



« *Migrant Camps in Europe: Open the doors! We have the right to know!* »

2012 Campaign of visits: Migrant detention centers? Don't come in, rights are being violated!

Country-By-Country Reports

Belgium – Journalists and activists refused access to the migrant detention centre in Bruges

Composition of the delegation: *The Belgian Human Rights League (organisation), Martine Vandemeulebroucke (Le Soir), Valentine Van Vyve (Alter Echos), Aurélie Didier (televised news RTBF), Tine Danckaers (web journal MO*) and Claire Pécheux (Retired journalist and blogger for Amnesty International)*

The Belgian League of Human Rights (LDH Belgium) supported the 'Open Access' campaign of 2012 and chose to focus specifically on the issue of journalists' access to retention centres. The centre in Bruges was eventually decided upon as the object of our visit because it is particularly revealing of both the carceral regime of migrant detention centres in Belgium (in terms of its instruments and disciplinary techniques), and of the opacity of such centres. The visit had been planned for the 17th of April 2012. An invitation to participate in the campaign was widely distributed to French- and Dutch-speaking journalists. Five journalists (print and television) responded to this call. The request for an authorisation to visit was directed to the General Director of the Foreigner's Office, and was made in the name of the Belgian Human Rights League, including a list of the names of participating journalists. It was rejected. In its refusal, the Foreigner's Office referred to Article 40 of the Royal Decree of the 2nd of August, according to which "*residents [detainees] cannot be exposed to public curiosity*". Considering this interpretation out of hand, the LDH submitted a second request, insisting on the fact that the second line of this very same Article stipulates that detainees "*[...] can neither be submitted to the questions of journalists [...] nor filmed without their consent*". Consequently, if the detainees give consent, journalists should be able to conduct interviews with them. The second request was also subject to refusal, justified by the claim that "*a sufficient number of internal and external checks and balances exist, which, it can also be noted, contribute to the humanisation of the centres.*" The planned visit was thus cancelled.

In a remarkable coincidence, the inauguration of a new detention centre on the outskirts of the Brussels airport was announced some days later. For the event, the Interior Minister convoked several hand-picked journalists (none of whom had chosen to participate in the Open Access Campaign) for a guided visit of the new 'Caricole' centre, completely empty at the time. In order to short-circuit the communication strategy of the Interior Minister, the Belgian Human Rights League encouraged the journalists involved in the Open Access campaign to publish articles deploring the refusals on the day of the inauguration. Two articles were thereby published and made accessible online following the inauguration of the new detention centre²¹.

Bulgaria – A local Deputy's visit to the Varna detention centre

Composition of the delegation: *Partners of the European Alternatives network in Bulgaria and local journalists*

In Bulgaria, the European Alternatives network requested that local partners and local journalists be granted a visit to the Varna detention centre. No written response was ever given subsequent to the numerous letters and faxes sent to Bulgarian authorities. In spite of repeated

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Cf. press review - Belgium

demands for an official response that might have served as a basis for contestation, the refusal was given verbally, apparently because the police authorities had not been involved in the campaign. The National Deputy Pavel Dimitrov finally carried out a visit, in the absence of either media or civil society organisations. Highly controlled, this visit was too constrained to allow for the collection of the data sought-after by the Open Access campaign. The director of the centre notably refused to hand over a copy of the internal rules and regulations, and not a single detainee could be interviewed.

The deputy noted several violations of the migrants' rights during his visit. Access to the judiciary system is very limited: detainees have access to lawyers only once a month and the informative document that is distributed to detainees upon arrival is only available in a handful of languages. What's more, decisions to extend the duration of detention are only subject to juridical review if a complaint is filed. Further, the access to health care is considerably limited: no veritable medical centre exists. One nurse pays a weekly visit to the centre and all consultations with her must be validated prior to the visit by the centre's administration. The deputy also observed deplorable living conditions in the confines of the centre (obsolete fixtures, dilapidated walls and ceiling, lack of a courtyard or exterior garden, insufficient light, barred windows).

Until the day under discussion, the Varna centre had never been visited by outsiders. Its management is not subject to any sort of control. Despite the fact that since 2011, the Open Society Institute, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, and the International Migration Organisation had meant to exercise civic observation of the centre, this was never made effective and the organisations never coordinated actions in pursuit of such goals.

