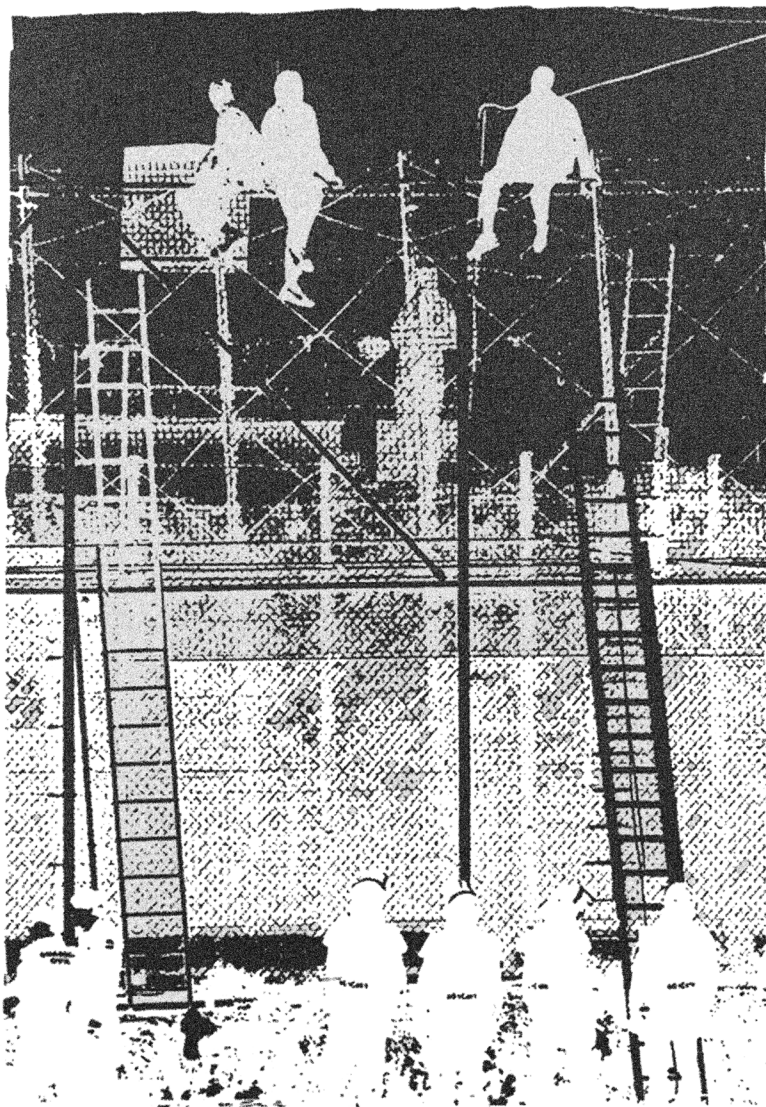


# CHEAP BODIES / FOREIGN BODIES

*THE GOVERNMENT STRATEGY ON MIGRATION*



antifa leukoşa





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# Introduction/First dive into the mire

## I.

*«In public discourse, the dominant perception dictates that travel documents, visas, controlling people's movement, immigrant detention centres, deportations and all other discouraging immigration policies form an integral part of our continent's history. Naturally, this perception is produced through the a-chronicity and falsification of history by Fortress Europe; it is politically powerful but also dangerous. The initial immigration policies aiming to stifle the flow of immigrants in Europe surfaced in the 1970's and were escalated in the 1980's. Previously, not only were such policies non-existent, but it was Europeans that were "emigrating" abroad by conquering foreign nations and transporting populations all around the globe. The history of colonialism is thoroughly silenced, not only because it reveals the historically abysmal nature of arguments about the "deterioration and altering of European culture" and the "uncontrolled influx of immigrants". It also constitutes a highly significant variable that explains the current movement of refugees from the so-called "third world countries".<sup>1</sup>*

## II.

In the modern history of capitalist societies, state immigration policies passed through various stages.

Starting from mid-19th century until 1914, unlimited immigration was the established norm (since according to capitalism theorists like Adam Smith, freedom of movement was necessary for suitable distribution of labour). With World War I commencing, the capitalist bosses close borders and rapidly devalue the labour force, a process that is repeat during World War II. Controlled immigration for the reconstruction of devastated areas follows as needed. In Germany, "Gastarbeiters" can be showcased as a characteristic example of this strategy.<sup>2</sup> 400,000 workers from Greece alone migrate to Germany, based on a 1960 agreement between the two countries. From the 70's onwards, the state's policies establish the illegalisation of the immigrant workforce. This does not mean that all immigrant workers are considered illegal, but that they are all under threat of the illegalisation regime.

This short historical section leads us to two important conclusions: Firstly, the appearance of documentation regarding the legality of immigrants is a recent phenomenon and something that can be reversed. Therefore, their importance is relative and not absolute. Secondly, immigration policies are not standardised across time either. Depending on the financial/political/military state a country or a union of countries (like the EU) is found in, immigration

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<sup>1</sup> Antifa Acukaşa, *From Fortress Europe to Menogeia*, December 2014

<sup>2</sup> *Gastarbeiter: 400.000 «pieces»*, *Reportage without Borders*, <http://goo.gl/wDJyni>

regulations can either be tougher or more relaxed. States handle their immigration regimes based on the needs of the market and of capital.

### III.

Cyprus first began accepting foreign immigrants in the eve of the 1990's, when working licenses were first authorised for female immigrant workers. This development can be explained as follows: The capitalist economy experienced a financial slowdown in the early 90's relative to the boom following the war of 1974. From 1989, growth of the Gross National Product (GNP) was calculated at 10.67%, in 1990 at 9.09%, and in 1991 GNP growth dropped to 1.38%; the lowest increase was observed in 1993 at 0.59%.<sup>3</sup> Slow economic growth combined with an increase in inflation prompted the bosses to pressure the government to contract wages. Simultaneously, there was a worker shortage in various sectors of the economy. The Cypriot state, in the service of local bosses, proceeds to provide work permits to immigrant workers to cover the worker deficit, thus reducing wages in order to promote "financial development".

