shelter or accommodations, most of them return to Patras on foot. As we have reported in several occasions, the police arresting them inside the factory often burn their few personal belongings and sometimes tear up their “pink cards” giving them legal permission to be in Greece.

¹⁰ Reports on push-backs from Greece to Turkey i.e.: ATIMA & NOAS 2009: Out the back door: The Dublin II Regulation and Illegal Deportations from Greece (p 26f). See: http://www.aitima.gr/aitima_files/Out%20the%20Back%20Door.pdf

¹¹ See: Press Release of the Solidarity Group in Patras (31.01.12) on the death of an Afghan (in Greek): http://www.kinisipatras.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=83%3A--3112012&catid=15%3A--2012&Itemid=8&lang=el

The aim – and hope – of this transient population, in most cases, is to move to another European country where they can seek international protection and access their basic rights. The population on the move consists mostly of male minors or adults from various countries such as Afghanistan, Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, Morocco and Algeria. Most of them hold a deportation order, issued at the place where they entered in Greece (and consequently the place of their arrest). Many have been repeatedly arrested in the past by the Greek authorities, but then released, as their deportation was not feasible, and they are then issued with a document ordering them to leave the country by their own means after a prescribed period (of 6 days, 30 days or even 60 months).

This deportation order – still valid or expired – grants no rights to its holder. Their lives remain in limbo. Nevertheless, this transient population includes refugees and asylum seekers in need of international protection and/or vulnerable cases, such as minors or victims of torture. There are also many holders of a “pink card” given to registered asylum seekers - and others who wish to apply for asylum in Greece, whose claims have been refused. Many of the asylum seekers in Patras come from Athens, because they were unable to access asylum and reception procedures in the capital.¹²

2.1. Access to asylum and reception conditions in Patras

Applications for international protection in Patras are processed by the Sub-Directorate of the Police Directorate of Patras. The General Police Directorate of the Region of Peloponnese is the competent authority for examining

¹² Access to asylum is almost impossible in all over the country. See: Asylum campaign about access to asylum in Athens: <http://asylum-campaign.blogspot.com>
Press Release by the GCR (19.03.12): www.gcr.gr/node/651
Press Release by the Group of Lawyers for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees, Athens (19.03.12): <http://omadadikigorunenglish.blogspot.com/2012/03/one-month-at-petrou-ralli-press-release.html#more>
Press Release by the Group of Lawyers for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees, Athens (02.03.12): <http://omadadikigorunenglish.blogspot.com/2012/03/press-release.html#more>

¹³ The support programme at the Red Cross in Patras for refugees and asylum seekers provides for one lawyer one social worker and one interpreter (Farsi/Dari). Source: Interview with Elisavet Nikolakopoulou (Red Cross lawyer) and Christos Karapiperis (Red Cross social worker) on May 11, 2012.

applications for international protection in its territorial jurisdiction. Nevertheless, it is virtually impossible for anyone in Patras to apply for asylum from these authorities, without the support of a private lawyer or of an NGO. The Red Cross is the main organization in Patras, which offers legal advice to asylum seekers and in practice, assists them throughout the asylum procedure. The NGO Praksis offers assistance to unaccompanied minors who wish to apply for asylum.

Even with the help of a lawyer, access to the asylum process is not unlimited. The authorities accept only two asylum applications per week, submitted with the support of the Red Cross lawyer. According to the Red Cross, the waiting list for the pending asylum applications during our research in May 2012, would reach the number of 80. Most of them try to apply for asylum since January of the same year.¹³ Anyway, most of the persons who told us that they want to seek for asylum alleged fear of walking to the offices of the NGOs due to repeated cases of ill-treatment and arrest by law enforcement officers on the streets.

If the applicant is homeless and cannot provide an address, the processing of asylum applications is not always guaranteed. During the waiting period, refugees are at risk of arrest and deportation. A number of asylum seekers we spoke to whose asylum applications were still pending, complained of that they faced harassment and arrest by the Greek authorities, even when trying to reach the Red Cross offices.¹⁴

¹⁴ Patras at the Factory of Peiraiki Patraiki April 2, 2012: Meeting with a group of approx. 10 Sudanese and Eritrean refugees in the place where they live. Most of the persons said they wanted to apply for asylum, but they referred to many practical obstacles, such as the danger of being arrested or beaten on the way to the Red Cross, long waiting times, no possibility to apply for asylum on their own because they lack an address and the police does not accept their applications if not registered with the help of an NGO etc. Two of the present persons had already applied for asylum and were holders of a Pink Card. These two were complaining that the Pink Card was not offering them any protection or support. They still continue living under miserable conditions and homeless being permanently in danger of different forms of exploitation and violence. Other persons had already an appointment for the examination of their asylum application before the authorities. All persons said they had suffered from police violence and racist violence many times. When we asked them if they wanted to tell us individually about these incidents they denied explaining that they don't believe it would make any difference since their situation would never change. They also expressed their fear of the police.

In addition, asylum seekers with a temporary residence permit face further difficulties when trying to renew their “pink card”. They cannot renew it if they cannot provide an address in Patras.¹⁵ If their application has been registered – and therefore the “pink card” has been issued – by another competent authority (i.e. Igoumenitsa or Athens), they have to make their way to the city where they first made their application – often on foot in the absence of any financial means – otherwise their claim may be refused because they did not comply with the obligations prescribed by law.

Moreover, even if an asylum seeker states before the competent authorities that he is homeless and in need of accommodation, they rarely receive any assistance and often remain homeless for months or even for years in deplorable conditions, without access to water, food, appropriate medical treatment etc. – all of which constitutes degrading and inhumane treatment.

It is obvious therefore, that the refusal of the Greek authorities to register asylum applications, the absence of reception facilities for undocumented migrants and the insufficiency of reception conditions for asylum seekers is part of a wider policy of deterrence in the city of Patras, intended to discourage and directly prevent asylum seekers from claiming asylum in the city.

2.2. Access to healthcare and medical certificates

According to Greek law¹⁶ hospitals and clinics are allowed to provide their services to adult undocumented migrants only in cases of emergency. Furthermore, according to a Ministry of Health circular¹⁷, employees of the aforementioned services who provide these services are subject to discipline and even criminal liability for having abrogated their duties (par. 4). Moreover, according to this Circular, medical treatment must be provided to adult undocumented migrants exclusively in cases of emergency and until their medical condition has stabilized. On the basis of all the above, it is evident that Greece grants only the most re-

¹⁵ This problem was documented already in 2008 by Amnesty International Greece who stated that: “Some had tried to renew their card in Patras in 2008 but the police would not renew their card since they were homeless and living in a camp, and could not provide a permanent address.” (Amnesty International 2010, p.24)

strictive access to medical care to undocumented migrants and, by extension, equally restricted access to health.¹⁸

A public discourse exemplified by Minister Loverdos of the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, routinely refers to migrants in Greece as a “hygienic bomb”, a “threat to public health” and a “financial burden” on the health system, because of the free treatment offered to irregular immigrants. Such language has contributed to further discrimination against migrants in the public health sector.

In Patras the vast majority of the population (apart from the holders of a “pink card”) have only emergency access to hospitals. The NGOs Praksis and the Red Cross provide the only alternative medical treatment for undocumented migrants, a few days a week. Nevertheless, most of the migrants and refugees we met (even holders of “pink cards”) told us they are afraid to walk in the streets or try to reach the hospitals or NGOs to receive medical treatment because they may be stopped and ill-treated by police. Even if they manage to access public hospitals, they usually have no money to buy the medicines prescribed to them, and some have no access to medical treatment of any kind.

As reported by refugees, migrants, NGOs and solidarity activists the hospitals often do not document cases of ill-treatment and violence, but only refer to the health problem and the treatment prescribed (i.e. broken leg, treatment cast for one month). Moreover, the lack of interpreters in the hospitals does not facilitate their medical examination and hinders the documentation of cases of ill-treatment. Those who have no papers, even when treated as emergency cases, are not granted medical certificates by the hospital, even though such documents constitute essential evidence in cases of maltreatment.

¹⁶ According to article 84 (1) of Law 3386/2005 (Entrance, residence and social integration of third countries' nationals in Greece)

¹⁷ OIK/EMP518

¹⁸ Decision Regarding the Right to Health of Undocumented Migrants, Greek National Commission for Human Rights: http://www.nchr.gr/category.php?category_id=326

3. Ill-Treatment against migrants and refugees by state agents

Violence and ill-treatment by law enforcement officers in Patras includes wanton physical force, verbal attacks and psychological intimidation.

Victims of such violence often belong to relatively powerless groups, such as minorities, the disabled, the young, and the poor, as well as refugees and migrants. In his annual report, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture noted that:

“(W)hile there is no evidence to suggest that members of racial or ethnic groups are generally subjected to particular forms of torture or ill-treatment applied uniquely to them in their status as members of these groups, it must be noted that they are particularly vulnerable to torture in various context and their status may also affect the consequences of their ill treatment. It would appear that members of racial or ethnic groups are disproportionately subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment. Indeed, ethnic differences may often contribute to the process of dehumanisation of the victims, which is often a necessary condition for torture and ill-treatment to take place.”¹⁹

In its contribution to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR), the United Nations Committee Against Torture stated that:

“Discrimination of any kind can create a climate in which torture and ill-treatment of the «other» group subjected to intolerance and discriminatory treatment can more easily be accepted, and that discrimination undermines the achievement of the realization of equality of all persons before the law”.²⁰

3.1. What has been done so far about police violence in Patras

Police violence and ill-treatment are not new phenomena in Patras. They have been also documented and condemned in the past by Greek (both local and national) and international non-governmental organizations, as well as by activist networks. Nevertheless, only few cases have managed to reach the courts.

The local solidarity group “Kinisi” – Motion for the defence of refugees’ and migrants’ rights – has repeatedly condemned police violence since the group came into existence in October 2007.²¹

In early 2008, members of the group filed a lawsuit against the Greek coastguard and police at the port of Patras, regarding several cases of migrant’s mistreatment on February. On February 22, 2008 six policemen surrounded and beat with sticks a group of young Afghan migrants, breaking the arm of Ali Mohamed, a 16 year-old minor. One of the Afghans, 28 year-old Sotzaat Rezai escaped the police assault only to be found later on by policemen, who beat him again with sticks and fractured his thumb. On February 25, 21 year-old Kader Bahri was arrested by two coast guards. The two coast guards first escorted the victim out of the Patras port. Then they beat him up and twice threw in the sea. On February 26, 20 year-old Morteza Moranti was chased by three uniformed men who kicked him in the back. On the same day four coast guards surrounded two Afghan asylum seekers at the port of Patras. They arrested 16 year-old Ramazan Karemi and pushed him into the sea and beat his friend, 26-year-old Mamatela Niazi, causing injuries to his face.

On October 11, 2011 members of the local solidarity group, together with representatives from Patras’ Afghan Community and five alleged victims of police violence (among them a 12 year old boy)²² held an official meeting with the port police, in order to complain about the general escalation of the violence by state officials in the port of Patras, as well as specific cases of ill-treatment. In a recent Press Release “Kinisi” stated: “Regardless of who is the perpetrator each time, unfortunately the victims are

²¹ Some recent Press Releases of “Kinisi” concerning police violence in Patras (in Greek):

05.01.12: http://www.kinisipatras.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=78%3A--512012&catid=15%3A--2012&Itemid=8&lang=el

22.12.11: http://www.kinisipatras.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=76%3A--22122011&catid=14%3A-2011&Itemid=62&lang=el

13.10.11: http://www.kinisipatras.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=69%3A--13102011&catid=14%3A-2011&Itemid=62&lang=el

27.09.11: http://www.kinisipatras.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=68%3A-27092011&catid=14%3A-2011&Itemid=62&lang=el

06.04.11: http://www.kinisipatras.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62%3A--642011&catid=14%3A-2011&Itemid=62&lang=el

²² In the end the port authorities did not allow to the victims to attend the meeting.

¹⁹ E/C.N.4/2001/66, 25/01/2001

²⁰ See: http://www.unilu.ch/files/schattenbericht_omct.pdf

"I WAS WALKING ALONE ALONG THE TRAIN RAILS IN THE DARK. THE POLICE APPEARED ... THEY STARTED BEATING ME UP."



"Fear... fear... fear!"

"I was walking alone along the train rails in the dark. The police appeared ... they started beating me up."

always the same. The violence that refugees and immigrants encounter today is daily, both physically and psychologically, and perhaps it is a precursor of the violence that we will all encounter as our society becomes more authoritarian and callous."²³

As members of the "Motion for the defense of refugees' and immigrants' rights" stressed to us during a meeting held in April, 2012, often migrants and refugees are literally haunted by police officers on motorcycles and have sometimes been seriously injured while jumping from the upper floors or roofs of the buildings where they find temporary refuge.

In 2007, the Group of Lawyers for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees and Pro Asyl, in their report "The truth may be bitter, but it must be told" (p. 28f) documented cases of ill-treatment by the police in Patras. Among them, there were cases of beatings with electric batons and of ill-treated minors.