Croatia – Visit to the Jezevo detention centre (*Prohvatni centar z astrance Jezevo*) **The 16th of March 2012**

Composition of the delegation: *the Centre of Peace Studies (organisation) and Tamara Opacic (H-Alter, independent web journal)*

In Croatia, the Centre of Peace Studies (CPS) carries out two visits per year to the administrative detention centre of Jezevo. Access to the centre does not in and of itself pose any issues, both for civil society organisations as for journalists. As part of the Open Access campaign, four members of the CPS and a journalist from H Alter requested a visit to the centre. Filed on the 15th of March, their request was granted the very next day.

At the time of their visit, 43 'irregular' migrants and asylum-seekers were detained there, including five women. Even though there were no minors amongst them, it is to be noted that a mechanism specifically designed for the detention of minors is being put together within the centre. The centre employs only two social workers and no psychological or social assistance is given to the detainees.

The delegation was able to conduct interviews with several migrants. Although some of them claimed to be satisfied with the conditions of their detention, others had recently undergone a hunger strike. The latter group, composed of asylum-seekers, had demanded a transfer to the centre for asylum-seekers. The director of the centre confirmed that the hunger-strikers had received daily medical consultations, and that no medical report had so far indicated the need to accord any special treatment, insofar as none amongst them was found to suffer from any particular symptoms.

The detainees have access to a juridical assistant free of charge and have the option of consulting with a lawyer from a Croatian NGO. Further, the CPS has not come across or heard of any particular cases of violence over the past five years.

The preoccupation of those who defend the rights of migrants does not so much concern the conditions of detention but rather the legislative framework that encompasses detention. In its transposition of European directives, the Croatian legislation gave broad authorisation for recourse to the internment of foreigners. Migrants can be detained for up to one year²², in the absence of any

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The maximum duration of detention is initially six months but it can be extended by six additional months

juridical control. The decision to place them in detention²³ is neither subject to control by judge, nor can it be contended through recourse to judicial review [*recours contentieux*]. The only available path open to migrants in such situations is an application for reconsideration [*recours gracieux*], through a very specific administrative procedure.

Spain – Administrative silence and violation of the right to information in the Migrant Detention Centres of Valencia and Murcia

Composition of the Valencia delegation: *SOS Racism, CEAR and Campaña por el cierre de los CIE (civil society organisations); Federico Simón (El País), Daniel Ayllón (Público), Ramón Fernando (Levante), Nicolás Castellano (Cadena Ser) and Purificación Gómez (Radio Nacional); Ricardo Sixto, Gaspar Llamazares (national parliamentarians); Marina Albiol and Francesc Xavier Ferri (regional parliamentarians)*

Composition of the Murcia delegation: *Convivir sin Racismo, HOAC and CATS (organisations); Javier Parra (La Verdad), Tania Costa (20 Minutos), and Javier Ruiz (Radio Murcia/Cadena Ser), Teresa Rosique and José Antonio Pujante (regional parliamentarians); and Teresa Vicente (lawyer and professor of law at the University of Murcia)*

In the framework of the previous campaign for a ‘Right to Inspection of Detention’, a delegation of Spanish organisations was able to visit the CIE (Centro de Internamiento de Extranjeros) of Aluche in Madrid in 2011. Also in 2011 as part of this same campaign, these organisations visited centres in Barcelona, Algeciras and Malaga.

This year, not one sole visit was authorised as part of the ‘Open Access’ campaign, which demands that unconditional access to detention camps be granted to civil society actors and journalists. This change of attitude on the part of the Spanish authorities demonstrates that granting journalists—who are the first sources of information for society at large—access to such camps is clearly an undesirable option for the authorities. This observation is particularly worrying because it reveals the manifest desire to keep these places invisible and inaccessible.

On the 1st of March 2012, a request to visit the centre of Zapadores, in Valencia, was conjointly filed by two national parliamentarians, two regional parliamentarians, five journalists and three representatives of civil society organisations. Despite several reiterations, this request fell upon the authorities’ deaf ears. To denounce this attack on the right to information, the *Sindic de Greuges* (ombudsman of the Valencian Community) decided to visit the Zapadores camp, on the 10th of April 2012.