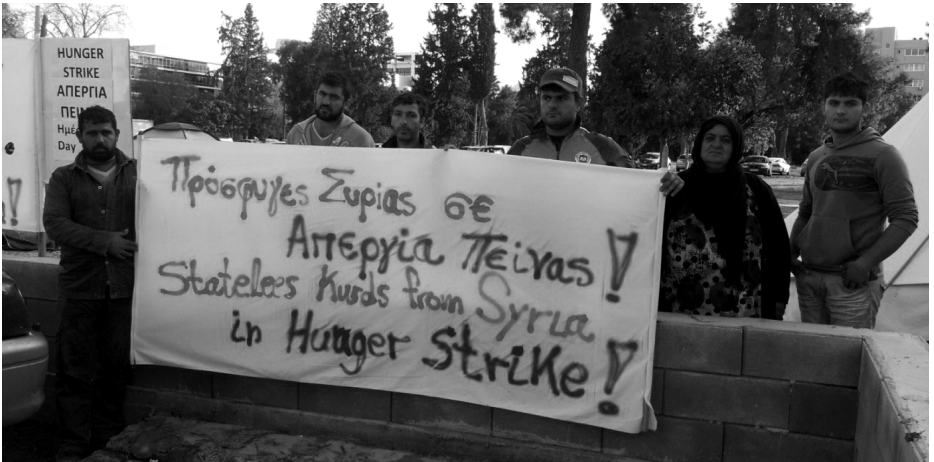
The permit arranged for immigrant workers was valid only for a limited time period (usually for 4 years, excluding domestic workers) and only for certain sectors that needed more workers to cover unfilled working positions created by the "economic miracle". These openings were found in low-paid positions that were undesirable for the local workforce: construction, farming, tourism and the hospitality industry, specific service providers, etc.

### IV.

Since in capitalist society immigration is deemed only as immigration of needed labour force, we recognised that immigration should be analysed from a class struggle point of view, and not a humanitarian point of view. The purpose of this pamphlet is to draw attention to the tactics employed by the Cypriot state to control immigration within the modern framework of European legislation and the economic crisis. The illegalisation of migrants (deportations, detention centres, undocumented labour) as well as the working conditions of large sections of what states call "legal" migrants are major themes of this study. States and bosses view migrants/refugees as excess bodies to be exploited for cheap labour. This is something that we must surely speak out about.

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3 [http://www.indexmundi.com/cyprus/gdp\\_per\\_capita\\_%28ppp%29.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/cyprus/gdp_per_capita_%28ppp%29.html)



# **Establishing illegalisation**

## ***I. The asylum application process***

The application requesting asylum in the state of Cyprus takes place at the Asylum Service, which is a part of the Ministry of Interior. This process usually takes 6–8 months, and in many cases years. Besides the racism that asylum seekers have to endure, they are also forced to depend on the arbitrariness of translators that are usually not even qualified for such a position. If their application is rejected, asylum seekers have the right to appeal the decision at the Refugee Reviewing Authority within 20 days. The Refugee Reviewing Authority must reach a new decision within 20 days. In the majority of cases, it simply confirms the decision of the Asylum Service.

If the appeal is rejected, asylum seekers also have the right to appeal to a third and final authority as a last resort, the Supreme Court. Most asylum seekers receive no financial aid, so it's impossible for them to cover judiciary costs and follow this course of action. Even those that are capable of building a case in the courts, they are still under risk of deportation since the Migration Department considers them “illegal aliens” and carries out arrest operations with deportation in mind, which is a breach of Cyprus Refugee Laws. Lastly, the Supreme Court also in most cases simply approves the Asylum Service's initial decision.

This exhausting and (as we will establish with statement-giving later) almost-always unsuccessful process is much easier for others. If a foreign citizen deposits or invests at least 2.5 million euros in a Cypriot bank, they will swiftly receive Cypriot citizenship in 3 months!<sup>4</sup> It seems that our proud people are not interested in kicking out all foreigners, only the undesirables. Class racism anyone?

## ***II. Conditions during the asylum seeking process – Illegalisation***

Asylum seekers are not allowed to apply for work for the first 6 months after submitting their application. For those without savings or external help, this either leads to absolute poverty or forced undocumented (and illegal) labour. When the 6 months pass, they are allowed to work in sectors predetermined by the state: farming/agriculture, fishing, commerce, cleaning, food delivery, and giving out flyers. In addition, they depend on their region's Labour Office which acts as an intermediary or directly finds them employment. If an asylum seeker finds work on their own, the Office is permitted to prohibit them from working for that employer.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.henleyglobal.com/citizenship-cyprus-citizenship/>

Asylum seekers are not included on the official unemployment statistics. Positions in the aforementioned sectors are only “offered” to them if it has been determined that no workers from Cyprus or the EU are available. Every 2 months they have to report at the Labour Office, either so that employment can be found for them or to receive an official document confirming they are unable to work; they have to present this at the Social Insurance Service to receive unemployment/disability benefits. If the asylum seekers reject a work position or they quit because of abysmal working conditions, they are automatically considered responsible for their unemployment and they won’t receive any benefits. In this way, they become completely dependent on the employer the state assigns them to. The situation realised before them is bleak: Work in whatever conditions they tell you to, without the right to complain, or live in poverty.