In 2008 Human Rights Watch in "Left to Survive: Systematic failure to protect unaccompanied migrant children" reported: "Many of the unaccompanied children, in addition to numerous adults, interviewed by Human

Rights Watch, described violence and ill-treatment at the hands of police, port police, coastguards or border guard taking place during interception at sea and during arrest or detention". These cases included an Afghan minor referred to the Greek Ombudsman in 2008²⁴ who was stabbed with a knife by a port official. (p.36) Other significant cases include the mock execution to which police subjected another Afghan minor named Ghulam S (p. 35) and Jafar F, who was thrown into the sea by officers from the port authority.

In 2010 the European Committee on the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) interviewed a detainee interviewed in the Gounari Street police station in Patras, who was alleged to have been ill-treated by the police after his arrest (p.17). "A detained person interviewed at Patras Gounari Street Police Station alleged to have been punched in the eye and nose on 19 September 2009 by a police officer after having been apprehended." (p. 17)

²⁴ Press Release by the Greek Ombudsman: www.synigoros.gr/resources/docs/200877.pdf
 Press Release by the Greek Ombudsman: www.synigoros.gr/resources/_deltio_stp_8_2.pdf
 Letter to the Authorities by the Ombudsman: www.synigoros.gr/resources/_patra_katavlismos_8_2-2.pdf

²³ Press Release by Kinisi 13.10.2011 (translated by Pro Asyl): http://www.kinisiptaras.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=14&Itemid=62&lang=en

Doctors of the World, who were running a program of medical aid in Patras during the summer of 2011 and who are about to start a new program in Patras this summer stated in a Press Release (28.07.2011): "Médecins du Monde notes with great concern the persistent use of violence against immigrants – regular or not - who are caught up in the port city of Patras in a desperate situation while trying to leave Greece. Blows from batons into the extremities or genitals and severe head injuries are some examples of physical police violence recorded by the doctors of the organization. The use of physical force, without the following "excuse" of being part of the arrest, constitutes an illegal and inhumane abuse of power. Additionally, Médecins du Monde denounces the exclusion of refugees and other persons in need of assistance from the mobile medical unit of the organization. This exclusion violates the right to medical care. We want to point out the paradox of state organs undermining the activities of NGOs that are financed by the Greek State itself.

Médecins du Monde has evidence proving all the above and states that it will uphold defend the right to decent survival and will do whatever it takes to turn it into practice."²⁵

On February 21, 2012 the Racist Violence Recording Network in Athens and Patras, which was set up at the initiative of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece (UNHCR) with the participation of 18 non-governmental organizations and other bodies, reported eight cases of racist violence against migrants perpetrated by police officers in Patras between October and December 2011. ²⁶

²⁵ Press Release 28.07.2011 (translated by Pro Asyl): https://athens.indymedia.org/front.php3?lang=en&article_id=1323055

²⁶ Racist Violence Recording Network / I-RED reported: "There is a distinct category consisting of 18 incidents, where police and racist violence are interlinked (10 in Athens and 8 in Patras). These incidents concern duty police officers, who resorted to illegal acts and violent practices while carrying out routine operations. There are a few recorded cases of migrants and asylum seekers taken to police stations, where they were detained and maltreated during a certain number of hours, as well as cases where legal documents were destroyed during these operations." Source: <http://www.1againstracism.gr/index.php/en/component/k2/itemlist/category/26-racist-violence-recording-network>

Following a fact-finding mission (29.02.-02.03.2012) the Greek Council for Refugees reported: "Complaints often concerned incidents where migrants were forced into the sea, with their clothes on and in freezing weather conditions, to stay in cold water up to their necks and then once out of the water were made to stand still for hours in their wet clothes, until they freeze (...). In addition, there were reports of migrants who were forced to stay on their hands and knees, while port authority officers would sit on them. In other cases, the victims were forced to take off their clothes, stand still with their legs extended, and beaten every time they moved. Furthermore, as we have been told, the authorities often destroy or confiscate migrants' personal belongings – even food or their shoes. The port officers unleash their dogs, sometimes leading to serious injuries from dog bites or falls when migrants try to escape them. There have also been some isolated reports of falls from the upper floors of buildings -served as makeshift shelters- during police raids.

On the afternoon of 29.2.12 members of our mission-team witnessed the beating of an 18 year old Afghan by a police officer in a supermarket carpark not far away from the Peiraiki Patraiki factory. The policeman took the Afghan to a more isolated place and repeatedly kicked him in the shins. He then took away his plastic bag, with his milk and bread. We would like to highlight the fact that all refugees unanimously expressed their desire and need for protection from police violence."²⁷

On April 24, 2012 HRW wrote on its Observations to the UN Special Rapporteur against Torture, about further cases of ill-treatment in Patras documented by them during their fact-finding missions in late November/early December 2011: "Human Rights Watch spoke with seventeen migrants, including ten unaccompanied Afghan migrant children, who told us of police and Coast Guard abuse. These abuses occurred on the streets, during sweeps in the abandoned factory where they lived during our visit, and in the port area during attempts to hide under or inside trucks heading to Italy."²⁸

²⁷ Press Release by GCR 2012 (translated by Pro Asyl). See: www.gcr.gr

²⁸ <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/25/updated-human-rights-watch-submission-united-nations-committee-against-torture-greec>

The UNHCR Office in Greece, expressed to the competent authorities its concern over the allegations of ill-treatment of migrants and refugees in Patras, asking them to draw attention and further investigate complaints concerning the use of physical force, during police operations in various parts of the city and/or in the informal makeshift shelters, where a sufficient number of persons allegedly suffered injuries and received offensive expressions and threats. UNHCR underlined that a proper screening of the population is deemed necessary, as among those found homeless and living under squalid conditions are persons with international protection needs as well as vulnerable individuals. In addition, UNHCR noted that the state should balance law enforcement operations with parallel actions at the local level to provide alternative solutions and to cover basic humanitarian needs of these people. Such actions would prevent destitution and would alleviate problems faced by the local community. Lastly, UNHCR underlined its concern vis-à-vis the detention conditions in the country, which are substandard and need substantial improvement.²⁹

The Greek Red Cross branch in Patras has lodged complaints in two cases against the Special Operation Units of the Hellenic Coast Guard (KEA) before the Public Prosecutor in 2012. The first case concerned the alleged torture of an Afghan adult, who was badly beaten in the head, thrown in the sea, forced to stand with his legs in extension, prevented from moving and bitten by a police dog.³⁰ The second case concerns the alleged torture of an Afghan minor, who was beaten with batons and an electric-stun baton. The Red Cross lawyer Ms Elissavet Nikolakopoulou in an interview stated: "Red Cross receives a great number of complaints concerning ill-treatment. Most of the refugees are afraid to lodge an official complaint against the police or the port authorities. Exceptionally, in these two cases, the victims agreed to through the legal system. We lodged a complaint before the Public Prosecutor, asking him to further

investigate the case. So far, no steps have been taken in either cases, from the Public Prosecutor. Both victims were taken to the Hospital, but no medical certificate was given to them, since there were no "pink card" holders." Christos Karapiperis, social worker in the Red Cross stated: "The aim of the police violence is to frighten and discourage refugees from going to the city or at the port and generally, from coming to Patras. Since there is no Reception Centre for asylum seekers in Patras, they are exposed to all sorts of threats, dangers and exploitation".³¹

Praksis has provided medical and social support to unaccompanied minors in Patras since August 2011. It had registered 12 alleged cases of alleged ill-treatment by law enforcement officers until the end of January 2012. There were more reports of violent behaviour by officers in the following period and until today. In most cases there was an abuse of power with racist motives. A representative of Praksis told us: "We are implementing a program for children on the move. We receive many allegations of ill-treatment of minors and adults by police and port officers. In two cases of minors who have been allegedly ill-treated, we treated their injuries. On a number of occasions police officers make racist comments, concerning the refugees' colour, ethnic origin or religion. The police always tell them "Leave Greece! Go back home!"³²

The Afghan Community in Patras "Bahar" is also noticing a constant increase of police violence against their co-nationals who are residing in Patras. The president of the Afghan community said: "Very often, unfortunately, we receive reports of excessive use of violence by state agents against Afghans, which often result in severe injuries, which we try to document. We have complained about these allegations to the Greek authorities".³³

In a Press Release issued on 31 May, 2012 the Greek Ombudsman expressed his concerns regarding the situation in Patras. According to him, the recent violent events reflect in the most dramatic way a "qualitative upgrade" in

the generalized and random racist violence, as well as the serious deficiencies in Greek immigration policies and practices, which have fuelled dangerous tensions in Greek society. Since 2007 the Ombudsman has called for public dialogue on the problematic situation in the wider area around the port of Patras, in an attempt to find practical solutions for it, and prevent the situation from getting worse. In February this year, the Ombudsman highlighted the fact that, one year after the promulgation of Law 3907/2011 none of the anticipated services were functioning properly, despite the growing needs of undocumented migrants in Patras and throughout the country. In view of the above, the Greek Ombudsman intends to approach the competent authorities once again, with specific proposals for the adoption of immediate and effective measures to address the complex social phenomenon of undocumented migration, that are in accordance with the rule of law and the principles of European jurisprudence.³⁴

3.2. Internal control mechanisms for examining cases of police violence

In its reports the CPT repeatedly highlighted that there is no effective and independent police complaint mechanism in Greece (par. 16, 2009).³⁵ Other bodies, both national and international, have echoed the CPT's criti-

cisms³⁶ and complained of shortcomings in the police examination of allegations of ill-treatment, which cannot guarantee a prompt, impartial and effective investigation; restricted access to forensic evidence³⁷; and prolonged judicial proceedings which generally result in police acquittals³⁸. In a number of cases the European Court of Human Rights found that

²⁹ Interview with UNHCR staff, held on May 18, 2012
³⁰ About the K9 dogs "Flute" and "Hector" at the port of Patras, see: <http://www.icts.gr/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/AEATIO-TYPIOY-16-12-2011.pdf>

³¹ Interviews with Elisavet Nikolakopoulou, lawyer at the Red Cross, and Christos Karapiperis, social worker at the Red Cross, held on 11.5.2012

³² Interview with Giorgos Papadeolopoulos, social worker of Praksis, held on May 14, 2012

³³ Interview with representatives of the Afghan Community of Patras "Bahar", held on May 14, 2012

³⁴ Greek Ombudsman May 2012: <http://www.synigoros.gr/?i=human-rights.el.danews.67496>

³⁵ If somebody would like to complaint against ill-treatment, he/she can either lodge a complain before the police either lodge a complain directly before the Public Prosecutor. In cases of complaints before the police, where there are clear indications that a serious disciplinary offence may have been committed, a so-called Sworn Administrative Investigation can be initiated. If the investigation finds that the allegation is founded, punishment is decided upon by a disciplinary board (composed of police officers) or the file is communicated to the competent public prosecutor (in the event of the threshold for a criminal offence having been reached). In addition to making a complaint to the police, which currently appears to represent a highly unattractive option for many would-be complainants, allegations of ill-treatment may also be lodged directly with the prosecutor. According to the circular of 4 June 2008 by the Chief Public Prosecutor, prosecutors receiving an allegation of ill-treatment are under an obligation to initiate a criminal investigation, including a medical examination by a forensic doctor.)

³⁶ CPT 2009: http://www.cpt.coe.int/documents/grc/2010-33-inf-eng.htm#_ftn18

³⁷ Under Greek law individuals do not have direct access to examination by state forensic services. Such an examination can only be obtained by order of investigating officials or a court, usually on the basis of a request by a victim who has filed a complaint of ill-treatment, or a request of the public prosecutor. Some injuries caused by ill-treatment, such as bruising, heal relatively quickly; consequently any failure on the part of the competent authorities to ensure prompt forensic examination may effectively result in the complete or partial loss of crucial evidence.

