

Solidarity to the Struggle of the Underage Asylum Seekers (Online Article)

Historical Note

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Content

SOLIDARITY TO THE STRUGGLE OF THE TEENAGE ASYLUM SEEKERS

We spoke yesterday to some of the unaccompanied, underage refugees that left Pournara because they could not stand it any longer. They are balancing between empty promises, the cold, the instructions of the Ministry of Interior, the unbearable situation at Pournara, the bureaucracy; but next to the catholic church we saw some kids that took a decision, made a move and are trying to improve their conditions. We know how much bravery this takes and we are fully with them.

We asked them what they want and they said they don't want to return to Pournara, that they can't stand it any longer, that it's cold, the food is bad, there are no toilets, they have no space, they have no access to medical care or help. They want to learn greek, to play football, to meet their relatives in Europe. In the end some of them returned to Pournara hoping that the bureaucratic nightmare that is keeping them there will end soon, since this is what the welfare department promised them. Some continue their refusal to return but the situation is changing constantly.

Against the racist state policy and societal indifference, are the pride and refusal of a group of teenagers that no longer want to live imprisoned. We share some of the things they told us, in an attempt to spread the word. What they have to say is not just their issue nor just ours. It is an issue of the whole society of Cyprus that is tumbling towards barbarism. Their stories follow.

My name is *, I'm from Somalia and I live in Pournara camp. The Pournara camp is difficult to live in, it is not safe for Somalis in Pournara, it's safer in Nicosia. The life there is terrible. There are many people from many countries. The army and the guardians never help us, when we are sick they don't help us. I want a new start, I want a future, I want to go to school, I want to learn Greek, I want to learn everything. I don't want to go back to Pournara ever. I'm serious. The Pournara camp is all types of wrong. So many people are sick, people have to share beds.

My name is *, I've been in Pournara for 7 months. Every time I go ask for help the guards say they cannot help me. When I want to tell my guardian something she just closes the door and tells me to go back. I have a brother who lives in Finland, I came here for help but I am not getting any. The food at Pournara is not good, it makes you go to the bathroom or it might even make you sick. A lot of people like me are in Pournara for 7 to 10 months. There's almost 20 people in one room and we all share a bed with someone. Nobody is coming to help us there so I don't want to go back. If I go back to Pournara I will kill myself.

My name is *, I have been in Pournara for 2 months and I am handicapped. In Pournara they don't

give wheelchairs. I cannot go to the toilet or to the food lines on my own, only my Somali brothers help me, they carry me from my shoulders and help me go to the toilet or to get food. Every day I go to the administration at Pournara, nobody helps. When you knock on the door they open it and close it in your face really fast, they just tell you to go back. Now I don't want to go back to Pournara.

My name is *, I have been in Pournara for 5 months, I'm here to get help. I have heart problems, I'm diabetic. The doctors told me to get my guardian to talk to them, but when the guardian goes they have no good answers. I told the welfare again, and they told me I will go to the doctor but I have been waiting 5 months for a doctor. You know, diabetics have issues with their kidneys, I want to take medicine and I really want to have an X-ray to check my lungs and organs. There are only 2 toilets at Pournara for 300 minors. If you want to go to the toilet you want for 2 or 3 hours in a line. Now I'm ok and I feel safe here, I feel like people here help me, so I don't want to go back to Porunara.

My name is * and I have been in Pournara for more than 4-5 months. There are many problems because so many people live there and some people get into fights with each other. I need help from Cyprus, I have no family and my country has many problems, that's why I came here. I had to leave my family, some of them are in the UK so I hope to see them in the future. I hope to have a good future in my life, that's why I'm here. I stay in Pournara for a long time, approximately 5 months, that's why I came here. When I talk to my guardian they told me to stay and wait but I am not patient, it's not him staying in Pournara, it's me. I need help. I need my family. We need space to play games in Pournara, like football, we need spaces to study, to learn the language of the country. Pournara is not good for us, we need to go to school, we need to study. We need a new life, because our country is not safe for us. If you go to our country you can see that it's a bad life.

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