In the agricultural sector, where a large percentage of asylum seekers work, the working and living conditions are deplorable. According to interviews with asylum seekers, cases exist where migrants work 10–16 hours per day, 6 days a week, for 300–500 euros (with no health insurance).<sup>5</sup> υπάρχουν περιπτώσεις όπου μετανάστριες δουλεύουν 10–16 ώρες την ημέρα, 6 φορές τη βδομάδα, για μισθό 300–500 ευρώ χωρίς ασφάλιση. Many times they are forced to live in containers or stables, whilst there are reports for many late payments or withholding of wages. Of course, reports of sexual abuse and rape are plentiful. Such dreadful conditions are imposed upon them under constant fear of resisting or reacting, since resigning or being let off won’t lead to the provision of unemployment benefits.

Regarding the much-discussed refugee benefits, it is important to mention that the right to such financial aid is only granted to those that have no means to support themselves, obviously because in the first 6 months (after they apply for asylum) they are not legally allowed to work. Following a decision by the Council of Ministers in 2013, the sum offered to refugees is 320 euros per month, of which 150 euro is given in the form of coupons for food and clothing. To be able to receive this humiliatingly small amount they have to present a housing contract and the first receipt of rent payment, which is practically impossible for the majority.

Furthermore, again according to interviews, 20% received benefits after the first 6 months, 18% in the first 3–6 months, and only 15% in the first 3 months.<sup>6</sup> The remaining 33% never received benefits; typically, this is because their application was rejected or because they were working “illegally” from the beginning. At the same time, 33% of asylum seekers reported they supporting themselves through “illegal” labour, 16% through support from friends and acquaintances, 7% from a combination of the above, and 28% through other means. Thus, this is how the state, through a long-term racist process fashions the conditions in which illegalisation and the extreme undervaluing of the migrant

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5 *Asyl in der Republik Zypern, KUB, p. 24–25*

6 *The interviews took place in 2013, see. KUB, p.27*



labour force and of refugees develops.

### **III. After the decision – The Punishment**

In the case of a positive decision, which constitutes the minority of cases, there are four possibilities: 1) The concession of refugee status, 2) The provision of humanitarian status, 3) The concession of subsidiary protection status, or 4) Temporary protection. In reality, all the above situations involve a stay of a limited time period. Those who acquire refugee status, (and these are very few), do so for three years. Every three years, their case is re-examined. The same applies for the other alternatives, but with an even smaller period of time before their case is re-examined. Those who obtain subsidiary protection status, for example, must renew their status on a yearly basis, while they can only work in certain sectors. Permanent residence status is granted to none; every immigrant/refugee in Cyprus lives under conditions of permanent threat of illegalization and deportation.

In the case of a negative decision, there are three possibilities: 1) “Voluntary” return, 2) Arrest for deportation, and 3) “Illegal” stay in the country. Obviously, “voluntary” return is not an option for anyone. However, there are multiple cases in which immigrants are forced to agree to this against their will.<sup>7</sup> Most opt for an “illegal” stay in the country, with all that this implies: minimal labor rights, no medical insurance, permanent risk of deportation. To these «illegal», almost invisible workers we will return later.

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7 See. KUB, σ.38



Those who do not manage to avoid arrest, end up incarcerated in the prison blocks or in the Immigration Detention Centre in Menogeia. Although the Cypriot state is given large sums of money from the EU in order to perform deportations (e.g. 2.2 million only in 2012), immigrants spend many months or even years in confinement until they are deported or released. There are four categories or groups of people who are detained in the Menogeia camp: 1) Asylum seekers whose request was denied but who cannot be deported (e.g. Iranians, since Iran does not accept their return without a visa), 2) Refugees who return on the basis of the Dublin Regulation, 3) Those who enter the country “illegally” (for example, through northern Cyprus), 4) Those who have been convicted of a crime (almost always a “minor crimes” or “misdemeanors”, such as the falsification of registration certificates).

We quote here an excerpt from a previous text of ours, regarding the detention center in Menogeia:

*«The hell of Menogeia (...) as a transitional place before deportation, (...) is nothing but a location of surveillance and control of a very specific population group. Its function is the control of the body, of how it moves and where, of who it is permitted to communicate with, of what it eats, of how it must behave. Although this is an area outside criminal law, since the detainees have not committed a crime, they are treated as criminal par excellence.*

*This treatment of the detainees as criminals begins at the point of confinement itself. The «paperless» are stacked in cells, from which they are allowed to leave for just a few hours per day. In order to use the toilet, they must ring a bell so that they can be escorted by a cop. The gendered separation is so rigid that even families are separated, since men and women are held in different sectors, while children are placed under the responsibility of the welfare institution regardless of their age. As for the food provided, it is of appalling quality; several people have lost significant weight and complaints are made against the disregarding of allergies.*

*The is no medical staff in the detention center. The guards make arbitrary decisions on whether an illness deserves medical attention or not. In the case of the former, the immigrants are allowed a hospital visit, which is, however, performed under supervision and through the use of handcuffs. In the case of the latter, those same guards simply provide painkillers, which are handed out for every kind of illness or pain.*

*Detainees are entitled to one visit per day which lasts one hour and are provided with signal for phone calls only at certain times. Communication with lawyers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is systematically prevented. There are reports of people who have been punished with isolation because they reported their miserable living conditions to NGOs. From their legal rights to the reason for their deportation, the detainees live in a state of ignorance. Furthermore, they do not know for how long they will be detained and when they will be deported. There are also cases of people who are being detained beyond the maximum limit of 18 months, or who are released at the end*

*of this allowed time period only to be rearrested.”<sup>8</sup>*

The most important aspect of the detention center is that it is not a situation of permanence. Its population is constantly changing; some are caught, others are set free, while others are deported, always according to the needs of the existing labor force. What is important for the State is not who are in detention centres, but that there are people inside them. It is a first step towards the extreme devaluation of labor power and of human life itself. At the same time, detention centres constitute just one component of EU border policy. As the risk of illegalization diffuses across the country, in every home and workplace, so the detention center is a complete and everlasting threat to migrant workers. Border checks, controlled work during the period of the procedure following the application for asylum, illegalization, arrest, detention center, «illegal» labor, deportation: All are integral parts of the whole called European (and thus Cypriot) migration policy.