³⁸ The case of the Agios Panteleimonas trial on torture of refugees in a police station of Athens: On December 13, 2004, Greek civilian policemen reportedly raided into a house in the Agios Panteleimonas area of Athens, where between 40 and 60 Afghan asylum-seekers and refugees were lodging. The police wanted to extract information about an Afghan national who had escaped from court where he had been taken on charges of staying illegally in the country. According to reports, the police collected all those present in the house, including minors, in one room and allegedly beat them severely and tortured some of them. The same sequence of events was repeated in the following days. Police officers took two afgan nationals to the police station and reportedly tortured (i.e. fallaga) them there. The case took publicity and a judicial and disciplinary investigation started. Eleven Afghans nationals among them many minors testified against the policemen. On 19.12.2011, seven years after the incident, the Athens Mixed Jury Court convicted two police officers who had been indicted for torture of two afgan asyurm seekers for misdemeanors crimes of causing bodily harm in the form of offence to human dignity and of causing provoked bodily harm to five other Afghans. On 22.3.2012 the Mixed Jury Appeals Court acquitted the police officers because of reasonable doubt of the charges of causing bodily harm in the form of offence to human dignity to two Afghans and confirmed the first instance convictions causing unprovoked bodily harm to five other Afghans. See: AI on the case of torture: http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=15837; Press Release on the results of the trial: <http://infomobile.w2eu.net/2011/12/20/the-trial-of-the-police-officers-from-st-panteleimonas-finished/>

Greece has violated Article 2 and Article 3 regarding the ill-treatment or torture by the police.³⁹

On March 31, 2011 the Law 3938/2011 “Establishment of Bureau for Addressing Incidents of Arbitrariness and Other Provisions” was published. According to this Law, the Bureau directly responds to the Minister of Citizen Protection. Its competence is the collection, recording, evaluation and submission of cases to the competent authorities for investigation (Article 1 (1)). The Law provides for the establishment of a three-member Committee in the Bureau, composed of a retired judge of the Supreme Court as its president and a retired prosecutor of the Supreme Court or Appeal Courts’ as well as the State’s Legal Advisor to the Ministry of Citizens’ Protection. The three-member Committee would be tasked with the

³⁹ For instance, see:

- Makaratzis v. Greece (2004), where the Court found that the Greek Police had not carried out a proper investigation into the basic facts of the incident;
- Celniku v. Greece (2007), where the Court criticised the fact that the investigation was carried out by officers working in the same department as the incriminated officers;
- Zelilof v. Greece (2007), where the Court questioned the quality and impartiality of the internal investigations carried out by the Thessaloniki Internal Investigations Department after a citizen was injured by police bullets: the internal police investigation relied on the statements made by the incriminated officers and the results of a forensic medical investigation were not taken into account;
- Alsayed Allaham v. Greece (2007), where the Court found that an ill-treatment complaint made by a citizen against the police had not been properly investigated by the Prosecutor and Court;
- Petropoulou-Tsakiris v. Greece (2008), where the Court found that no forensic-medical investigation had been carried out into the injuries of the complainant and that the internal investigation had not been carried out promptly;
- Stefanou v. Greece (2010), where the Court identified a number of shortcomings in the investigation (such as that the investigation was carried out by a police officer from the same Directorate responsible for the police station of the alleged perpetrators) and found a violation of article 3 in the case of ill-treatment of a 16 years old boy by police officers;
- Galostkin v. Greece (2010), where the Court found that the Greek authorities failed to carry out an adequate investigation in the case of ill-treatment of the applicant;
- Zontul v. Greece (2012), where the Court found a violation of article 3 for the torture of an asylum seeker in June 2001. In particular the Court noted that the Greek criminal justice system, as applied in that case, had not a deterrent effect such as to prevent the torture of which the applicants

responsibility to evaluate the reliability of each complaint or reported incident, to assess whether they fall under the Bureau’s competence and to issue a decision to either submit the case to the competent authorities for investigation or to reject the complaint as inadmissible (Article 1 (3)).

The above-mentioned office has still not started functioning, since the necessary Presidential Decree has not been published yet. Furthermore, the establishment of this Bureau does not fulfil the criteria for an independent and effective examination of allegations of police violence, since – among others – the Bureau is under the direct responsibility of the Minister of Citizen Protection and does not have the authority to examine such allegations except from a first ‘admissibility’ evaluation.⁴⁰ Thus the “climate of impunity within law enforcement agencies”, as observed by the CPT 2008, is still persistent today.

In this climate of impunity – lacking an effective, impartial and prompt investigation mechanism against allegations of ill-treatment by state agents – the vast majority of the alleged victims of ill-treatment in Patras are afraid of filing a complaint of ill-treatment, either before the police authorities or the public prosecutor. Given the precarious legal and social status of migrants in Patras, nobody can expect from the victims to file a complaint against the police.

⁴⁰ Concerns also remain over the effectiveness of the Bureau, since the main function of the Committee is to evaluate the admissibility of the complaints and if it finds them admissible, to forward them to the competent disciplinary bodies for investigation. In addition, its own powers to carry out investigations are very limited, since a member of the Committee will be able to conduct investigations only in those cases which the Law categorizes as “serious complaints or incidents”, subject to the discretion of the Minister of Citizens’ Protection, and only in relation to the disciplinary aspects of such cases. Hellenic League for Human Rights 2012: <http://www.hlhr.gr/detailsen.php?id=668>
For further analysis, see: Amnesty International public statement, Greece: Amnesty International calls on the government to create a genuinely independent and effective police complaints mechanism, Index: EUR 25/011/2009, 21 December 2009: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR25/011/2009/en/83c0ccdc-62a3-4ac4-a58a-c1c35e1434a2/eur250112009en.pdf>; and National Commission for Human Rights: Comments on the bill by the Ministry of Citizen Protection “Bureau for Addressing Incidents of Arbitrariness and other provisions”. http://www.nchr.gr/category.php?category_id=231



“I arrived in Patras at the time of the oranges!”



“OH GOD, YOUR HELL IS TOMORROW BUT I BURN TODAY, WHY?”

3.3 Research findings

As we have noted before and based on the findings of our missions, we have come to the conclusion that the violence and ill-treatment by state officials (Police and Port Authorities) to which migrants are subjected is systematic and widespread. The victims are targeted purely because they are foreigners. There are specific patterns of violence used, which in some cases could even amount to torture or other forms of degrading, humiliating or cruel treatment. The perpetrators often make racist comments. The high number of allegations of violence by state agents also indicates a pattern of a wider policy of repression and of deterrence.

In most of the cases reported to us, the perpetrators are police officers and agents of the Special Operations Units of the Hellenic Coast Guard (KEA).⁴¹

Victims are male, both adults and minors, from Afghanistan, Sudan, Eritrea and Morocco. Most of them are undocumented migrants or holders of a deportation order. Some of them are “pink card” holders – among them are also alleged torture victims in their countries of origin.

Reported incidents of police violence generally take place during identity checks and raids on the places where migrants and refugees find a temporary shelter consequently leading to their arrest, or in the streets - wherever and whenever they are seen walking or hanging out. In most of the cases of ill-treatment reported to us, the victims were first beaten or insulted by the perpetrators and then were asked to show their documents. Even then, no formal legal procedure was followed. In other cases, the police beat or humiliated migrants without even asking for any documents or arresting them. It is clear, that document checks and arrest procedures in Patras lack any legal safeguards.

⁴¹ For details on the Hellenic Coast Guard / KEA, see: <http://www.hcg.gr/node/156>

If arrested, migrants were brought to the Police Directorate, where no information on their status, their rights or interpretation was provided to them. They were then either let free or transferred and detained in other police stations under equally degrading conditions. Or they were transferred to the Athens Aliens Police. It seems that shortly after their transfer to Athens, most of them were immediately released and returned to Patras on foot.

“Pink card” holders also reported cases of alleged ill-treatment during identity checks or mass police raids. Some of them have even expressed their fear of being “targeted” by the police, because they are “pink card” holders, and said that asylum seekers are treated worse than others.

Police raids take place daily⁴² in the places where migrants and refugees live, and are often followed by their eviction from these places. During these raids and mass roundups, migrants claimed that the police destroyed their personal belongings (clothes, blankets, food, mobile phones and SIM-cards and their documents) or set fire to them in order to force them to evacuate these places. We have been also told of police officers who threw tear gas or stones at migrants in the old factory of Peiraki Patraiki, in order to force them out.

Police violence and harassment also takes place in other places, such as the traffic lights around the port of Patras, where migrants try to jump on the trucks, or in places where food is distributed to those in need, by solidarity groups or members of the church, and even outside supermarkets, where migrants searching for food in rubbish bins, or while walking to hospitals or to local NGOs.

In some cases reported to us, police officers on motorcycles have approached migrants from behind and without any warning or obvious reason would hit or beat them while still in motion. In one specific case, a police officer on a motorcycle collided with a migrant and broke his leg. The migrant was then transferred to hospital. No investigation of this incident ever took place.

⁴² During the research in Patras police raids took place on a daily level in the abandoned industrial area of Peiraki Patraiki and in other provisory places where migrants and refugees stay and live.

A large number of these reported incidents of ill-treatment by law enforcement officers, take place in the new Passengers’ Port of Patras. The victims were migrants intercepted within the port area, inside the ferries or inside, underneath or close to the trucks. The alleged perpetrators in most of the cases were officers from the Special Operations Unit of the Hellenic Coast Guard (KEA). Migrants and refugees referred to them as “commandos”, whose work includes the detection of “illegal” migrants trying to leave Greece without documentation. In a few cases, the port police or the private security company personnel operating inside the Patras port premises, were also cited as perpetrators.

In most cases, the victims told us that even though they had been immobilized, handcuffed and did not resist arrest, they were ill-treated by the “commandos”. In almost all of the cases, the victims stated that they were taken to remote places out of sight, where they were then beaten. On most occasions, the port authorities did not arrest the migrants or file any administrative or criminal case against them.

It is obvious, that violence and ill-treatment is generalised, even when there is no resistance from migrants.

Interviewees told us that they have been beaten with batons and telescopic metallic batons, and punched and kicked in every part of their bodies, even in the head. In some cases, they were forced to lie down on the ground while the perpetrators walk on their backs or step on their hands.

Due to the serious injuries caused by these beatings, some migrants were rushed to hospital, in some cases bleeding, with broken arms or legs, unable to walk, or unconscious or in a coma. Some migrants told us they were in pain for a long time, in some cases even for months. We have seen – and in some cases taken photos of – scars, bruises, broken legs, open wounds and other injuries. In very few cases have we seen medical certificates regarding the injuries.

Apart from the physical violence inflicted on them, we have been also told of different patterns of ill-treatment, which arouse feelings of fear, anxiety, distress and inferiority and which made migrants feel humiliated and worthless. We have been told that the “com-

mandos” often forced migrants to jump into the freezing sea in winter and remain there for more than ten minutes. Others described how they were terrified and hunted by the police on motorbikes and/or with dogs, which were even sometimes biting them. One interviewee described how he was forced on to his hands and knees and “ridden” like a horse.

At least five victims reported to us that electroshock weapons had been used against them, such as electroshock batons and tasers⁴³. One of them showed us pictures of the scars the taser had left behind. Another interviewee told us that he was threatened with a loaded gun. In another case, the victim told us that the offenders took photos of him with their mobile phones in a humiliating position. Yet another victim was forced to take off all of his clothes for an intimate (strip) search, without any reasonable cause or formality - as required - in order to carry out this search. Yet another victim was forced by a police officer to enter into a garbage bin, whereupon the lid was closed over his head.

In all these cases, the victims were also insulted with words and gestures, directed at their honour, reputation, family, ethnic origin, skin colour and religion. Most of the time they were told to leave Greece and go back home. All these are clear expressions of racism and discrimination.

⁴³ The tasers according to CPT are electrical discharge weapons (EDW). There are various types of EDW, ranging from electric shock batons and other hand-held weapons requiring direct contact with the person who is the intended target to weapons capable of delivering dart-like projectiles, which administer an electric shock to a person located at some distance. On 12.12.2011 the Athens Mixed Jury Court convicted a retired police officer for two acts of torture with electroshocks using a stun gun on two youth G. Sidiropoulos and I. Papakostas in Aspropyrgos (Attica) on 14.8.2002. That was the first and the only case in Greece that a Court handed a conviction with torture, article 137A par.1 and 2 of the Criminal Code. Source: <http://www.cpt.coe.int/en/documents/eng-standards.pdf> See also: Periklis Korovesis’ parliamentary interpellation to the Ministry of Citizen Protection on the use of tasers by the Greek police and consequent response. <http://syriza-vyronea.pblogs.gr/2009/01/398367.html> Eleutherotypia (January 22, 2009): “Halt” of death with electroshock – What does M26 Tazer cause? <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.article&id=9778>

It is more than clear to us, that the ill-treatment occurring in Patras, has no other purpose than the one of terrifying and “punishing” these persons, either because they have attempted to leave Greece or just because they are staying in that city. The aim is obviously to discourage them from coming. All of the people we have talked to expressed their fear and terror of further ill-treatment and felt vulnerable and unprotected.

Allegations of the ill-treatment of migrants and refugees by law-enforcement officers in Patras, have been documented at least since 2007 (see chapter 3.1). Nevertheless, these incidents continue to be widespread and even got worse. The Greek governments’ reluctance to address this problem is exacerbating the climate of impunity, which fosters further incidents of ill-treatment. As long as effective actions aren’t taken to investigate these allegations and as long as the perpetrators aren’t brought to justice, the climate of impunity will persist. The reported incidents of ill-treatment by law enforcement officers, could amount to torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, which are not tolerated under any circumstances according to the Greek, European and international law. No exception can be made in the name of “combating illegal migration”.

2008



K. from Afghanistan was beaten by police officers when he tried reaching Lidl in order to buy food.

2010

This Afghan man was allegedly beaten by the "commandos".



This minor from Afghanistan was beaten by "commandos" in the port of Patras.



M. from Afghanistan was stabbed by a knife. The perpetrator was a "commando".



2011

This young men was arrested and beaten by the police. Allegedly he was also electroshocked.



2012

Both persons got injured when they were trying to escape the police. Allegedly they ran away because they feared ill-treatment and arrest by the officers.



4. Individual Cases of Police Violence



4.1. Y., from Eritrea⁴⁴

“I left my country because I had political problems. I want to apply for asylum, but it has not been possible yet. I have already got an appointment with the Red Cross for my asylum application, but I still haven’t any with the police. They always say: ‘after, after, after!’