It is particularly interesting to note that, in parallel to the refusal given to journalists, the Interior Minister organised a press conference in the CIE of the *Zona Franca* in Barcelona. The press was invited to appreciate the installations of the premises, without for as much being allowed to meet any of the people detained there. Anything but coincidental, such media events reflect the communication strategies of Spanish authorities, seeking to dissimulate their obstruction of access to detention camps by civil society actors and journalists.

The same struggle was carried out to obtain a visit to the Murcia detention centre, in vain. On the 21st of March, two regional parliamentarians, three journalists, three representatives of the organisations HOAC, CAT and Convivir sin Racismo, and a researcher, Teresa Vicente, sent a conjoint request for access to the centre. Faced with the administration’s silence, the above-mentioned organisations and journalists had recourse to diverse alternatives: new requests were sent directly by the parliamentarians; the director of Migreurop sent a fax to the Spanish Interior Minister in the name of the Open Access campaign, and another request was filed with the Chief of Police. All such requests have gone unanswered. The message is as explicit as it is alarming: journalists and members of civil society are not authorised to enter in Spanish detention centres.

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Which falls within the competency of the administrative police

France – Of the nine planned, six centres were actually visited, access was refused to journalists and activists

Participation of Elected officials in the Open Access-France Campaign:

European Deputies: Kader Arif (PS), Nicole Kiil Nielsen (EELV), H  l  ne Flautre (EELV), Karima Delli (EELV), Marie-Christine Vergiat (Front de Gauche), Sandrine Belier (EELV), Judith Sargentini (Green Left), Franziska Keller (Group of Greens/Free European Alliance), Ana Miranda (Group of Greens/Free European Alliance), Raul Romeva I Rueda (Group of Greens/Free European Alliance) and Rui Tavares (Group of Greens/Free European Alliance)

Deputies: Mich  le Delaunay (PS), Genevi  ve Gaillard (PS), Marcel Rogemont (PS), Philippe Tourtelier (PS), Patrick Lemasle (SRC), Catherine Lemorton, Pierre Cohen, Martine Martinel, Monique Iborra

Senators: Christian Favier, Jo  l Labb  , Philippe Tourtelier, Jean-Jacques Mirassou

Composition of delegations:

Media and Journalists - *L'Humanit   (Marie Barbier et autres), MATIVI Toulouse, La D  p  che, Les amis du monde diplomatique, 20 minutes, Le Canard encha  n  , Agence France Presse (AFP), Le Parisien (Carole Sterl  ), M  diapart (Carine Fouteau), RFI (Isabelle Romero), Arte Radio (J  r  me Thorel), Les Inrocks (Camille Polloni), Sud Ouest, France 3, O2 Radio, Radio France (Anja Vogel), Grand Rouen (Violaine Gargala).*

Civil Society Organisations - *Cercle des voisins de Toulouse, Ligue des droits de l'Homme, M  decins du Monde, R  seau Education Sans Fronti  res (RESF), Toulouse-based collectives (SP Cugnaux, Fonsorbes et Tournefeuille – collectif Volvestres, "La marche de l'espoir", "Halte    la d  lation"), Group Welcome, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Anaf  , Groupe d'accueil solidarit   (GAS), Observatoire citoyen, the Cimade, Association Solidarit   avec les Travailleurs Immigr  s (ASTI) F  d  ration des Associations Solidarit   avec les Travailleurs Immigr  s (FASTI).*

By the decree of the 8th of July 2011, the French government set out very restrictive parameters for the 'visitation rights' held by civil society organisations with regard to access to sites used for the administrative retention of foreigners. This decree having been strongly contested, the organisations participating in the campaign were not allowed to accompany parliamentarians in the visitation campaign. The journalists, for their part, made separate requests, either as independent visitors or as companions of the parliamentarians. 48 French journalists were mobilised for this campaign²⁴, of whom thirty were from Toulouse alone, where an entire week of mobilisations had been organised.

Not a single journalist nor activist was allowed to enter – excepting activists already integrated into the French system of oversight of such centres.

Of the nine centres where visits had been planned, only those in which a parliamentarian was present could be visited. Therefore, whereas visitation requests had been filed for the administrative detention centres (*centres de retention administrative – CRA*) of Vincennes, Bordeaux, Strasbourg, Rennes, Toulouse, Palaiseau, Mesnil-Amelot, Rouen and the waiting zone of Roissy, only the CRA of Vincennes (the 26th of April), Strasbourg (the 17th of April), Rennes (the 26th and 30th of March and the 23rd of April), Toulouse (the 28th, 29th and 31st of March and the 2nd and 6th of April), Bordeaux²⁵ and the Roissy waiting zone (the 17th of April) could be visited.