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8 *Antifa Acukoşa, From Fortress Europe to Menogeia, December 2014*



## IV. Statistics of Illegalization

Ετήσια Στοιχεία 2002-Ιανουάριος 2011 - Yearly Totals 2002- January 2011

	2011		2010		2009		2008		2007		2006		2005		2004		2003		2002		Σύνολο/ Total	
	cases	persons	cases	persons	cases	persons	cases	persons	cases	persons	cases	persons	cases	persons	cases	persons	cases	persons	cases	persons	cases	persons
Αιτήσεις που έχουν υποβληθεί (Applications)	172	184	2544	2878	2663	3199	3449	3922	5905	6789	4286	4545	7291	7746	9285	9872	4032	4407	839	952	40294	44310
Αποφάσεις Υπηρεσίας Ασύλου (Decisions)	121	121	2371	2785	5830	7017	7537	7912	6749	7184	5295	5601	5499	5804	4998	5345	404	411	126	143	38809	42202
Αριθμός αιτητών Ασύλου που αναγνωρίστηκαν ως Πρόσφυγες (Recognised Refugees)	0	0	11	31	21	49	27	64	15	36	19	37	16	41	15	30	0	0	0	0	124	288
Παράχρηση Ανθρωπιστικού Καθεστώτος (Humanitarian Status)	0	0	8	25	19	33	76	163	115	191	85	151	50	122	26	56	10	10	0	0	389	751
Παράχρηση Καθεστώτος Συμπληρωματικής Προστασίας * (Subsidiary Protection)	0	0	214	370	564	1287	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	778	1657
Απόσυρα αιτημάτων ** (Withdrawals)	15	15	187	203	267	285	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	454	488
Αριθμός Απορριφθέντων Αποφάσεων (Rejections)	105	105	1843	2032	3034	3325	3848	4001	2123	2316	1674	1779	2988	3133	2504	2734	267	274	126	143	18407	19737
Αριθμός φακέλων που έχουν κλείσει (Closed Files)	1	1	108	124	1925	2038	3586	3684	4496	4641	3517	3634	2445	2508	2453	2525	127	127	0	0	18657	19281

\* για τη έτη 2002-2008 η παράχρηση Συμπληρωματικής Προστασίας, περιλαμβάνονταν στη κατηγορία Ανθρωπιστικό Καθεστώς/For the years 2002-2008 Subsidiary Protection was included under the section Humanitarian Status

\*\* για τη έτη 2002-2008η απόσυρα αιτημάτων, περιλαμβάνονταν στους αριθμούς φακέλων που είχαν κλείσει/For the years 2002-2008 withdrawal of application was included under the section closed files

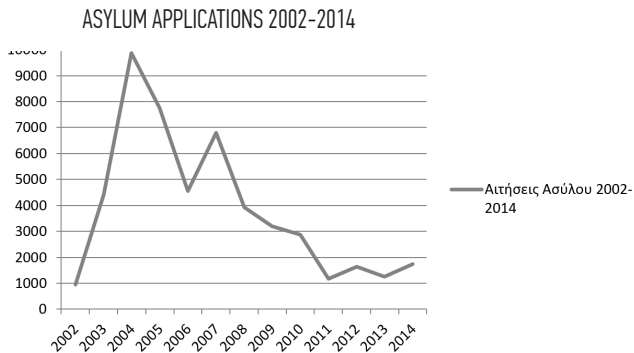
Source <http://kisa.org.cy/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/yearly-totals-2002-2011-for-web-jan.pdf>

The above table shows the total applications and decisions regarding asylum in Cyprus. The years 2003 and 2004 are turning points, with a sharp increase in applications. There are two main reasons for this development: the onset of the war in Iraq, and the accession of Cyprus to the EU in 2004. Overall, the absolute numbers may not seem very big, but this should not fool us: In those first years of increasing requests, Cyprus had the highest rates among all European countries in terms of the number of applications in relation to the size of the population (24 per 1,000 inhabitants).<sup>9</sup>

Let us examine a few years in more detail. In 2003, the year that marked the initiation of the war in neighbouring Iraq, there were 4,407 asylum applications. The decisions taken were only 411. Refugee status was granted to the remarkable number of 0 (zero) people, while there were 10 concessions of humanitarian status. In 2004, the year with the most applications (9872), a total of 5,345 decisions were taken. 30 people were recognized as refugees and 56 received humanitarian status. A percentage, therefore, of less than 0.02%. In 2005, when there was a

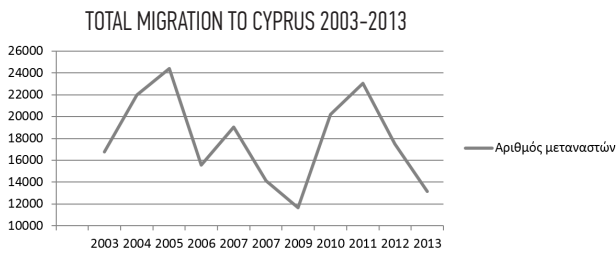
<sup>9</sup> Asylum Procedures & Reception Conditions in Cyprus, KISA, 2011, p. 10

total of 7,746 applications, refugee status was granted to 41 people and humanitarian status to 122 people.



From 2005 onwards, the number of asylum applications follows a declining path. Clearly, the strategy of minimal recognition was achieving the desired outcome. This policy continued in the subsequent years without major deviations. In 2010, with a total of 2,878 applications and 2,785 decisions, 2,032 of those were negative. 31 people received refugee status, 25 received humanitarian status and 370 received subsidiary protection (a category introduced after 2008). Applications until the year 2014 have similar statistics<sup>10</sup>.