Wherever I go in Patras I am afraid. I came here on January 1, 2012. Up to today, the police beat me eleven times for no reason. I have been arrested and “deported” three times to Athens [the term “deport Athena” is used by the migrants to describe their transfer to Athens, when arrested by the police]. The police constantly insult us. I have been insulted on several occasions: ‘malaka, gamisou...!’ They insult us because of the colour of our skin or our religion. Once they told my friends and me: ‘Greece is bad. Greece is number one in Europe. Go to your country... We are mafia’.

I am always afraid. The police can beat me everywhere. Come and walk with me for a while though the streets of Patras and you will see! I am even afraid to go to the Red Cross offices in the city centre.

Once some fascists beat up a Sudanese, who had a “pink card”. He went to the police to sue them and report the incident, but they told him to leave. There is no protection! When I walk in the streets some people make the sign of the cross while passing by as if I am a danger.

In the end what is the sense and the benefit of having a “pink card”? The police beat also those who are “pink card” holders – even more than the others. It is a shame for your country what is happening here.”

Incident 1:

“One day as I was walking on the street, a police officer appeared from behind on his motorcycle. Without any warning he hit me with his motorcycle. He immobilized me; he lifted his hand and punched me in the side of my body.”

Incident 2:

“This morning the police entered our home⁴⁵ and burned everything: all of our personal belongings, our clothes and the food... They destroyed everything. Even a medicine bottle... They set fire and burned everything. They know there is no other place where we can stay. They know we search for food in the garbage.”

Incident 3:

“The worst thing that has ever happened to me was when the police arrested me in January 2012. I was brought to the police station, as I had no documents. **They undressed me. I even had to take off my underwear and was subjected to a strip search.**”

4.2. M., from Afghanistan⁴⁶

“The “commandos” beat me up twice. The police have never managed to catch me. During the last month, the situation has worsened a lot here. They beat us up all the time. It was not like that before. **The “commandos” themselves come to the factory and say we are always talking to the journalists about our beatings and for this reason they beat us even more now.** The “commandos” always insult us. Usually, they call us ‘malaka’. Some other officers they do not really say anything, they just beat us up. If there are any witnesses around, i.e. tourists, they take us politely from the shoulder to a remote place where nobody can see us. Then they just beat us up. They make us queue up and then beat us. During the winter, they forced us to jump into the cold water. Sometimes, they force us to lie on the ground and then they step on our heads and move their feet back and forth, as if they were extinguishing a cigarette. The police never beat us in front of other people in the city of Patras. Violence is always well hidden.”

⁴⁴ Interview held on April 4, 2012 in Patras

⁴⁵ He is referring to the abandoned factory of “Peiraiki Patraiki” where he and his friends were staying

⁴⁶ Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras

"In Patras, people are generally good. I think they are kind and generous. We have problems with the authorities and the extremists."

"We did not live like this in Afghanistan."

"I believe that dogs have a better luck than us here in Patras."



Incident 2:

"The "commandos" beat me once more - this time in front of some other Greeks. It was three-four months ago. It was late at night. They found me hidden inside a truck. Three "commandos" entered in the truck. One stayed outside, in front of the door. We were six persons hiding in that truck. They found only three of us, but they understood there were others hiding. I was among the first three found. **They beat me in order to tell them where they could find the others.** I went back in the truck and asked the others to come out. I had no choice. We had been badly beaten and when the others came out, they beat us all again. Three "commandos" beat us with their batons. **They were beating us that badly, that they started sweating. While I was beaten up, I was shouting: 'I'm sorry! I'm sorry!'** When the others came out, the "commandos" told me I was good and they let me go. Then they released the other two found with me. The other three were found later on when they stepped out of the truck, and were beaten up badly, too. We could see everything, while standing outside the port. There were some doctors in a van, passing by. We told them that the "commandos" had beaten us. They asked me how old I was. I told them I was 16 years old. Then they gave me a paper, stating my age. My hand was in pain for two weeks. The doctors bandaged it and gave me some tabs."

Incident 1:

"It happened just yesterday (2.4.12), around 6 or 8 pm. We were in the new port. The "commando" found us hiding inside a truck. They have dogs, you know. They smell us and bite our clothes. If we resist coming out from our hideouts, they order the dogs to bite us. There were four "commandos". **They entered the truck. They started kicking and punching us. Then they pulled us out, one by one. They put plastic handcuffs on us. Two of them brought us at the backside of another truck. They made us queue up and then they beat us up one by one - each for a few minutes. Two officers kicked me and punched me all over my body and in my head. Then they asked if we had any documents!"**

Incident 3:

"A friend of mine, who lives with us was beaten that badly that was full of bruises for two weeks. He does not want to talk about it. He does not even talk to us about this incident. He never went to the hospital. They caught him near the AB Supermarket, close to the rail tracks and beat him black. This happened two weeks ago. Some other guys saw the beating. Three to four police officers were beating our friend. His arm was swollen. It turned all blue and black from the beating. He was beaten so badly that he told the officers that he was fainting away and lay down on the ground."



"THEY THREW TEAR GAS IN SOME OF THE ROOMS FORCING PEOPLE TO COME OUT".

4.3. A., from Morocco⁴⁷

Incident 4:

"They once caught me inside the port. They put plastic handcuffs on me. Then they beat me. They handcuffed me tightly. That was about one month and a half ago. I told them I was a minor. They let me go after three hours."

Incident 5:

"We were once close to the coast guard building, in the old port. We were four Afghans and 5-6 "commandos". They caught us and handcuffed us. Then they brought us close to the Check-In point. Some officers and drivers could see us. We were tied up together, then ordered to sit down and look at the floor. There was always one "commando" guarding us. One of my friends looked up. The "commando" slapped him twice. We stayed like that for three hours. A friend of mine asked to go to the bathroom. The "commando" started insulting him: 'If you were in the truck, what would you do?' He then gave him a bottle in order to pee. I was very sad. I had almost managed to leave Greece. And they were beating us in front of other people. They would not say anything. Tourists were passing by, but would not say anything."

Incident 6:

"It was last year, when I saw the "commandos" chasing after a boy in the port. They caught him and beat him up with the batons. He fell down from the beating. They forced him to stand up and to move on. He could not walk and fell down again. The "commando" lifted him up again, ordering him to move. Another "commando" then dragged him behind one truck. They beat him again. Then a "commando" car came and carried the boy away."

"It has been some months now that I am here in Patras. I have a deportation order. We are not only afraid of the police and the "commando", but also of the fascists. There are some groups of Greeks who just wait to catch one of us alone, so that they can beat him."

Incident 1:

"In March 2012, two "commandos" arrested me at the old port close to the ticket offices. During the arrest there were a lot of people around. They handcuffed me and then started kicking me. Then I was brought before the court and accused of stealing. I spent 20 days in the detention container in the old port and seven days in the police station in Lappa. They did not give me any food or even a blanket. I was then transferred to Pyrgos' police station. We were twenty people in one cell. We were not allowed to go out. I went on a three days hunger strike demanding my release."

Incident 2:

"Today the police and plain-clothes police officers entered in the old factory where I am staying with their motorcycles. They threw tear gas in some of the rooms forcing people to come out. They were throwing tear gas to us, through the holes in the wall."

Incident 3:

One day I saw the "commandos" beating up two friends of mine inside the new port. At first the officers forced them to jump into the sea. When they came out of the water, I saw the "commandos" beating them with batons. They also threw gas into their eyes. Then they let them go and sent the dogs after them to bite them. The guys were running to save their lives. We could hear their screams from a distance of 20 metres, while they were beaten up."

Incident 4:

"The worst thing for me is what happened to a friend of mine. They beat him so bad on his leg that he was screaming and shouting for a doctor. They broke his leg."

4.4. A.M., from Afghanistan⁴⁸

"I came to Greece in August 2011. I moved to Patras one month and half ago. I have not applied for asylum. Patras is a very difficult place. We all eat from the garbage. The police treat us badly. They are very violent! They should not beat us. It is forbidden by European law. We come from a country at war, in order to find peace and we find ourselves in the middle of violence."

Incident 1:

"It was twenty days ago, around 11 o' clock in the night. I went to the port on my own. Two "commandos" noticed me. They came and ordered me to sit down and empty my pockets. They took my mobile phone and my sim card and broke them both. They ordered me to take off my shoes and threw them in the garbage bin. They both started beating me with their baton, in my back, in my knees and ankles. They were shouting to me: 'malaka!' This was the only thing I could understand. There was nobody else around. They brought me close to a building where private cars are parked. After beating me for almost twenty minutes, they told me: 'fyge malaka'. I left barefoot. When I came out of the port, some of my friends came to help me. They carried me on their back, back to the factory. A journalist brought me some medicines for the pain, the day after. I was new in Patras. I did not know where to find a doctor. I could not walk for a week. I still feel pain. The "commandos" tried to beat me in my head. I put my arms over my head, in order to protect me. This is why I was beaten that badly in my arms and hands."

Incident 2:

"It was on April 1st around 10am. I was in the port along with three other friends of mine. I was hidden underneath a truck and fell asleep. The "commandos" came. My friends managed to run away. When I woke up it was already too late. Two "commandos" came with a dog. I woke up, as the dog bit me on my shoulder. His teeth passed through the clothing and slightly injured my shoulder. You could see the bite on

my skin. The dog was holding me very tight. My jacket was torn up. When they pulled the dog back, I came out of the truck. The "commandos" handcuffed me very tight, on the front side of my body, with plastic handcuffs. My wrists are still in pain. There was also someone else in plain-clothes. Maybe it was the security guy or the truck driver. I was ordered to sit down. One of the "commandos" grabbed me from my clothes and pulled me up, shouting: 'pano, pano' (up! up!). He dragged me to a remote corner, where nobody could see and kicked me badly on my legs. After ten minutes, he slapped me on my face very badly and then let me go."

4.5. M.M., from Morocco⁴⁹

"It's been six months since I am here in Patras. Wherever we go we risk being beaten up by the police. They have beaten me up so many times in the streets. Sometimes the "commandos" cover their faces with a full-mask, so that we cannot recognize them. In the port they always beat us up somewhere hidden, not in front of other people (i.e. tourists). They beat us up with their hands, punches and kicks, with batons and even with some special rods, like golf clubs. They want to force us out of Patras."

Incident 1:

"They asked me where I am from. I replied. They insulted me ("malakas" etc.) and then punched, kicked and hit me with batons for about three to five minutes – for no reason. Generally, there isn't any reasonable motive for the beatings occurring in Patras. It is a police tactic. We are all afraid that we can be beaten at any time. It is a simple matter of luck and of how well you speak Greek – whether they beat you up, or they beat you more or less. They transferred me to the police station in Athens and then let me free. I came back to Patras, on foot, walking the whole way back."

Incident 2:

"It was two months ago. It was on Sunday. I went along with two friends of mine to the new port. We were sitting on the rocks, by the sea. It was at night. We were just sitting there. Somebody

⁴⁷ Interview held on April 4, 2012 in Patras

^{48 & 49} Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras

must have seen us. Two “commandos” came with the dogs. They said to us ‘Mesa!’ (inside!). They meant jump into the sea. It was cold. I tried to tell them in English that I do not speak any Greek and that I could not jump into the water. It was too cold. They moved towards us, threatening that they would unleash the dogs. We were afraid and jumped into the water. It was very cold. When they let us come out of the water they beat us up again. I do not remember for how long we stayed into the water. I was very afraid.”

Incident 3:

“It happened one month ago. It was very cold and rainy. It was about six o’ clock in the morning. I was hiding in a truck, trying to leave from Greece. I stayed inside for hours. The vessel arrived. I could hear it. In the end, the “commandos” found us. We were four hidden in the truck. They forced us to take off our shoes. They never gave them back to us. One of the “commandos” pointed to the sea. He told us to jump in. I told them I was sick. They both punched me in the chest, several times. Then one of the “commandos” started going around in circles with his motorcycle, pushing us this way towards the port’s exit. We were just trying to protect ourselves from the motorcycle and from him in order not to be beaten up.”

Incident 4:

“I saw twice the ship security officers using a taser on migrants. They use this small black rod with some small things on it that sends out electricity. They security officer took one guy out of the ship, stunned him with the taser⁵⁰ and then just left him lying on the ground.”

4.6. R., from Morocco⁵¹

Incident 1:

“It was about 20 days ago, around 17 o’ clock in the afternoon. I was trying to get into the port. I was hiding under a truck. Two “commandos” found me. One of them pointed his gun at me and ordered me to get out and sit down. I followed his orders. I was alone. While I was sitting on the ground he ordered me to take off

my shoes and give him my mobile phone. I did whatever he told me to do. Then he started beating me while I was in a sitting position. He insulted me. He raised me up and said ‘Mesa’ (inside!). I was afraid and felt I had no other choice but to jump into the sea. I came out only when I was ordered to do so. He was standing at a distance of approximately three meters from me, pointing his gun at me and loaded it. I heard the sound. I was terrified. I thought he would kill me. Then I understood I had to go. I started running away barefoot and wet as I was.”

Incident 2:

“One week ago, the “commandos” caught me again inside the port. They immobilized me with handcuffs and then beat me up with a baton in all parts of my body. I did not want to go to the hospital. I was afraid.”

At this point, the interviewee shows us his right hand, where he still hand signs of handcuffs on it. He could not move his bandaged hand.