²⁴ Certain journalists made several requests for visitation, as was the case for Carine Fouteau, a journalist for Mediapart (who filed requests for Vincennes, Palaiseau, Strasbourg and Roisy), as well as for journalists from the NGO Reporters Without Borders

²⁵ At the last minute, the parliamentarians cancelled the visit to the Bordeaux CRA, initially planned for the 25th of April, because the administration refused entry to journalists.

The conditions of access have thus been firmly restricted, limiting the ability of civil society to inspect such places of detention.

The reasons for the refusals (when given at all) were multiple: the administration referred to the code of Civic Procedure, in which only elected officials are permitted access to detention centres, but they also had recourse to the confidentiality requirements put upon administrative personnel during an electoral period. The leader of the Communication Policy of the Interior Ministry, for her part, gave perhaps one of the most surprising reasons for rejection, following a visitation request made by a journalist to the CRA in Toulouse. She argued that the “[administration seeks] above all else to ensure the respect of all persons. If such centres are out of bounds, notably to journalists, it is linked to the fact that these detainees are not animals and we are not in a zoo”.

The French and European parliamentarians that were able to carry out visits bore witness to the living conditions in these closed spaces. The most recurrent observation concerned the very limited access to healthcare. The situation of the Strasbourg CRA is significant in this respect, where the means of medical assistance have been halved beginning in 2012. Furthermore, as highlighted by European Deputy Marie-Christine Vergiat, the absence of psychological assistance and care can lead to situations of tension, to which the personnel respond most commonly by putting the agitated detainees in isolation.

As statistical indications have only rarely been made available to visitors, comparisons are difficult. For example, it can be noted that the average duration of detention in 2011 was 10 hours in the CRA of Strasbourg, compared with 6.59 days in Rennes. The number of placements in the CRA in 2011 was 347 in Strasbourg against 875 compared with Rennes, whereas some 10,000 people pass through the Roissy waiting zone every year; in 2011, 195 people held in the CRA of Rennes were subject to deportation, some 24.28%. Additionally, the number of asylum demands filed in the Strasbourg and Rennes CRAs has dropped off over the past years²⁶.

These very thin data put into sharp relief the administration’s lack of transparency. Authorities are rarely disposed to provide information on places of retention and enclosure.

More generally, for the majority of parliamentary visitors, it is not so much the conditions of detention that present the main problems—the conditions have globally improved over past years. Rather, it is the very principle of the enclosure and detention of foreigners. More still, the detention of minors has been strongly condemned²⁷. The spaces dedicated to minors in places of detention—as is the case in Roissy—do not by any means solve the problem.

The majority of parliamentary denounce this deprivation of freedom, especially given that “these people who have never committed any sort of reprehensible act and are just suspected of being in an ‘irregular’ administrative situation”²⁸. This “cannot be accepted within the conception of a democratic nation-state”²⁹.

Italy – Obstructions of journalists and civil society’s right to information concerning foreigner internment camps, the discrete detention centre in the airport transit zone Rome-Fiumicino and the force of collective civic mobilisation

In light of recent legislative changes, the actors involved in the Italian Open Access campaign felt assured of obtaining authorisations for the access to foreigner detention camps. In effect, some months earlier (ministerial notification of the 13th December 2011), the Interior Minister, Anna Maria Cancellieri had nullified the ministerial notification of the 1st of April 2011 that revoked all right of

²⁶ The number of asylum demands filed in the Strasbourg CRA was 98 in 2009, 37 in 2010, and 24 in 2011; the CRA of Rennes numbered 78 in 2009, 57 in 2010 and 22 in 2011.

²⁷ [CEDH, The retention of young migrants accompanied by their parents in a centre that is poorly adapted for minors was irregular and contrary to the respect of human life – the Popov vs. France affair](#)

²⁸ Marie-Christine Vergiat, the 26th of April 2012.