What is equally significant is the number of deportation orders. In 2010 for example, in which as mentioned above 2,878 asylum applications were received, a total of 2,845 deportation orders were issued. This figure was indeed the smallest of recent years: In 2008, 3,355 were issued, 3,205 in 2011, 4,310 in 2013 and 3,525 in 2014. Of course, these deportations do not only concern asylum seekers but the immigrant population as a whole which is deemed illegal.



<sup>10</sup> All data on applications and decisions on asylum after 2010 and also data on migration and deportations are from the EUs statistics service.: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

The figure shows that the number of immigrants in Cyprus is ten times that of the asylum seekers. It can therefore be inferred that there are many immigrants who come in order to work, without meeting the legal requirements for the concession of any «humanitarian» status or that of a refugee. Also noteworthy is the sharp decline in recent years is observed. While 2011 23,027 immigrants came to the island, the corresponding figure for 2013 was 13,149.

Both the number of asylum seekers and that of immigrants decreases, despite the economic crisis and the military unrest in the surrounding areas. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the refugee recognition rate in 2015 increased to 73.4% in the first instance, and to 53% in the Tenders Review Authority while in 2014 out of a total of 1,745 applications and 1,305 decisions, 995 were positive (although 940 of these were granted subsidiary protection status).

## **V. Good refugees, bad migrants?**

Did the state become more «humane»? Of course not. It is much more convincing to say that, in the context of western «humanitarianism» which has unfolded over the past few months in relation to the war and the refugees of Syria, the Cypriot state has its own role to play. And it should play it with very material terms. As we discover, the Cypriot government will receive 72 million euros from EU programmes to «support and manage asylum.»<sup>11</sup> The laundering of this money will have to be excused. Also, the Cypriot state helps in this way the division between «real refugees» and from Syria and «bad economic migrants». This division is complacent in the further fragmentation of the working class, establishing the refugee crisis as a matter of «humanitarianism» while making the matter of managing the «bad economic migrants» a military issue (let us say here that the Cypriot police participated this October for the first time in FRONTEX operations).<sup>12</sup>

Immigrants are constructed as «dangerous» and «illegal» by the state so that it can easily control and manage matters of «security» and also excuse larger expenses on policing. From December, 120 members of the national guard will be trained in order to join the police force in combatting «terrorism.» The army will take on patrols at airports, ports and embassies, with standard military equipment. Our bleak future becomes a present.

So beyond the «humanitarian» fireworks (and all the interests that they carry), the Cypriot government is following a prohibitive policy regarding asylum seekers. Granting asylum in the past decade has happened at a very low rate, as has granting «humanitarian» statuses and statuses of «partial protection.» *The negative decisions regarding*

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11 *Ibid.*

12 <http://www.sigmalive.com/news/local/280038/skafos-tis-limenikis-kyprou-sti-xio-gia-diasosi-prosfygon>

most applicants and the illegalization of the remaining migrants on the island create a large body of «invisibles» in legal and employment rights. And that is something that the employers relish.





## **Moments from reality's sewer**

### ***I. Ugly world, made for the rulers***

As we saw before, the state creates the conditions which lead to the illegalization of a large part of the foreign work force. Simultaneously, the state imposes on the rest of the foreign working class the fear of becoming illegal. Work conditions for so called "legal" laborers are often as bad as those of "illegals." Most contracts are short-term, up to 4 years, (not taking into account domestic workers). The workers are connected to a single employer, in a specific workplace. If for any reason they decide to leave, (for example because they are being physically abused) they have to get permission from the employer. The irony is evident. If they manage to get permission, they have one month to find a new employer or else they are declared automatically illegal. Furthermore, the employer has the right, at any moment, to terminate the contract, making the worker illegal. All in all, immigrant workers cannot stand up to their bosses because if they do, they are in danger of arrest, detention centers, and finally deportation. Either "legal" or "illegal," migrants are cheap and easily-taken-advantage-of labor. Bosses rub their hands in glee.





## ***II. Servant and masters: domestic workers***

*“They have me at home without papers and if you want to leave you can’t, no. You can’t complain if you get paid or not. You can’t complain because you don’t have papers, and they will threaten that they will send you to the immigration, they’ll call the police.”<sup>13</sup>*

According to a population census in 2013, 30.952 domestic workers live in Cyprus, the majority of which is from the Philippines, Vietnam and Sri Lanka.<sup>14</sup> This number is approximately 45.35% of the migrant population. The importance of this part of the working class is evident. Domestic workers are a special case for employers; until recently they were called “domestic helpers,” neglecting the fact that they are workers. Since 2012 on the island, the minimum wage is defined as 870 euros. Despite this, domestic workers are exempt, with the excuse that they are provided with food and shelter. Their minimum wage, since 2013, is at 309 (!) euros.<sup>15</sup> *Domestic workers are, as we will*

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13 *Combating trafficking, MIGS, a. 57*

14 *Ibid., p. 32*

15 *Ibid., p. 34*

*see, a part of the labor force that does not have to be made illegal, because the working conditions under its "legal" status are not far from those of "illegals."*

Here is the contract that the state of Cyprus has prepared for migrant domestic workers: the worker is not allowed to change employer and work place during the contract, must work 6 days a week, 7 hours a day, must "obey all orders and instructions by the employer," has no right to a pay raise if not written within the contract and only if the employer deems it desirable, cannot with any direct or indirect way participate in any political action during her stay in Cyprus.

Of course exploitation supersedes the contract: unpaid extra hours, unpaid work in houses of relatives, forced work on Sunday, delayed payments, withholding travel documents to use as a threat, prohibition of wandering after work, prohibition of contact with family, a sex life etc. etc. Immigrants also have to pay their agents from 1500 to 4800 euros for the service of finding them a job. They must almost always borrow or mortgage property, thus depend even more on their Cypriot employers.