4.7. M.H., from Sudan⁵²

“I NEED TO CHANGE MY LUCK!”

When we first started talking with M.H he was hesitant about talking to us about the police violence. He explained that it is a daily routine here in Patras; It happens all the time and to everyone. Thus, it is rather difficult for him to tell us about individual incidents of violence he has experienced, he says.

“It’s been two and a half years since I arrived in Greece. I first arrived in Samos. I stayed for a year in Igoumenitsa, where I applied for asylum. Since summer 2011, when the police arrested everyone in Igoumenita, I moved here in Patras. I have no other place to go. The police and the “commandos” beat me many times here. Wherever I go, I am in danger. Being a “pink card” holder does not offer me any pro-

tection. On the contrary, it is a big problem for the police. I do not really know why, but they beat us more if we have a “pink card”. The situation in Patras is very bad. You can never sleep. Nobody can ever sleep. When we see a police car or a police motorcycle we run away. It does not matter if you have any papers or not. They do not ask you if you have any problem or not. They just beat you. Patras is finished for refugees. I do not know if it’s in one day or in one month. The police are very bad. The Greek people are not bad – there are so many refugees. Some people also help us. They inform us about the fascists’ demonstrations. In Igoumenitsa the “commandos” were beating us, not the police. It was a small city and all refugees knew where the police officers where staying. The police don’t like the refugees. For us Sudanese, it’s a little bit easier. For those from Afghanistan or from Maghreb it’s more difficult. But they also beat us Sudanese. Today the police came at the place where I live. They arrested everybody, apart from me. I have no idea where my friends are now.”

Incident 1:

“Three days ago, it was late at night and I was trying to find a place to hide in the port. The “commandos” saw me. They asked me whether I had any papers. I said I did not have any papers, as they would tear them up. They do not like us to have papers. They took my mobile phone and stepped on it. They punched me in my head and beat me with their batons in my back. I could not move for a couple of days, because of the pain.”

Incident 2:

“One week ago, I was on my way back to the place where I’m staying. It was around 5am. I was walking alone along the train rails in the dark. The police appeared. An officer asked me why I was close to the port. There were two other officers in the patrol car and one standing next to it. They handcuffed me. Then they started beating me up, all together. They beat me in the temples with the baton. Then they grabbed me by my scruff from my neck and lifted me up. I was shouting: “I’m sick! I’m sick!” They then let me go. They said: ‘fyge malaka!’,

and said some other bad words in Greek. I’m afraid to walk through the city on my own. I go a long way round to reach the place where I’m staying. I’m trying to avoid the police now. I am always hiding from them.”

Incident 3:

“It was in the afternoon, around 5pm when the “commandos” caught me in the port. There was none else around. There were four “commandos” in a car and two others on a motorcycle. They handcuffed me with plastic cuffs. They searched into my pockets. They found my “pink card” and beat me once more for some minutes, even though I was handcuffed. Then they let me go.”

Incident 4:

“I was never attacked by a dog, but a Sudanese friend of mine was. The dog bit him so badly, that he broke his hand. He was in the port, running away from the “commandos”. The “commandos” unleashed the dog and shouted: ‘get him!’. The dog did not let go, until the “commandos” grabbed its neck and squeezed it. Only then it let go of my friend’s hand. They then let him go. He went to the hospital as his hand was injured and broken.”

Incident 5:

“Two months ago, I was caught by a “commando” in the port. It was late at night. I just came out of the truck where I was hiding. There were no people around. He threw me down. I was lying on the ground with my face down. Then he walked over me. He did not insult me with words, but he did it in the worst possible way.”

4.8. M., from Morocco⁵³

“I believe that dogs have better luck than us here in Patras. I have been beaten and I have seen others being beaten up by the police and the “commandos”. Can you tell me why they treat us like that? I am always scared. I am afraid to wake up. I am afraid to go to the garbage and look for food. I am afraid to go to the city.”

⁵⁰ Electroshock weapon

⁵¹ Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras

⁵² Interview held on April 4, 2012 in Patras

⁵³ Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras

Incident 1:

"The worst thing happened to me seven months ago. The "commandos" saw me inside the new port. They chased me around and I ran as if I were a cat. When they caught me and arrested me, I was immobilized and brought behind a corner where nobody could see us. This happens to all of us. Two "commandos" started beating me up. One of them is a bald one. They beat me all over my body with the batons, even in my face and head. I fell down, but they continued beating me up. They broke some of my teeth. Even though it has been months since then, I still have some scars and other injuries." He shows us marks from beatings on his left eye and left cheek, on his head and on his right foot. His elbow seems dislocated, as if it had been broken and healed by itself.

"I was very afraid. I was afraid that they might kill me. I felt helpless. There was nothing I could do and none I could call for help. I think they beat us up, because they want to terrify us to such an extent that we would never enter in the port again. When they stopped beating me up, they left me lying on the ground covered all with blood. I was in such pain that I could not stand up on my feet. When I finally managed it, a tourist saw me in that state and gave me some money. I went to the hospital. At first they did not want to treat me. I started shouting and finally a doctor came and examined me. I never managed to go back to the hospital. My hand was broken and the bone was remodelled badly on its own."

4.9. H., from Afghanistan⁵⁴

"A month ago I was caught by the police near the port. I was close to the Lidl Supermarket. One officer handcuffed me and put one part of the cuff on the motorcycle. Then he officer started driving up and down for about 20-25 minutes in front of everybody. It was around 2pm."

⁵⁴ Interview held on May 12, 2012 in Patras

⁵⁵ Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras



"We come from a country at war, in order to find peace and we find ourselves in the middle of violence."

4.10. A., from Morocco⁵⁵

Incident 1:

"It is almost five months since I moved to Patras. One week ago, I was inside the new port along with two other persons. The "commandos" found us hiding under the truck. They pulled me out. There were six "commandos" and one dog. I was the first. They started beating me up. They handcuffed me and kept on beating me. They took off our shoes and threw them into the sea. They also took our mobile phones. We never got them back. They forced us to sit down. I was handcuffed behind my back. We were forced to lift our legs in the air and look upwards. They were shining their flashlights directly into our eyes, blinding us. Then they started beating us up again, while keeping insulting us. I have been beaten everywhere: in the head, in my stomach... everywhere. They were kicking us and beating us up with the batons. Next to me, close to my legs there was the dog. It was frightening. The most terrifying things in Patras for me are the dogs. Sometimes the "commandos" unleash them and send



"Put yourself in my place. Imagine you eat from the garbage. What hopes would have you, if you were staying in Patras?"

them after us. They kept beating us and insulting us for approximately 30 minutes. Nobody could see us, in that corner where we were. My stomach and my chest were in strong pain. I still have the pain on my chest. I was detained in the old port overnight. The day after they released me without any document. There was nothing in that cell. No food, no water, no toilette, no blanket, no shoes, no nothing. It was cold. I could not even stand on feet or move due to the pain. I was crying for help telling them I need to see a doctor. Every three hours, someone would come and check on me, making hand gestures and insulting me by saying: 'malaka, gamisou esy, gamisou aderfi sou, gamisou to islam, gamisou chora sou' (asshole! Fuck you! Fuck your sister! Fuck Islam! Fuck your country..!). Three days after the beating I was still in a lot of pain, so I went to the hospital. Nobody helped me there. A woman waiting to see a doctor, started shouting on us, telling we wanted to steal her bag. After waiting for five hours I fainted from the pain. A doctor visited me and I was put on a drip. I had an X-ray. When I left the hospital, I didn't get any medical attestation concerning my injuries neither was any medicine prescribed to me."

Incident 2:

"We know all the garbage bins of Patras. We even know in which one can find sweets, bread or other meals... Fifteen days ago I was looking for food in the garbage bin. A police officer arrived on his motorcycle and stopped next to me. He ordered me to enter the garbage bin and close the garbage bin lid over me. I did as he ordered me to do. I had no other choice of course. I was afraid. I just entered into the garbage bin and closed the lid over my head."

Incident 3:

"One day I saw an Afghan lying on the ground. A "commando" was standing on him and beating hem while a dog was biting his legs. It was very shocking for me. When they let him go and he came out of the port, we asked a Greek person to call an ambulance. The Afghan could not walk anymore. If we call the ambulance, they never come. A Greek has to call for them."

4.11. A., from Eritrea⁵⁶

"I've been in Greece for five months and two weeks here in Patras. It's a shame for Europe what the police is doing here. Europe should be setting a good example, not a bad one. They should be civilized and friendly here. At least this is what I heard about Europe, before coming here. We did not know Europe is like this, when we were in Eritrea. We might come from poor families, but we are not used to living like this. They should sympathize with us; we are human beings. In Patras, people are generally good. I think they are kind and generous. We have problems with the authorities and the extremists."

It was six days ago, around the 29th of March. I was trying to leave, in a truck. I was hidden in a spare tire. The truck arrived at the Check-In point. At first, the "commando" did not see me. When he found me, he pulled me out. It was in the afternoon. He insulted me and then punched and kicked me. Another "commando" came and ordered him to stop beating me. They pushed me inside the van. There were also three Sudanese. They handcuffed me with plastic cuffs on my back. The "commando" then told me: 'Now you are safe! Tomorrow you will be transferred to Athens.' When he left, the other one stepped into the van and closed the door behind him. He beat me until I begged him to stop. Twenty minutes later, we were brought to the police station. They took everything, even our mobile phones. When we were about to be transferred to Athens, they even searched my underwear."

4.12. H., from Morocco⁵⁷

"One week before, we were three persons and the "commandos" caught us. They forced us to sit down with our legs up in the air, with our heads leaned to the back and our hands on our back. They told us to take off our shoes. Then they threw them into the sea. They brought us to a remote place, at a corner where no one could see us. They started beating us up all over our bodies with the batons and kicking us. There was also a dog with them. One of

⁵⁶ Interview held on April 4, 2012 in Patras

⁵⁷ Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras

us was handcuffed on his back. They ordered me to take off my clothes and jump into the sea. I tried to tell them that I do not know how to swim. I was afraid to drown. They beat me even more and heavily insulted me telling me to leave the country."

"I CAME HEALTHY
FROM AFGHANISTAN
AND NOW
I AM AFRAID
THAT I WILL LEAVE
THIS COUNTRY
LIMPING."

4.13. H.M., from Afghanistan⁵⁸

On the 5th of April, around 10am the police came where we are staying. We were all sleeping, on the second floor. They came from the stairs, so I tried to run away, climbing down a rope. The police, once they arrived on our floor, cut the rope. I fell from six metres height. I hurt my leg. I could not walk anymore and I was feeling dizzy. They dragged me into the "dolmush". In the car, there were also some Sudanese and a Pakistani. I was shouting from the pain, asking them to take me to the hospital. They said: 'Shut up!' and drove around the area for a couple of hours. They did not ask for my papers. They then brought me to Aghios Andreas Hospital. A plaster cast was put on my leg. I was told not to move for thirty days. I left for Athens, to rest and get well. After 30days I

⁵⁸ Interview held on May 12, 2012 in Patras

⁵⁹ Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras

went to KAT hospital, to have my plaster cast removed. They told me they could not do that, as I had no valid documents. I came back to Patras. Now I'm sleeping in the same place. My friends tie a rope around me and pull me up to the second floor. I depend on them for everything. Now, my friends have been arrested. I'm alone. I told the police to leave at least one of them to take care of me, but they replied I should get in my sleeping back and stay there until they come back."

4.14. R., from Morocco⁵⁹

"I don't understand why these things happen in Greece. They do not have the right to humiliate us like that."

The worst thing that ever happened to me, took place twenty days ago. Two "commandos" arrested me inside the port. They had a dog with them. They handcuffed me so tightly that my wrists still carry the signs." He shows to us his right wrist. "They took me to a remote place. They did not want tourists to see them. Four or five "commandos" came. I was wearing a cap. They pulled it down over my eyes, so that I could not see anything. Then they started beating me up with their batons and kicking me – mostly in my head, back and legs. I had the impression they were trying to break my legs. You can still see the signs of the beating over my body." He shows to us signs on his back. "I fell down from the beating and they just kept on hitting me. At some point my cap was lifted and I could see them. I think they beat me over for about half an hour. They were making pictures of me with their mobile phones and laughing. They insulted me. Then they told me they would upload the photos in the Internet. They were asking me whether I could provide them with some hashish. They broke my mobile phone. My legs are still aching me. I tried to go to the hospital. I finally managed to go to Rio's Hospital."

4.15. A., from Morocco⁶⁰

Incident 1:

"Fifteen days ago, six "commandos" caught me inside the port in the afternoon. I had tried to enter in a truck and leave for Italy. I was arrested. They handcuffed me. Then they brought me to a remote place and started beating me all together, with their batons while kicking and punching me, too. I was not able to move for two weeks. They took my mobile phone. They were beating me for a long time and they were saying bad words. When they stopped beating me, they washed their hands with water in order to clean them from my blood. I was detained for one day and then transferred to Athens where I was released. While in detention, I could not make any phone calls, I could not communicate with the outside world. I did not even drink water or get any food. I was not brought to the doctor. I just slept on the floor."