²⁹ Kader Arif, the 2nd of April 2012.

access to foreigner internment camps (*camp d'internement d'étrangers – CIE*)³⁰, in order to re-establish the previous system that authorised civil society members and journalists to have access to such sites³¹. Nevertheless, the results of this visitation campaign demonstrate that, in practice, such places of detention remain largely impenetrable. Excepting the foreigner internment camp of Bologna via Mattei, every single access request filed by the civil society actors and journalists was rejected on the basis of derisory premises, without any juridical foundation. If the right of access is henceforth the rule, this does not mean that it is not subject to the arbitrary discretion of prefects.

For the CIE in Milo via Trapani, the prefecture presented a refusal to organisations and journalists “pending the approval of the Interior Ministry”³². In Milan via Corelli, the refusal was at first justified through reference to the “risk of revolt”. At a subsequent point in time, the coincidence of the planned visitation date and the National Liberation Day was used as grounds for refusal. Finally, with regard to the airport frontier of Rome-Fiumicino, the request remained without reply. Interrogated as to the reasons for this silence, the administration explained that the personnel in charge of admissions were absent, and then claimed to have misplaced the letter in question. At the airport of Fiumicino and the CIE of Milo Trapani, the visits were finally made possible by the presence of parliamentarians.

Visit to the Identification and Expulsion Centre (CIE) of Via Mattei, in Bologna, the 23rd of April 2012

Composition of the delegation: Sandra Zampa, Rita Ghedini and Donata Lenzi (parliamentarians), Danilo Gruppi (CGIL Bologna), Stefano Brugnara (Arci), Antonio Mumolo (Regional Counsellor), Silvia Bonacini and Cécile Kyenge Kashetu (LasciateCIEntrare)

According to the last effective survey, 30 women and 23 men are detained in the Bologna centre, which is set up to hold up to 95 persons. The average duration of detention is two to three months. The delegation described the conditions of detention as “dire”. Let alone the concrete slabs covered with mattresses supposed to constitute bedding, the cells are stripped bare of any kind of furnishing: neither cupboards, mirrors, sheets, nor duvets, and in the absence of curtains the windows have been covered with newspapers. The showers are broken and there is no hot water. Detained in these inhuman conditions, migrants develop a number of psychological troubles. The atmosphere is oppressive and the feelings of disorientation, hopelessness and rage are palpable. Since the beginning of 2012, 18 detainees have escaped from the camp and a young man, aged 21, died of an overdose.

Visit to the Identification and Expulsion Centre (CIE) at Milo via Trapani, the 24th of April 2012

Composition of the delegation: Carmen Cordaro (Arci), Hassan Maamri (Arci), Stefania Siragusa (parliamentarian) Il Sole 24 Ore (Nino Amadore – present, but refused access on site)

After the visit, the deputy Stefania Siragusa was outraged, describing “a structure that is totally improper” as well as “unconscionable living conditions”. There are presently 190 foreigners detained in the Trapani camp³³, 36 of which are asylum-seekers. The average duration of detention is around five months but certain detainees have been there for more than eight months.

The delegation highlighted deplorable sanitary conditions (extremely dirty rooms, nauseating stench, absence of doors on the toilets, broken showers). For “security reasons” the dining hall is not

³⁰ Ministerial Notification (*circulaire*) n° 1305 of the 1st of April 2011: Adopted by the Interior Minister Maroni in response to the massive wave of arrivals from North Africa, this Notification limits the right of access to detention centres to a handful of international NGOs (UNHCR, IOM, the Italian Red Cross, etc.), and to other organisations directly involved in the management of such centres.

³¹ Ministerial Notification (*circulaire*) n° 11050 of the 13th of December 2011: Following a decrease of arrivals from North Africa, the new Interior Minister, Cancellieri, nullified the previous directives and re-established the directive of the 24th of April 2007.

³² Yet, according to Italian law, the granting of access by members of civil society to such foreigner camps falls within the remit of the prefectures.

³³ The Administrative Detention Centre (CIE) of Milo via Trapani has a maximum capacity of some 204 persons.

used. In what is a shocking sight, the detainees are simply rounded up against the gates of the centre for their meals. Hoarded together and surrounded by the guards like animals, they are forced to eat on the floor from plastic bags. This kind of treatment, humiliating and disrespectful of human dignity, is akin to torture. Other grave violations of sanitary norms were denounced during the visit. The disrespect of norms relative to the transport of foodstuffs, and the absence of emergency medical equipment bear witness to the personnel's negligence of sick detainees. For example, three detainees suffering from cardiac complications were deprived of any sort of specialised assistance.