According to research of 2010<sup>16</sup>, 25% of domestic workers felt demeaned by the society around them, while 20% felt socially excluded. 14% stated that they had experienced sexual harassment, 12% had been physically abused by the employer and 6% had been sexually exploited. Furthermore, a 4% had been raped by the employer. Through the contract and institutionalized racism and sexism, the state and the bosses create bodies that have no worth. Bodies that are potentially illegal, that are not allowed to complain, that are objectified, that experience, in all its violence, the shitstorm of Cypriot reality.

These are the beautiful conditions in which domestic workers live and work in Cyprus. 5 years ago a case was published in which a teacher from Limassol had a domestic worker from Vietnam locked up in a garage, fed only with water and bread. When she arrived in Cyprus, her employers took away her cell phone and travel documents. She was forced to work 14 hours a day, 7 days a week and when she was not working she was always locked up in the garage. This woman had paid 5.000 euros to come to Cyprus.<sup>17</sup>

More recently, in August 2015, a young domestic worker from India was found dead under the balcony of her workplace in Larnaca. Immediately her death was presented as a suicide, as happened in the case of Oxana Rantseva, a "dancer," that was actually a victim of trafficking, in 2001 in Limassol.<sup>18</sup> The young immigrant had paid a large amount

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16 *Migrants: what research on their profiles and life among us shows, Politis newspaper (02/06/10) in Fascism, Xenophobia and Racist Violence in Cyprus*

17 03/03/10 <http://archives.cyprus-mail.com/2010/03/03/vietnamese-woman-locked-up-fed-only-bread-and-water/>

18 For more information on this case: <http://www.interights.org/rantsev/index.html>

to come to Cyprus. After an episode of sexual harassment (which was never reported) her “agent,” the person who has absolute authority over her employment and legal status, “moved” her. During this process, she was told by the agent that she would not change employer again, or else “he would deport her.”

In this context of blackmail and under threat of becoming illegal, the Indian worker lived and worked in terrible conditions. Her employers forbade her leaving the apartment. They also did not allow her familiars to talk to her, a few hours before her death, as they wanted to convince the employers of letting her visit the Indian mosque. It was later discovered that these employers had a long history of changing domestic workers due to the harsh conditions and the humiliations that they imposed. The way that she died, also, suggests that it was a murder rather than a suicide.<sup>19</sup>

In February 2015, 25 year old Sarah from Nepal spoke of the conditions under which she worked for a news report. These are her words:

*“I came to Cyprus to work. I had problems at home, I didn't have money, so I came here. My agent picked me up from the airport and took all my documents, my passport, everything. Then, I went to the house of my first employer and I worked there for 8 months. I had so much work. I worked from 6 in the morning until 8-9 at night when I finished. I had 2 hours of rest, but slowly my shoulder started to hurt so I asked my employer to “release” me because I had a problem.*

*My employer had 4 kids. In the morning I combed their hair, prepared their milk and then sir and madam left the house. I began to clean the house and cook. I cleaned everything, bedrooms, all other rooms, the toilet, the bath, everything, and once I was done I started to cook. My employers returned around 2-3 in the afternoon, ate, and I washed all the dishes. I went to my room for 2 hours and then I continued with ironing the clothes. The children made a mess and I cleaned again. Then I went outside, cleaned the garden, watered the trees and then it was dinner time. I washed the dishes and sometimes cooked dinner. When I was done with all this, I went to my room. I was not paid extra money, just my salary, 314 euros. My employer gave me one day of rest.*

*(...) My second employer was a lawyer and I started working at her house. I cleaned the house and took care of the child. In the afternoon the child returned from school and I watched it. Sometimes, I also cleaned my employer's office. Friday, Saturday, Sunday, whenever she was out, I spent all night with the child. I worked 13 hours a day. (...) I called my agent and told him that I could not continue to work there, because I felt sick. One day the partner of my employer told me “you will go to this house, or else I will put drugs in your clothes and send you to prison.” (...) I was*

*scared and I left the house. (...) On November 5th we had a meeting with my employer at the Employment Office and I asked her to return my clothes, my passport, my "alien book" and she did not. Then she took me to court, I did not know if the case was over, because nobody told me, and the court ruled against me. I must pay my employer 2.500 euros."*

Sarah's case should be considered the rule rather than the exception, precisely due to the legal context of semi-slavery under which domestic workers find themselves. These women are undervalued bodies, to the point of humiliation and annihilation. And unfortunately, so are the bodies of much larger parts of the immigrant work force.

### ***III. Our own plantations***

Conditions similar to those of domestic workers are the case in agriculture (where almost exclusively men are employed): overtime, unpaid work, violence, sexual violence, withholding of travel documents etc, while often the workers live in stables or barns. Let's let the bosses speak for themselves: the ad on the opposite page from K.S. Flowershop Company LTD.

The ad of company K.S. Flowershop Company LTD may have caused discussion, outcry and even an order of the minister of Labor for an investigation of the company, however there is nothing illegal about it. According to the Labor Contract of the Agriculture and Livestock departments, (signed by all unions, including PEO), the gross salary of an unskilled worker is 455 euros. From this amount is deducted: the contribution to social security, the union membership (which is mandatory), the payment for medical care and possibly provisions for shelter and food. If shelter and food are not provided, the minimum wage is 870 euros per month, rising to 924 euros per month after six months. There is not limit to overtime.

The case described by the despicable ad of this company is not some kind of exception or disgusting, one-time scenario as described by the media and the Ministry of Labor. On the contrary, the countless unpaid hours of overtime, work on Sundays and holidays, and blackmail and use of violence from employers are the norm in agricultural work.

