



Prosecution case 16767/2022 - A new state persecution

Intro

Doros Polykarpou is charged with, among others, illegal entry to Pournara reception centre, assault, and attack against two security guards. ([Please find attached the indictment in Greek – Annex 1 and an unofficial translation of the indictment Annex 2](#)).

Hearing 15/10/2024

The hearing of the case was to start on 15 October 2024. However, the judge decided to postpone it to 11 February 2025 because the public prosecutor did not give access to Doros Polykarpou’s defense lawyer to the audio-visual material recorded as testimonial material in the case, despite the fact that the lawyer had requested it in writing from last April. In fact, the public prosecutor initially stated that she was not aware of the said video. When the defense lawyer pointed out that the particular video is listed under the testimonial material she said that she was not aware whether this would be used by the prosecution and asked for some time to see into the matter. Mr Polykarpou’s lawyer pointed out that it is the right of the suspect to have full access to all testimonial material regardless of whether it will be used in court by the prosecutor. The judge decided to give the prosecutor some time and postponed the next hearing to 11 February 2025.

The actual facts

In March 2022, Ms Brigitte Espuche, Coordinator of the [Migreurop Euro-African network](#), traveled to Cyprus for coordination and exchange meetings with KISA as a beneficiary of their Program for internship placement. During her mission to Cyprus, we arranged to visit the [Pournara camp at Kokkinotrimithia on 12 March](#).

During the visit, Mr Polykarpou, the representative of KISA who accompanied her, was insulted and physically attacked by a private guard of the camp in the presence of Ms Espuche. The attack was reported the same day by Mr Polykarpou to the local police station. The said security guard and his brother, also a security guard at the camp, filed also the same day a complaint at the police station against Mr Polykarpou for assault and attack against them.

Upon her return back to Paris, the Coordinator of Migreurop informed in detail the Attorney General of Cyprus about the attack and expressed her willingness to testify, if he so wished ([see Annex 3](#)). The statement was sent by Ms Espuche to the Attorney General who forwarded it the Chief of Police ([see Annex 4](#)).

The Police did not, despite their legal obligation under EU Law, call the Coordinator of Migreurop for a statement and neither she nor any other camp staff or asylum seekers, who were present at the incident, are included in the list of witnesses for the court case.

More specifically, the police have neither obtained a statement from the reception center manager who

was working that day, Ms Marcella Demetriou, nor from Mr Alex Abelleira Vicens, who was present during the contact of Mr. Polykarpou with the two security guards. Mr Alex Abelleira Vicens introduced himself as a member of staff of the administrator of the centre and the responsible officer at the set time.

The Attorney General decided to prosecute Doros Polykarpou but for unknown reasons decided not to prosecute the security guard who attacked D. Polykarpou and the trial is expected to start on Tuesday, 15.10.2024 (case no. 16767/2022).

The motive of the guards

On 20 October 2021, KISA received complaints by migrant women who experienced serious violence and ill-treatment by a security guard working at the Social Welfare Services in Nicosia. The women went to the Welfare Services to meet their social workers because they did not have money to buy even milk for their babies ([see Annex 5](#)). The migrant women with their written complaints provided us with a [relevant video of the incident](#)). They also informed us that they filed a complaint at the local police station against the security guard but the police failed to respond appropriately and investigate it.

KISA filed a complaint to the AADIPA (Independent Authority for Investigating Allegations and Complaints against the Police) regarding the handling of the migrant women's complaint of excessive force by the security guard ([attached as Appendix 6](#)) and the inappropriate police response.

After the submission of the court case against Mr Polykarpou for the alleged attack against the security guard in Pournara, we found out that the security guard who accused Mr Polykarpou was the same security guard we reported for the violence against women at the Welfare Services on 20 October 2021.

We believe that the violent behaviour of this security guard towards Mr Polykarpou in Pournara on 12/03/.2022 was in retaliation for the fact that KISA had reported him for violence against the above mentioned migrant women on 20/10/.2021.

Pournara in late 2021 - early 2022

During that period, the [situation at the Centre was unbearable](#). The Centre, which was designed as a 72 hour reception centre with a capacity for up to 800 people, at that time accommodated around 3000 people. The vast majority of asylum seekers were staying in temporary tents placed around the "official" centre by asylum seekers who were not registered by the authorities. This area was more or less self-administered. There was no electricity, no access to drinking water and no bathrooms, so that in order to have access to these basic necessities, the authorities tolerated their uncontrolled access and movement throughout the Centre's facilities, generally through entrances created by the asylum seekers themselves.

Asylum seekers faced inhuman, degrading and humiliating living conditions, inadequate access to health care, gender-based violence and exploitation of women, as well as mistreatment of refugees by guards and the administration.

Furthermore, unaccompanied minors,, who should normally be living in a safe zone were left in completely [inadequate living conditions](#). The space was so small that not even a sufficient number of beds could be accommodated and as a result the children were forced to share even the same bed. Moreover, the same space was also accessible to adult residents.

This situation created tensions and in December 2021, conflicts broke out between unaccompanied children in the "safe zone accommodation" for unaccompanied children. The police were called in and the police officers involved in the management entered the accommodation area of the children with anti-demonstration gear and began to indiscriminately beat with batons any child they found in front of them or running for their lives (please see [video from the police attack](#)).

In another incident, on 20 February, a 25-year-old Congolese refugee died of asphyxiation at the Athalassa Psychiatric Hospital. He was living in the “unofficial” section of Pournara without access to food, healthcare and sanitary facilities. The deceased had no history of psychiatric problems. On 13 February, he was transferred by ambulance to the Nicosia General Hospital Emergency Department from Pournara , where he had been staying since November 2021, without access to proper accommodation, food and medical care. On the morning of the same day, the management of the Centre was informed and instead of ensuring that he received immediate care, they literally threw him out of the Centre ([link for the video from that day](#)). The doctors on duty could not even communicate with him due to language and instead of being kept at the General Hospital for the required tests he was taken to the Athalassa Hospital, where he died 6 days later.

At the beginning of March 2022, unaccompanied minors, who could no longer bear the unsuitable living conditions, [left from Pournara and moved to the center of Nicosia](#) where they stayed outside the shelter of the Hope for Children organization.

Nicosia, 27/09/2024