Beyond the consequences on their state of physical wellbeing, the unbearable nature of such detention puts in jeopardy the psychological health of interned migrants. The numerous cases of self-mutilation and suicide attempts related by the centre's doctor bear witness to as much. Other rights violations occur with regard to access to legal action. In effect, detainees—whether or not they are asylum-seekers—have no access to any kind of juridical assistance.

One month after the visit, during the night of the 27th of May 2012, 100 migrants succeeded in escaping from the Milo camp.

Visit to the airport frontier zone of Fiumicino the 27th of April 2012

Composition of the delegation: Claudio Graziano (Arci Rome), Marco Perduca (senator), Radio Radicale

According to a source of the ARCI, migrants and asylum-seekers are regularly detained during several days in the airport transit zone of Rome-Fiumicino. An unprecedented experience, this visit aimed to verify, *in situ*, the existence of an informal place of internment for migrants who arrived in the frontier « illegally ». Meticulously prepared, the visit was conducted under the direction of the chief of border police and two of his officers. The latter two affirmed that the transit zone was only used in very rare exceptions as a place of detention. However, the places that were visited left no trace of doubt regarding the recourse to migrant detention. In practice, these so-called “holding zones” used to hold foreigners pending repatriation, are the same waiting rooms used by travellers. If the need arises, the iron banks and the airport toilets are transformed into a space of detention for the migrants. A yellow strip on the floor materialises the barrier that must not be passed. Unsurprisingly, given that the visit was announced in advance, these zones were empty.

The existence of a “day nursery”, a little room without window, lit by neon lamps and intended to hold mothers and their children, constitutes proof of the detention of foreigners during the night, including vulnerable members of the population.

Further away, the office of the “*ARCI con fraternita*” is in charge of the information, shelter³⁴ and the distribution of meals³⁵ for asylum-seekers. Access to this office by asylum-seekers, situated beyond the frontier zone, is subject to the goodwill of the border police. Given that it is closed from 7 PM and during the weekends, those asking for protection, and who arrive at the frontier zone on Friday after 7 PM, are detained at least two nights within the airport transit zone. The delegation also met with two ombudsmen from the CIES (*Centro Informazione e Educazione Allo Sviluppo*). The latter work with the border police in accordance with a convention with the Rome Prefecture. Running from a simple interpretation service to an aid in the management of migrants, the remit of their mandate is very broad. The absence of any legislative framework regulating the detention of foreigners, the arbitrary discretion characteristic of access to asylum procedures, and the inability of the premises to assure dignified conditions for those detained there, are at the origin of multiple violations of the rights of migrants in the airport transit zone; an invisible place for the internment of foreigners.

Mobilisation of the Italian “LasciateCIEntrare” coalition in support of the ‘Open Access’ campaign, from the 23rd to the 28th of April

³⁴ There are 70 places in Rome where asylum-seekers are sheltered pending their transfer to a specialised centre.

³⁵ Several cases of food-poisoning of asylum-seekers held by the “*ARCI con fraternita*” have been reported.

“LasciateCIEntrare” is a campaign carried out by a coalition of actors from Italian civil society since the summer of 2011. From the 23rd to the 28th of April, “LasciateCIEntrare” joined the Open Access visitation campaign. Several sit-ins were held before the migrant detention camps³⁶ and requests for access to these camps were filed in ten Italian cities: Bologna (conjoint request with the ARCI), Trapani, Modena, Milan, Rome, Bari, Turin, Caltanissetta, Gradisca d’Isonzo and Crotona. The local authorities rejected the majority of civil society actors and journalists’ requests, meaning that several visits had to be carried out by parliamentary intermediaries and regional counsellors alone. However, in certain cities, the mobilisation was fruitful and journalists were able to visit the centres. In Bari, where the press association has a significant reputation, several journalists were authorised to visit the centre with the possibility to film and interview detainees. In the Gorizia d’Isonzo camp, even though the access was at first refused to journalists, they were finally authorised to visit the centre a month later, following a protest by the local journalists’ union (Fvg Assostampa). The strong mobilisation had a widespread effect in Italy. The multiplication of visits meant that certain worrisome tendencies could be out into light: namely, an increasing recourse to the detention of migrants and the unconscionable and revolting nature of human rights violations that this generates.