Incident 2:

"Another time, when the "commandos" caught me inside the port, they forced me to jump in the cold water and stay there until I was ordered to come out. Then they beat me and let me go. I have seen that many times, when they order people to jump into the sea, they throw stones in the water, ordering them to dive and catch them."

He shows us marks on the left side of his chest. When we ask him if he visited a doctor after that incident, he replies, that they would not have treated him anyway.

4.16. M.A., from Afghanistan⁶¹

M.A. has no valid documents. He has never entered the reception system here in Greece.

"I never had papers and I never want them. Those who hold a "pink card" have nothing more than me! It has been three months now I am in Patras and eight months I am in Greece. When I arrived to Patras, the new port had just opened a month before. Patras is a black place. A terrifying one! Now (at noon) there is a light in

the room for you, but we cannot see it. We only see darkness. If we go outside there is the police. In the night there are the fascists. When they get drunk they come close to this area and beat people. You know, the police and the "commandos" have even torn up minors' papers, so that they could freely beat them. When I think of the police beating us, I feel as if we do not count as human beings. They do not see us as human beings. The police are doing very bad things to us. Before coming to Greece, I believed that there is culture here, now I understand that the police are bad everywhere."

Incident 1:

"The first time I came to Patras (three months ago), it was noon. I was close to the factory and a police motorcycle arrived. One officer was riding the motorcycle and another came on foot. They arrested me and pushed me in the "dolmush" [expression used by the migrants to describe the police van] where they beat me up. There is this bald police officer. Whenever he comes here he lifts his helmet so that we recognize him. Everybody runs away. When they pushed me in the "dolmush" the officer driving the van was sitting in his seat. The other officer was punching and kicking me all over my body except in the face for almost ten minutes. They were shouting at me: 'ante gamisou, ai sto diaolo, tha se gamiso' (fuck you! Go to hell! I will fuck you!). On that day they arrested people from different countries. We were fifteen in the "dolmush". After beating me up, they asked me if I had any documents. I showed them the deportation order, which they took away from me."

Incident 2:

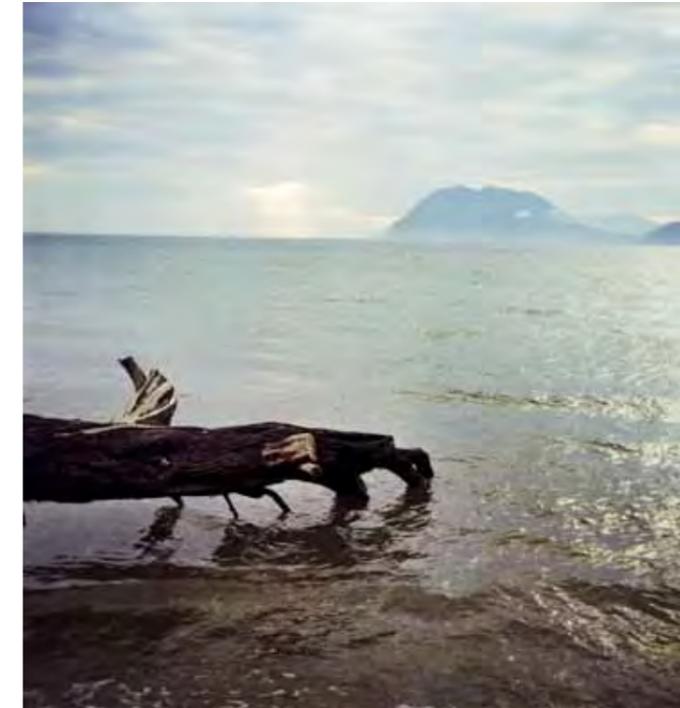
"In the beginning of March (2012) the "commandos" found me hiding close to the trucks waiting to embark on the ship. I was trying to hide under a truck along with a friend of mine. They caught us and handcuffed us. It was late midnight and dark. They ordered us to walk and the two "commandos" followed us on their motorcycle and started kicking us while in motion. They led us to the Check-In point. We stood next to a wall, where nobody could see us. A second motorcycle arrived with

⁶⁰ Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras

⁶¹ Interview held on April 2, 2012 in Patras



"Every night I am dreaming of leaving Greece!"



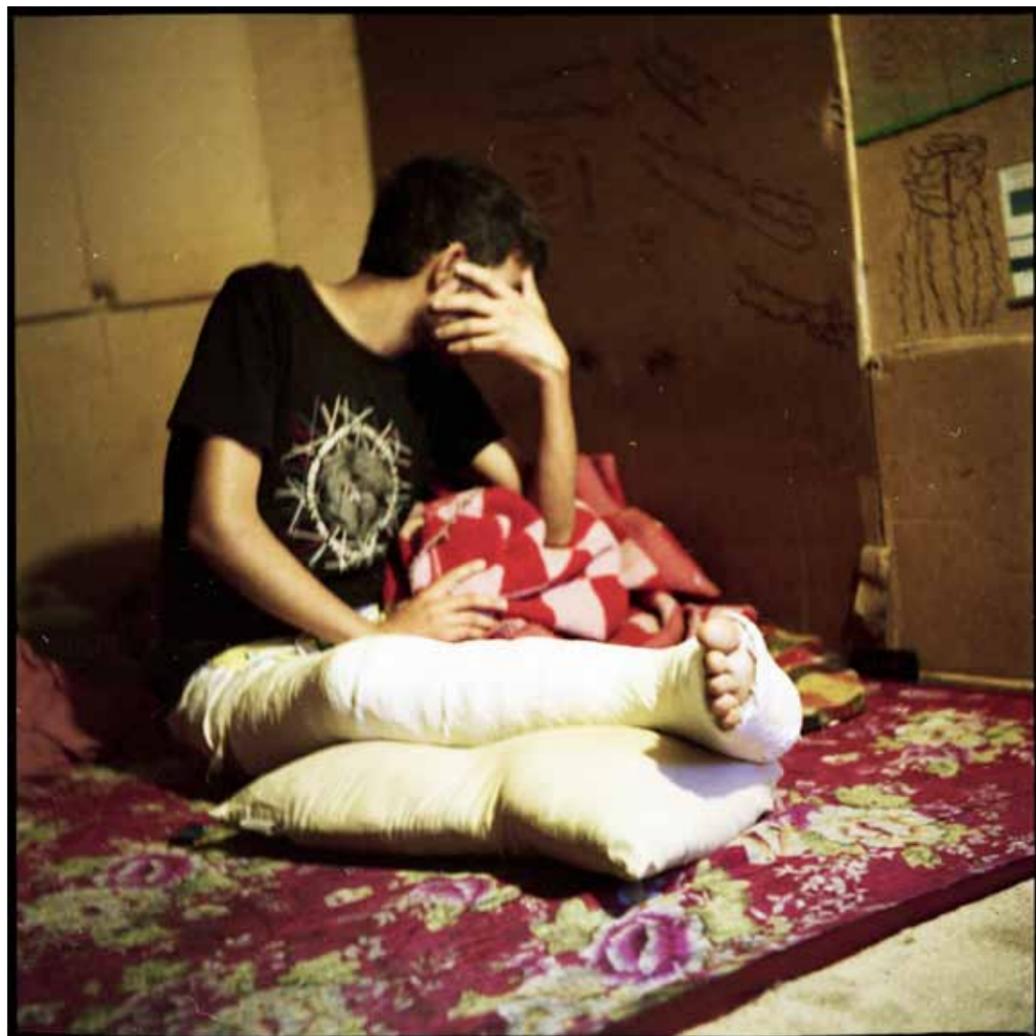
"He ordered me to enter the garbage bin and close the garbage bin lid over me."

two other "commandos". They beat us up for about half an hour. There was also a woman from the Check-In point [Check-In staff belong to the uniformed coast guard] watching the whole scene. They beat me with their batons on my right arm and shoulder. I was trying to protect my head. When I fainted from the beatings, they kept on beating me up. Then they asked for our mobile phones, our documents, shoes, jackets and cigarettes. They insulted us a lot. I do not want to repeat the words they said to us. They kept on beating us for another half an hour. It was cold and rainy. They even took off their helmets and beat us with them in our heads. Then they just let us go. It was almost impossible for me to walk back to the place I sleep. My friend was also badly beaten. They even pulled off his hair and made fun out of it. Since that day, I never went back to the port. I am afraid. It was Sunday and there were no people around."

4.17. M., from Morocco⁶²

"I was in the port, near the rocks. It was 20-25 days ago. Two "commandos" found me and beat me with an electric baton on my left shoulder. It felt like a bomb in my heart. I felt dizzy and fell in the sea. Five days ago, another one was beaten on his head by the "commandos" with this electric baton. He had to be recovered. Now he is so afraid that he has left the place."

⁶² Interview held on May 12, 2012 in Patras



"He came from behind and hit me with the motorcycle."

4.18. S., from Morocco ⁶³

"Yesterday I went to the port around six o' clock in the afternoon. Two "commandos" with their motorcycles found me. They got off their motorcycles and started beating me with their batons and insulting me. I fell down on the ground and they kept on beating me up, everywhere – they even kicked me in my head. I was so badly beaten on my legs, that you could see the bones through the open wound." He shows to us an open wound on his left leg. He bandaged it on his own. "I did not want to go to the hospital, I have no papers and I am afraid. Can you help me see a doctor?"

4.19 J., from Afghanistan ⁶⁴

We visited J. in his makeshift shelter. He has not been going out since he was injured and is entirely dependent on his friends for everything he needs. His right foot was in a cast. He showed us the medical certificates he had receive from the hospital. He seemed weak and in bad psychological condition while we sat and talked.

"It was a month ago. I was outside walking, near a gas station. I wanted to buy a coffee. I was on my own. It was around five o' clock in the afternoon. I saw a police officer on a motorcycle chasing some others. I kept on walking.

⁶³ Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras

⁶⁴ Interview held on May 12, 2012 in Patras

4.21. H.R. (17), from Afghanistan ⁶⁶

I did not realize what he was about to do. He came from behind and hit me with the motorcycle. He then stopped. He revved up and hit me again. I fell down. He stopped and wanted to handcuff me. I showed him my leg. The bone was completely exposed and broken. He did not handcuff me and then asked me if I had any documents! And then he finally called for an ambulance.

He hid his motorcycle behind the bushes. The ambulance arrived as well as another police officer on a motorcycle. He did not ask me anything about the accident. I guess he came to give the one who hit me a lift. I was brought to Aghios Andreas Hospital. The police officers did not come along. The doctor in the hospital asked me how this happened. I told him, but he did nothing about it.

There were no other people standing there. But there were passers-by who saw what had happened. I spent 15 days in the hospital recovering. In three days I have to go back, to change the plaster cast.

Nothing was done about this. I don't think that the officer who injured me was punished for what he did. No other officer came to ask me about the incident in order to investigate it."

4.20. A., from Morocco ⁶⁵

Incident 1:

"One day, I was in front of the supermarket. I tried to ask for food to eat. The police came and beat me with their batons. They accused me of stealing. They destroyed my mobile phone and then let me free."

Incident 2:

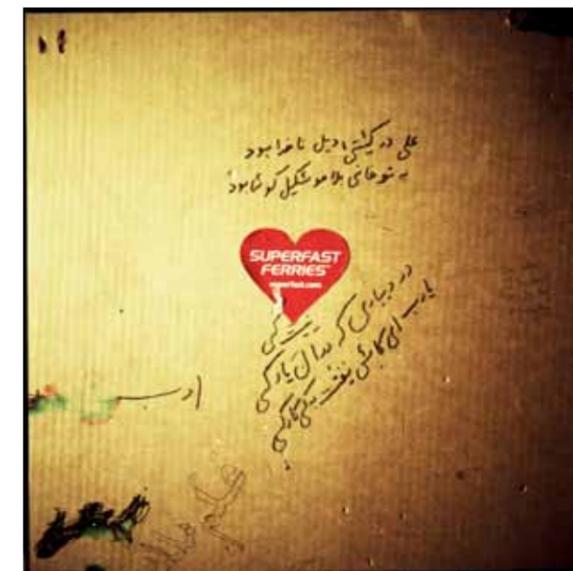
"Ten days ago, three "commandos" on motorcycles were chasing me. I was running, because I was afraid they would beat me. They stopped me, threw a spray in my eyes and beat me with their batons on my head. I fell down, but they kept on beating me."

⁶⁵ Interview held on May 12, 2012 in Patras

⁶⁶ Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras

"I am almost 18 years old now. When I first came to Greece, I told the police I was 27 years old, as I did not want to stay three months in detention. I had a deportation order from Evros', but the police here in Patras tore it up. They did the same to others, too. The police had checked my documents here in the factory. They wanted to arrest me, but I ran away. It has been one year since I arrived to Greece and seven months I am in Patras now. I have once managed to reach Italy, but they sent me back immediately. I was once beaten up that badly by the "commandos" that Praksis referred me to a reception centre. But I left and came back here. The living conditions here are very bad. Last month, the Municipality cut off the water supply in the fabric. Now we drink from the sewage water. We already eat from the garbage bins.

The police tell us: 'You want to stay here? Live like dogs and die like dogs!' We had heard that they would respect our rights here in Europe, but they do not know what the word "human" stands for. He points at a dog next to him. This dog is worth more than us to them. Common people do not really treat us bad, but the police do. Even though in our home countries we have so many problems, we never treat a foreigner bad. I believe Greece is the toilette of Europe!"