Let's examine some examples from the gutter of our agricultural society. 7 immigrants from India worked like slaves in animal barns in villages near Paphos and Lefkosia. They were forced by their bosses to work from 5 in the morning to 8-9 at night, often without food, and they were beaten if they dared to complain. This is the statement of Dalbir, a worker at a pigsty in Orunta:



*"My employer was harsh... my work began at 5 in the morning and ended at 8 at night... without food. I finished from the pigsty and walked 40 minutes to go to another farm owned by my boss... For 400 euros a month. After 6 months my residence permit expired... my boss beat me every day, since I was tired from all the work and couldn't do the tasks as he wanted. I cleaned the whole barn... When I wanted to eat, I walked to a kiosk in Akaki and bought food."<sup>20</sup>*

To understand further, we share another experience from an immigrant worker in agriculture. It is from 26 year old Vietnamese worker Pham Van Chi:

"My work was to take care of and milk the animals. My job started at 4-5 in the morning and ended at 9-10 at night, with a break of 2 and a half hours from 12 to 2:30pm. I worked 14-15 hours. They gave me expired food, and they beat me 3 or 4 times. As was the case with all other workers at the farm, they told me they would deduct 50 euros from my supposed salary to cover my nutrition. But they never paid me for my work there. (...) In July 2010 I began working in a village close to Paphos, cleaning the garden and collecting fruits. My employer gave me a long metallic rod to reach the top of the trees. As I was using it, I felt a sudden shock and was paralyzed. I fell from the tree and lost consciousness. When I came to, I was under the tree and in pain throughout my body. I realized that my right hand was burnt and I was missing three fingers. Part of my left hand was also burnt, as were both my legs. I looked up and saw

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<http://www.sigmalive.com/simerini/news/209234/indoi-sklavoi-se-mantres-zoon>

three electrical wires along the branches at the top of the tree under which I had fallen. I understood that I had been electrocuted. (...) My employer told me to not report the case to the police, and he promised to compensate me. Indeed, I reported nothing to the police but he did not keep his promise. I found myself without money, without clothes and was very lucky that my girlfriend in Lefkosia could support me financially so that I could buy food and medicine. (...) In February 2011 I was arrested by the police as an illegal immigrant. They took me to the Lakatameia detention facilities for more than 4 months and then ordered my deportation. (...)”<sup>21</sup>

This is the everyday reality for many immigrant workers on our island. Slavery conditions are not only within domestic or agricultural work – see construction, tourist sector, sex work and more. In 2009 for example, 103 Romanian workers were found living under horrible conditions, without basic necessities such as electricity, toilets and sheets. They were put there by their “agent,” a certain Giannis Piripitsis, who kept them there to “rent” them to employers. Most of them were not paid for their work, rather they received only 20 euros a week to buy food. These modern slaves worked for more than 65 (!) employers, and also worked on the construction of the Larnaca airport.<sup>22</sup>

Our cute island is also known for its tradition in human trafficking. Until 2009, the so called “artist” visa still existed, that brought women to Cyprus to work as artists (such as dancers), led them into the clutches of the sex work industry. Today, after the abolition of this visa, trafficking continues with other methods. This past summer, a case was published where three young women from Cameroon were locked for months in a house in a rural area. As they reported, their traffickers forced them to have sex with many men daily, as in they were forced into being raped multiple times per day. When they tried to escape this Cypriot hell with fake passports, they were arrested and spent many days in police stations and at the central prison. As the only (!) one of the three that was later recognized as a victim of human trafficking described, the detention at police stations of Paphos was terrible, with daily infringements of basic human rights.<sup>23</sup>

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21 <http://www.sigmalive.com/news/local/108235/i-kolasi-enos-vietnamezou-stin-kypro>

22 <http://archives.cyprus-mail.com/2009/11/14/court-hears-of-workers-miserable-conditions/>

23 <http://www.sigmalive.com/simerini/news/255060/treis-afrikanes-stin-kypriaki-kolasi>

## Conclusions for resistance

> As evident from the early 90s, immigration policy is above all a political management of the working class. Migration policies change, becoming more 'humane' or 'harsh' depending on the interests of the ruling class.

> The Cypriot state follows a severe migration policy in relation to asylum seekers, with minimum grants of refugee status or the right to remain in the country. Thus it creates 'excess bodies,' bodies that don't matter, that will walk the path of undocumented labour, detention centres and deportation.

> No migrant worker receives a status of permanent residence; every migrant/refugee in Cyprus with a temporary permit lives under a constant danger of becoming illegal and consequently of being deported.

> 'Illegal' migrants are not only those who enter the country 'illegally' but also those who stay after their contract in Cyprus expires, those who 'illegally' leave their employer or those that are fired by the latter. Illegalization is not only imposed at the borders but infiltrates every house and space of production.

> The overall immigration policy of the state consists of various levels and spaces: border controls, supervised labour during the process of pending asylum applications, illegalization, arrest, detention centres, 'illegal' labour, detention. All



of the above are an integral part of a single strategy.

> Detention centers do not exist to punish the 'misbehaved' but as a potential punishment for anyone. It does not matter who is detained and for how long, as long as some are detained, with the purpose of nurturing fear for an extreme punishment of the workforce.

> *The illegalization of the migrant workforce exists because it defends the conditions of employment as they stand. Paraphrasing the fascist slogan we would say that every migrant workers corresponds to a well-fed local employer.*

> For a big section of the migrant workforce, for example domestic workers, illegalization is not even necessary, as the legal conditions of labour are very close to those of undocumented work. Despite this, the threat of being 'illegalized' is always used for the sake of absolute discipline.

> For the rest of the workforce such as those employed in tourism, agriculture, construction, sex work, a combination of illegal and legal labour prevails. Outright exploitation exists not only for the 'illegals' but also for the rest that are always potentially 'illegal'.

> The strategy of the Cypriot state is not to prevent the entrance of every 'illegal' migrant nor to deport those that do not have the legal right to stay. It is to legalize and legalize in relation to its needs regarding the workforce. It is also the strategy of placing workers in permanent danger of becoming 'illegal' while illegality holds its workers in conditions of slavery. It is a strategy created by the state for the capital.