"In the place where no one remembers no one, you should not expect anything."

4.22. H. (16),
from Afghanistan⁶⁷

Incident 1:

"It was around midnight. When I finally managed to enter in the port, the "commandos" saw me. I saw three motorcycles with two "commandos" on each one of them. I climbed back on the fence to get off the port area. When I had just managed to reach the top of the three meters fence, one of the "commandos" pushed me from the back and I fell down and hit my head. I remember my friend shouting: 'He is dead! Call an ambulance!' But the "commandos" replied with insults: 'fuck you! Go to hell!' Shortly after, I fainted away. I do not remember anything. My friend told me later on that while I was unconscious, one of the "commandos" stepped over me with his motorcycle. A 15 years old friend of mine picked me up and called an ambulance. He was later arrested and imprisoned. I was brought to Rio's Hospital. I was in a coma for seven days. When I woke up, I asked the interpreter from Praksis, who was sitting next to me, for some food. I told him I had not eaten anything since yesterday. He then explained to me that I had been in a coma for a week. I stayed in the hospital for another nine days.

Upon release from Rio's Hospital, Praksis referred me to a reception centre. I had to undergo an operation in a hospital in Katechaki, in

"I arrived in Greece seven months ago and I have spent six months here in Patras. I had a deportation order from Evros, where I was first arrested. I never applied for asylum. I suffer from asthma. I cannot breathe well these days. In Patras I am having a very bad time. I am far away from my family. Whatever bad things could ever happen to me, they are found in Patras. I wish the police did not beat us. I cannot sleep at all. At night, the police come and wake us up, shouting, kicking and beating us with their batons. If we do not wake up, they just slap us. They insult us badly. In the best cases, they just call us "malakas". When they wake us up during night, some of us have fallen through the deep holes in the factory floor and broken their arms and legs. The "commandos" force us to jump in the sea. It happened three times to me. There is one police officer, who we call "the bald one". He is the worst! Every time he catches us, he beats us badly. Then there is another officer, who usually comes with him. We call him "minor". He looks very young. They always come on a motorcycle. The "minor" learns from the "bald one". He also beats us badly."

**"THEY THEN SAT ON HIS BACK,
AS IF THEY WERE RIDING A HORSE,
FOR SOME MINUTES."**

Athens. I stayed for a month in Athens. Until today, I cannot really sleep. My wounds may have healed from outside, but not from inside. I have started going back to the new port. I have nothing to fear anymore. My fear is gone. What else could happen to me?"

Incident 1:

"One night, I went to the new port with a friend of mine. It was late at night, probably six months ago. There was no one else around. We hid ourselves inside a box in a truck. A "commando" found us and pulled us out. At first, he did not beat us. We were taken to the port perimeter, by the fence. When we were almost outside the port area, he pushed us, and three other officers arrived. I tried to leave the port by climbing over the first fence. They pushed me and I fell down. I hurt my foot. When I fell

from the fence, the officers came after me and chased me. One was on his motorcycle and he stopped next to me and kicked me. I fell again. This officer was very big. While I was lying on the ground, he put his foot on my back. Another officer arrived on his motorcycle. They started beating me together, punching and kicking me. I got a very strong punch on my chest and I could not breathe anymore. They also beat me with their batons on my ribs. They were shouting things in Greek I could not understand. I was terrified. I could not understand anything. They were beating me constantly for more than ten minutes. A police patrol car arrived. Another two officers stepped out. They also beat me. Among them, there was also the "bald" one. He wears glasses. Four police officers kept on kicking me as if I were a football. I was shouting that I still had my deportation order with me and I was an underaged. Only then they let me go. My friend came to help me and he was arrested, as he was an adult. They "deported" him to Athens. Next morning I went to Praksis to see a doctor. I could not walk for a month. I was in a lot of pain."

Incident 2:

"It happened a month ago, at night. I was in the new port, by the entrance, next to the wall. I was alone. Suddenly I saw some others running, so I started running, too. Then I noticed that the one running next to me was a police officer, the "minor". When he noticed me, he started chasing me for about 60-70metres. He could not catch me, but he took a large stone and threw it at me. It hit me on my back. My back was aching me for a week."

Incident 3:

"About five months ago, I was in the port when a "commando" saw me together with three friends of mine. Then two others joined him. He threatened us with a baton, as if he would beat us and then shouted to us in a very terrifying way "kato, kato!", pointing with his baton at the sea. I cannot swim, but I did not want to be beaten up, so I jumped into the water. My friends also jumped. We did it because we were afraid. I was afraid. I was wet and trying to hold from a small rock. He beat me in my hand, so that I could not hold anymore. They

want us to get wet up to the head. I was stepping on some stones in the sea. After approximately ten minutes, they ordered us to come out of the water. The three "commandos" beat us all. We were shivering. They beat us again for some more minutes and then shouted to us: 'fyge malaka'. We came back to the factory, so that we could dry our clothes and get some rest."

Incident 4:

"This happened a couple of months ago. It was late at night and I was in the port. Every time the "commandos" find us hiding in a truck, they force us to jump into the water. This time I was alone. There were two "commandos". One of them forced me to jump into the sea; the other beat me when I came out of the water. They beat me all over. They do not look where they are beating you. They just beat. They do not care if they hit you on the head. They always beat in groups. Many of my friends have been beaten on the heads!"

Incident 5:

"It was 20 days ago, around 3 a.m. It was very windy. We were at the port, six of us, hiding at the back of the containers. Six "commandos" came and my friends ran away. They caught me together with a friend of mine. Four of the "commandos" grabbed my friend and started beating him all over, with batons and kicks. His back was all black from the bruises. The other "commandos" were running after me, trying to catch me. I ran towards the sea, trying to escape from them. I found a mud puddle and stayed there, with the water up to my knees. I was thinking they would not want to wet themselves. At first, they did not enter and they started throwing stones at me, trying to make me come out. I did not come out, so they came in. They started punching me. I got three punches and I got dizzy. They grabbed my hood and dragged me to where my friend was. They used so much force that my hood was torn off. They kept on beating me, kicking and punching me. Then they undressed me and left me in my underwear. They even took my shoes. Then they let me go. Someone from the local TV-channel saw me and called for an ambulance.

⁶⁷ Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras

The “commandos” took my friend’s mobile phone. They did not ask him if he had any documents. Now, my friend wants to go back to Afghanistan.

I was taken to the Rio Hospital. Then I had to come back barefoot. I had no shoes anymore. I found some shoes while walking back to where I’m staying, next to the train rails. My body was aching for a long time. Those of us who are trapped here, are the poorest, the youngest. It’s been a year since I last saw my family. I’m trapped.”

4.23. M. (16), from Afghanistan⁶⁸

“It’s been two years since I arrived in Greece. I have not applied for asylum. I stayed in Athens for a couple of months and then I moved to Patras. I can at least remember ten to eleven times I have been beaten by the police. Put yourself in my place. Imagine you eat from the garbage. What hopes would have you, if you were staying in Patras? I only see death. I left Afghanistan because my life was in danger. The police... when I think of them, I only feel fear... fear... always fear...! When I hear the sirens, I just run away to escape.”

Incident 1:

“The worst beating occurred two months ago. We were ten persons hiding inside a refrigerated truck. It was around 5pm. We were hiding beneath some card boxes inside the truck. When the truck arrived inside the port, they started checking it. There were five “commandos”. They entered the truck. I was hidden in the top, at two metres height. One of the “commandos” caught me and dragged me down. I fell inside the truck. They handcuffed me on my backside. They then forced me to lie down with the face on the ground. Everybody had to lie like this. They then started beating us. They only said to us: ‘don’t raise your heads’. They hit us everywhere, for about fifteen to twenty minutes. They then lifted me up by pulling my jacket. I could not stand up from the pain. Then they ordered us to come out of the truck. We were somewhere in a remote place. No one

was around. But the truck driver was there. He was in the truck, while the “commandos” were beating us. We were detained for five days. During our detention, we received some food: noodles with water. We were then transferred to Athens. I came back to Patras on foot. I had to walk for three days.”

Incident 2:

“One month ago we were at the traffic lights. The police was hiding there. Three of us entered the truck. I guess the police made some signal to the truck driver, as he stopped in a remote area by the beach. Two police officers entered the truck. They were with their motorcycles. They beat us all with their batons. Then they let us go. The truck driver was sitting in his seat and watching.”

Incident 3:

“In the port, the “commandos” chase us on their motorcycles and hit us on purpose. Once I was hiding underneath the truck. I did not hear any sound or voice. All of a sudden, a police dog appeared next to me. It bit my calf and would not let go. I punched the dog, but would not let it go. I was very afraid. The dog is terrifying! When it opens its mouth, it is so big and frightening. It makes a terrible sound, horrible. The “commando” had to cut my trousers with scissors because the dog would not obey his commands. They then pulled the dog back and I came out. There were two “commandos” shouting at me: ‘kato kato!’ (down, down!). I had to sit with my head between my legs, looking at the ground. Then they started beating me up with their batons. Maybe they were drunk. I could not understand. One of them pulled me up, punched me and broke a tooth. Another punch burst my lips. I could not eat any food for two weeks. I was bleeding and this is why they let me go. I waited for half an hour for an ambulance, but it never came, so I left.”

Incident 4:

“I was in the port a month ago, with a friend of mine. He is 40 years old. The “commando” ordered him to knee down and bend his head forward. He was handcuffed. They then sat on his back, as if they were riding a horse, for

some minutes. He was then ordered to take off his shoes and they threw them in the garbage. They usually do this. If the shoes are old, they throw them in the garbage. If the pair is new, they throw them in the sea. We have no spare pair of shoes. Only the ones we wear. They know that. He was handcuffed from 8 to 12pm, staying still at the same position. They forced him to watch the ship leaving to Italy, laughing about it. Then they beat him a lot and let him go. I was very, very sad when I saw this.”

4.24. M. (17), from Afghanistan⁶⁹

“It’s been seven months since I came to Greece. It’s been four months since I arrived in Patras. Patras is a very bad place for me. I never suffered such bad conditions. It is very difficult for me. The police beat us here. They are very mean! But there is also one officer who is nice. We call him “my friend”. He never beats us. We do not go to the doctors, because they simply give us a prescription but we have no money to buy the medicine. It makes no difference here if you are a “pink card” holder or not. They beat us anyway.”

Incident 1:

“Three months ago, we were at the port. It was night. We were close to the ship’s chains at the edge of the pier. I was hiding behind the chains. My friends had managed to climb into some trucks. The “commandos” caught them. Then I tried to hide under a truck. The driver saw me. He pulled me out and called the “commandos”. A “commando” arrived on his motorcycle. He ordered me sit down. I did not comply with his orders, so he bit me up with a telescopic baton. Then he grabbed me by the arm with one hand and took a machine out of his pocket with the other. He electroshocked me once on the left side, close to the kidney. I felt myself losing the feeling in my legs. When he pressed the buttons at the side of the machine, I saw a blue light and I heard a sound like “tak-tak-tak”. I was hit by electricity. The machine was black, about 20 centimetres long and had some but-

tons on the sides. On its top, I saw the blue light, when he turned it on. He did not ask me anything. He just stunned me. Ever since I always feel pain, whenever I drink cold water.”

Incident 2:

“One month and a half ago, the police caught me close to the “Praktiker” shop. Everybody managed to run away, apart from me. There was a police patrol car and the “minor” officer on his motorcycle. The “minor” kicked me on my back. The other officer was holding me still and slapping me all the time. They were shouting to my friends who were at some distance: ‘Ela malaka! Ela ki esy!’ (Come asshole! Come also!). They kept beating me for almost 20minutes, until the “dolmush” arrived. They arrested me. I was detained for two days in the police station. They did not give me food, as I had no money to pay for it. Two other detainees shared their food with me. I was then transferred to Athens, where I was immediately released and came back to Patras on foot. It took me six days.”

4.25. A. (16), from Afghanistan⁷⁰

“I came to Greece six months ago and I have been here in Patras for two months. I only have a deportation order. I was beaten twice by the police in Patras.”

Incident 1:

“I saw what happened to Mukhtar one month and a half ago. We were together on that day. My hand was in pain for a long time after that beating. I did not visit any doctor, because they cannot really help us. They just prescribe medicines to us which we cannot afford to buy. The “commandos” had forced me to lie down. They were pulling my legs apart, as if they wanted to tear me up in pieces. They took my mobile phone and stepped on it, until it broke. I brought it from Iran all the way to Greece. All my memories and contacts were in that phone.”

⁶⁸ Interview held on April 4, 2012 in Patras

⁶⁹ Interview held on April 4, 2012 in Patras

⁷⁰ Interview held on April 3, 2012 in Patras

„EVERY TIME I GO TO THE PORT,
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER
I'LL STILL HAVE MY ARMS AND
LEGS WHEN I COME BACK.”

Incident 2:

“Fifteen days ago, I was close to the port. It was around 11pm. I was sitting somewhere close to the taxi station for about twenty minutes. A “commando” found me. He lifted me up and threw me on a taxi. The driver was sitting inside. When I crashed on the hood of the car, the “commando” beat me with his baton. I managed to run away with a lot of difficulty, since I could not walk. My back hurt badly. It still hurts.”

4.26. M.J. (17),
from Afghanistan⁷¹

“I’ve been in Greece for eight months and I moved to Patras four months ago. I have no papers. I was beaten more badly than you could ever imagine. Patras is hell! The hell of Afghanistan is still better than the hell here. Concerning the police here, I have only one request for them: stop being so brutal!”

Incident 1:

“The day before yesterday was the worst time ever. There is a two-storey building in the port, where you can buy the ferry tickets. If you go there late at night, there is no one. It was around 2am. I was sleeping with a friend on the roof of the building. When all of a sudden, we woke up and saw somebody coming onto the roof. It was a pot employee. He saw us. Thirty minutes later, four “commandos” arrived. Two of them came from one side through a door, and the other two waited on the stairs that lead to the roof. They caught my friend and beat him badly. Two “commandos” were kicking and beating him with their batons. When he finally fell down, they came after me. I tried to run away, but I got stuck on the edge of the roof. One “commando”

grabbed me and beat me with his baton, while shouting bad words to me. He said: ‘Why did you come here to Greece, malaka!’ It took more than ten minutes until I managed to get free and jumped down from the building. We both jumped, as there were two other “commandos” waiting for us at the stairs. After that, I could not walk anymore. The two “commandos” kept on chasing us. My friend still can’t walk at all. There was just a taxi driver who saw the whole scene. I think he was so shocked, that he could not even speak. He could not help us.”

Incident 2:

“Two weeks ago the police beat me with some metal rods. I was close to the red factory building. We were running inside, trying to escape from the police. One of the officers entered on his motorcycle. Outside there was a police car and a police van. We climbed up a wall and the officer grabbed a metal rod and hit us from behind. I fell down from a height of four metres and hit my face on the ground.”

Incident 3:

“5 or 6 days ago, I was in the port hiding underneath a truck. The “commandos” sent the dog after me. It was 10pm. The dog bit my clothes. They pulled the dog back and I came out. I was very afraid of the dog. Then the “commando” ordered me to walk and another followed me on his motorcycle, hitting me with the motorbike wheel from behind. Then he started moving in a circle around me shouting: ‘Run! Run!’ He came after me again and hit me several times with his motorcycle and also started kicking me, while still moving. Everybody saw that, but nobody reacted or said anything. I guess they were wondering what was going on.”

⁷¹ Interview held on April 4, 2012 in Patras

4.27. A. (16),
from Afghanistan⁷²

“Oh god, your hell is tomorrow but I burn today, why?”

A. is a minor. His brother lives in Italy and holds a humanitarian status there. His father died and he has no contact with his mother. When he was eight years old, he and his elder brother left for Iran where they were working. His brother left for Italy. Back in Iran he worked as a shoemaker. Since coming to Greece he has tried to leave several times. He has been readmitted from Croatia to Serbia, from Hungary to Serbia then from Italy back to Greece.

“I arrived in Greece in August 2011. My father died during the war. I always thought Europe was a safe place to be. I did not come to Europe in order to be beaten. I was looking for safety. I wanted to go to school. I’ve been in Patras for the last seven months. Patras is hell. I know they use dogs to find narcotics. But here they use them to chase refugees. They bite us and then the “commando” calls them back and says: ‘bravo!’ Violence is a bad thing. We are human beings, not animals!

On April 18th, I was in the port with my friend. On that day the “commandos” beat us badly. A car with “commandos” stopped in front of me. I thought it would have been like the other times. They would just beat me and then let me leave. I was trying to say some words in Greek. One of the “commandos” beat me with the baton in the knee and I fell down. I told them again and again: ‘sygnomi’ (sorry!). Two of them grabbed me and brought me to the back of a container. Nobody could see me. One “commando” had his face covered with a full-mask. He had a telescopic stun baton. He beat me really badly. I was lying down with my face on the ground. Every time he would beat me with the electric baton I felt like someone

⁷² Interview held May 11, 2012

⁷³ Interview held on May 12, 2012 in Patras

was trying to rip my flesh. I was feeling the electricity and then lost the feeling in the parts of my body where they were beating me. I was begging them to stop, but they went on and on. I think it lasted for about 10-15 minutes. Four “commandos” beat me. At the same time, two other “commandos” would beat my friend. I saw them beating and pressing his face in the sewage water. One of the four “commandos” ordered me to hand him any paper I had. ‘Afghan? Italia?’ he asked. I was crying: ‘No Italia, no Italia.’ I was trying to take my paper off my pocket. He did not let me. He stepped on my hand. When I managed to give them my note, they started talking about my age. One told the others that I was 16 years old. They took my mobile phone and threw it in the sea. Then they ordered me to give them my shoes. I was in such pain that I could not use my hands. I tried to take off my shoes with the help of my foot. Then they told me to leave and beat me again with the batons. But I could not. I lost consciousness and somebody called an ambulance. I was brought to the hospital. They caught me many times before in the port, but they would only slap me, not like this. I never fell on my knees before, but the “commando” made me kneel! On my back I had the sign of “Zorro” after that beating. Since then I see nightmares every single night.”

The boy showed us photos and a video from his injuries. See also the respective photos in the photo chronicle. He is one of the two cases, which were brought before the public prosecutor by the Red Cross this year.

4.28. A. (17),
from Afghanistan⁷³

“It’s been eight months since I arrived in Greece and 3 ½ months since I moved to Patras. Patras is a cage for me. The worst thing here is the police. They step on our hands and push their feet back and forth as if they were extinguishing a cigarette.

Three months ago, I went in the port. It was at night. Four “commandos” caught me. I did not see them coming. They came from the

back. They had left their motorcycles aside and came after me on foot. They brought me to a remote corner at the port. Two of them were holding me and took off my jacket and t-shirt. Then they handcuffed me, with metal cuffs. I was standing. One of them started beating me with a telescopic stun baton (electroshock). I heard the sound “ghss”. Another “commando” joined him. Then they pushed me on the ground, with my head on the ground. Then the four “commandos” beat me up all together. They kicked and punched me for about twenty minutes. When I was stunned, I felt a burning sensation and I felt dizzy. I could not walk anymore. The “commandos” lifted me up and dragged me to the port exit. The police came and called an ambulance. In the hospital I was on the drip and got an X-ray. I stayed one week at Rio’s Hospital. I had two cracked ribs and my left arm was broken. My body was black and blue from the beatings. I could not sleep for two weeks. Even today I feel pain at night. Now I’m afraid to go back in the port. I haven’t gone back ever since.”

4.29. M. (15), from Afghanistan⁷⁴

“It’s been ten months since I arrived in Greece and six months since I moved to Patras. I stay with some friends who take care of me.

Today the police came at six o’ clock in the morning, in the place where we sleep. We were sleeping, but we heard them coming, so I ran away and hid in a place nearby. My three friends were still sleeping. I saw the police handcuffing my friends while they were still lying on the ground. Then they started beating them. Afterwards, they asked them if they had any documents. They dragged them to the basement, where two other officers were waiting and pushed them in the “dolmush”. They were “deported” to Athens, because they were adults and had no papers. Now I’m alone here.”

4.30. A.R. (17), from Afghanistan⁷⁵

I’ve been in Patras for the last four months. I’m here because I want to leave Greece and go to Italy. It’s been one year since I arrived in Greece and I only have the deportation order. I have never received any support in Greece. The worst things about Patras for me are the “commandos” beating us, and the fact that I’m stuck here. I cannot think anymore. I’m afraid of the police. When the “commandos” and the police see me in the street, it’s like they see their worst enemy. I feel like a ghost! Can I ask you a question? Why are people in the streets afraid and cross the sidewalk when they see me? I don’t think they are racists, but I’m wondering why they’re doing this!

I was inside the port, behind the rocks. It was about a month ago, around 8:30 in the afternoon. We were two persons hiding. The “commandos” came. They were wearing full-face masks, so that we could not recognize them. They were shining their flashlights directly into our eyes. My friends managed to escape, swimming. Both “commandos” started beating me with their batons and I felt an electroshock. Then they threw me into the sea. I cannot swim. I tried to get out of the water, but when I reached the rocks they would beat me with their batons and throw me back into the water. When I finally managed to come out of the water, I could not feel my arms and legs. They were insulting me a lot like: ‘gamisou... malaka... fyge malaka’ (fuck you... asshole... go away asshole). There was nobody else around. They would not have beaten me that much, if others had been watching.”

⁷⁴ Interview held on May 12, 2012 in Patras

⁷⁵ Interview held on May 13, 2012 in Patras

⁷⁶ Interview held on May 13, 2012 in Patras

4.31. S.A. (17), from Afghanistan⁷⁶

“I’ve been here in Patras for eight months now. I could never apply for asylum in Greece, so I only have the deportation order. Greece is not a good country for us. Specifically Patras is a very bad place. The worst moments for me are the ones when the police come and insult my family. I want to leave here as soon as possible. Really. I’m just here because I want to leave Greece. We are not treated like other people living here. Every time we go to the shops, because we are starving, people kick us out. (...)

I was outside the new port, by the sea. This happened a month and a half ago, around 10pm. There were three of us hiding behind the rocks. It was raining a lot and then two “commandos” wearing full-masks were shining their flashlights in our eyes. They pulled me out from the place where I was hiding and beat me with an electric baton. I started screaming. There were two truck drivers next to us watching the whole scene. That’s why the “commandos” brought me to a more isolated place near the sea. Then they pushed me into the water, shouting: ‘Fyge! Fyge!’ (Go away!). I was feeling helpless. I was wet and freezing. They let me go. I came back to my shelter. I could not feel my arms for two hours. I was in pain for three more days. I’m glad they “just” beat me. Others come back with broken arms and legs. Every time I go to the port, I don’t know whether I’ll still have my arms and legs when I come back.”



“The police were hunting me with motorbikes along the rails. I tried to escape the beatings and fell!”

“I lifted my hand to protect my head from the beatings of the “commando”.”



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6. ATTACHMENTS

VIDEOS ON THE SITUATION

OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN PATRAS

Welcome to Europe 2011 (in English):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDVR9pBQOBY&feature=share>

Stathmos 2011 (in English with Greek subs).

<http://vimeo.com/19872472>

ARD Fakt: Flucht mit Hindernissen 2011 (in German):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5UVsTjNzEw&feature=related>

Being a Refugee in Patras 2010 (in English):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkQ2peq-PJk&feature=related>

UNHCR 2010 (in English):

Greece: A Harsh Welcome to Europe.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmlsJV4SjU&feature=related>

Spiegel Online 2009 (in German): Fluchtziel Europa.

part 1: <http://www.spiegel.de/video/video-1013905.html>

part 2: <http://www.spiegel.de/video/video-1013900.html>

part 3: <http://www.spiegel.de/video/video-1013895.html>

Spiegel Online 2008 (in German): Auf dem Weg nach

Deutschland. Flüchtlingsdrama in Patras.

<http://www.spiegel.de/video/video-28055.html>

VIDEOS MADE BY REFUGEES

Video of Afghan refugees. (Background music is a rap in

Dari about the situation of Patras.) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBBaNASt8IY&feature=related>

Video of Afghan refugees.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZtkbR-vK7Q&feature=related>

Video of Afghan refugees in side the detention facility of the old port of Patras 2008 (in English).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhGuFLhX0xc&feature=related>

PHOTOREPORTAGES ON IMMIGRANTS IN PATRAS

Hell-As Hell, photo reportage by Gabriel Pecot 2011 (in

Spanish):

<http://www.hellas-hell.eu/12-claves/01-las-barreras.html>

Photo reportages about Migrants and Refugees Living in Patras 2011, by Alessandro Rampazzo (in Italian). "Three Stories: From Darfur to Europe".

<http://www.alessandrorampazzo.com/#photo=639/album=24>

"Patras, the door of Europe": <http://www.alessandrorampazzo.com/#page=albums/album=22>

A FEW VIDEOCLIPS ON THE RECENT FASCIST ESCALATIONS IN PATRAS 2012 (IN GREEK):

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=hs1080yJQBg)

[embedded&v=hs1080yJQBg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZThwGBkw_5s)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quhr8ioCkM4>

<http://www.thebest.gr/news/index/viewStory/129454>

<http://www.thebest.gr/news/index/viewStory/129188>

IMPRINT



BANI ADAM

HUMAN BEINGS ARE MEMBERS OF A WHOLE,
IN CREATION: OF ONE ESSENCE AND SOUL.
IF ONE MEMBER IS AFFLICTED WITH PAIN,
THE OTHER MEMBER UNEASY REMAIN.
IF YOU HAVE NO SYMPATHY FOR HUMAN PAIN,
THE TITLE 'HUMAN' YOU CANNOT CLAIM.

By Sa'adi Shirazi
Quoted by Amin
May 13, 2012 – Patras

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LIKE A WAR

EASY TO START,
DIFFICULT TO END,
IMPOSSIBLE TO FORGET.
I AM IN WAR IN THE GREECE
AND I HOPE THAT WAR WILL FINISH
AND THE DREAM WILL COME TRUE.
TRAVEL LIKE A DREAM...

BY ISMAIL
MAY 14, 2012