> *The attack against migrant workers is an attack on the whole of the working class. The degradation of worker's rights for part of the population lays the foundation for the infringement upon the rights of the entire working class, as it as it makes them vulnerable to arbitrary interventions depending on the needs of capital. The local working class owes it to migrant workers to join them, standing in solidarity in their struggles and contributing to them with its own.*

> Our own strategy must be the demand for immediate legalization of migrant workers. This legalization does not only indicate a micro change in legal status but also an end to the constant threat of illegalization. Illegalisation takes place beyond the government offices that legally impose it, it is a constant process, in every neighbourhood, relationship, school, work environment. In the same manner, the process of legalization has to take over such spaces. If we don't identify common interests and potential struggles in the figures of migrants and refugees, a joint resistance is impossible.



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**ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΕΣΩΤΕΡΙΚΩΝ  
ΤΜΗΜΑ ΑΡΧΕΙΟΥ ΠΛΗΘΥΣΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ  
ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΕΥΣΗΣ**

**ΣΥΜΒΑΣΗ ΑΠΑΣΧΟΛΗΣΗΣ**

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**MINISTRY OF INTERIOR  
CIVIL REGISTRATION AND  
MIGRATION DEPARTMENT**

**CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT**

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24 For a full version of the contract, see Report MIGS, σ. 71-78

## CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT

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Agreement made on the ..... between  
Name .....  
Address .....  
Telephone .....  
Employer's Registration Number (Social Insurance) .....  
(hereinafter called "THE EMPLOYER") on the one part

and

Name .....  
Nationality ..... Sex .....  
(hereinafter called "THE EMPLOYEE") on the other part, covering the following:

1. (a) The Employer shall employ the Employee and the Employee shall work exclusively for the Employer to the post/occupation ..... at his residence. The present agreement covers the period of ..... months from the day the Employee begins work according to this contract.
- (b) The Employer shall deposit with the Civil Registry and Migration Department a bank Guarantee of € ..... as security for travel expenses of possible repatriation of the Employee. In case the Employer is a Diplomat, he shall provide a letter to the Civil Registry and Migration Department acknowledging acceptance of financial responsibility to repatriate the Employee (not applicable if the employee is a EU citizen or citizen of an acceding country).
- (c) The Employee's entry residence and employment shall be subject to the provisions of the Aliens and Immigration Laws and its relevant Regulations.

- (d) The Employee shall undergo a medical test, at the time of his/her arrival in order to provide a certificate that he/she is free from contagious diseases. Medical expenses shall be paid by the Employer.

**2. The Employee**

- (a) Shall not be allowed to change Employer and place of employment during the validity of this contract and his Temporary Residence/Work Permit.
- (b) Shall work 6 days per week, for 7 hours per day, either during the day or the night and shall perform his duties or any other duties relevant to his employment according to the requirements of the Employer, and shall obey all orders and instructions given by the Employer or his authorized representatives and shall cooperate with the rest of the Employer's staff and contribute to the utmost of his abilities in promoting the interest of the Employer, protect his property from loss, damage etc. and without delay inform the Employer or his responsible representative of any such loss, theft, etc. that may come to his attention.
- (c) Shall obey and comply with all orders and instructions of the Employer and faithfully observe the rules, regulations and arrangements for the time being in force for the protection of the Employer's property and in general the good execution of the work.
- (d) Shall produce work of the highest standards and in no way inferior in quality and quantity to the work produced by skilled or unskilled workers of the same specialization/occupation in Cyprus.

- (e) During his employment, shall not, in any way (except so far as may be proper in the ordinary course of his duties) divulge or make known any information relating to his employer or his business or any of his customers or any other information which may come to his knowledge.
- (f) Shall not at any time be guilty of any act or conduct which may cause damage, according to the judgment of the Employer, to his property/interest or reputation, and shall in all respects and all times conduct himself with propriety and decorum, and in particular shall obey and comply with all the law, rules and regulations for the time being in force in Cyprus.
- (g) Shall not be entitled in any way and for any reason to any increase of his fixed salary, unless it is provided under this contract or it considered appropriate by the Employer.
- (h) Shall not engage, contribute or in anyway, directly or indirectly take part in any political action or activity during the course of his stay in Cyprus, and shall observe faithfully the laws governing the conduct and behaviour of aliens.

### **3. Emoluments and Fringe Benefits**

The Employer shall pay the following emoluments and fringe benefits to the Employee during the course of the above employment.

- (a) The amount of €.....- per month, for 42 hours work per week.
- (b) The Employee shall be entitled to 24 working days annual leave with full pay. Also the Employee shall be entitled to the following 9 official holidays with full pay: 1<sup>st</sup> January, 6<sup>th</sup> January, Easter Saturday, Easter

**5. General Terms**

- (a) Any dispute in respect of this contract shall be governed by the Law/Regulations applicable and in force. The decision of the arbitration shall be binding on both parties. During arbitration a member of the ..... Embassy/Consulate in Cyprus may be present. In case of disciplinary proceedings, the Employee will be given an opportunity to explain his case.
- (b) If the Employee at any time disobeys or neglects or refuses to carry out or comply with all lawful instructions given to him by the Employer or his representatives on the basis of this contract, or if he is found guilty of consumption of alcoholic drinks, or gambling, or unjustified absence from his work, or if he violates the Laws of the Cyprus Republic, the Employer may immediately dismiss him from his work by giving him written notice, and he shall be repatriated.
- (c) Breach of any of the clause of this contract will automatically cause the termination of this contract as well as the validity of the Employment and Residence Permit.
- (d) Each party may cancel this contract under the terms and Conditions provided by the Termination of Employment Law, 1967, giving at least one month's notice to the other party. In such case the Employer shall pay to the Employee all arrears of salary and the Employee shall accept the same in full discharge of all claims whatsoever. If any of the parties to the present contract violates any of its terms and conditions, the other party has the right to claim damages.