In Turin, 156 cases of self-mutilation and 100 foreign body ingestions (56 of which were sharp / cutting objects) were reported for 2011. The psychiatrists admit the existence of several psychopathological signs “crafted” by the experience of detention, and which bear witness to the grave risk of suicide attempts. These figures violently confirm the devastating state of psychological distress into which people are put when they are locked up without ever having been found guilty of a crime.

The mobilisation continues, and on the 30th of May 2012, accompanied by the President of the National Italian Press Union (FNSI), Roberto Natale, twenty journalists were able to visit the camp of Trapani via Milo.

Romania – Visit to the Arad migrant detention centre, on the 4th of May 2012

Composition of the delegation: Collective of journalists from Indymedia Romania, News Radio Romania and the French revue “Regards”

In parallel to the ‘Open Access’ visitation campaign, Migreurop received several distress calls from the detention centre in Arad, Romania. Some fifty detainees (including a young pregnant woman), all dismissed from their right to asylum, are detained in the centre for a period that could be extended to a maximum of 18 months. Outraged by the conditions of their detention, these migrants bore witness to the grave violations of their rights: frequent acts of police violence, arbitrary placement in isolation, enclosure in cells for around 22 hours a day, no access to doctors or appropriate healthcare and deplorable sanitary conditions (broken shower, absence of heating). Migreurop collected and distributed the eye-witness accounts of the Arad detainees on two occasions³⁷.

Following the distribution of the first eye-witness accounts, a protest was organised by an informal collective claiming solidarity with the migrants, on the 21st of March 2012³⁸. The next day, several media outlets came to the Arad detention centre in order to enter it and see the situation for themselves. The director of the centre, Petre Padurean, refused this access, arguing that the detainees were “too violent”.

³⁶ In Trapani, Caltanissetta and Turin

³⁷ Eye-witness account collected on the 8th of March [Arad camp \(Romania\) « We are in hell »](#) and on the 26th of March [Arad camp \(Romania\): Handcuffed and beaten for a lighter](#)

³⁸ [The press release](#) – Cf. press clippings “video from the mobilisation of the 21st of March”

Following a written request by Active Watch (member of Reporters Without Borders Romania), the Romanian Immigration Office (RIO) assured that the detainees were well looked-after, and that the journalists were welcome in the centres, provided that they filed an accreditation request prior to arrival with the RIO. Although the accreditation request made in the name of the Open Access campaign by journalists was eventually accepted, it was never followed by an official written response. It is only by means of a telephone conversation that the RIO spokesperson confirmed the authorisation of the journalists' collective for access to the Arad centre.

The visit, which finally took place on the 4th of May, was meticulously prepared by the governmental authorities and by the administration of the centre. In effect, journalists were able to speak for some three hours with the personnel of the centre and an RIO commissioner who had come especially from Bucharest in order to oversee the visit. In a notable exception, journalists were able to undertake confidential interviews with the migrants for around five hours. The detainees complained about their conditions, particularly the poor quality of the food, the lack of specialised medical service and the lack of medications. They again painted a picture of the violent acts visited upon them by the police, but those with visible wounds did not want to be photographed for fear of reprisal. One week later, journalists and activists learnt of the escape of four detainees from the camp in the night of the 8th and 9th of May...³⁹

During the preparation of their media report, a second visit to the Otopeni retention centre has been planned for the month of June.

Serbia – Visit to the district of the Subotica Prison (*Okružni zatvor Subotica*) the 25th of April 2012

Composition of the delegation: Two representatives of the Regional Minority Centre (organisation) and Philippe Bertinchamps (*Courriers des Balkans*) to whom access was denied

In Serbia, the Regional Centre for Minorities (RCM) and a journalist filed requests to visit two foreigner internment centres. For the Padinska Skela expulsion centre (*Prihvatište za strance*), all requests for access were refused. As for the prison of Okružni Zatvor in Subotica, the Justice Minister at first required further information from the RCM (its social objective, the reasons for the visit, and the passports of non-resident visitors). Once this information had been transmitted, a visiting authorisation was granted to the two representatives of the association, but access was denied to the journalist.

This act of granting access needs to be put in perspective: the visit was limited to the administrative premises and was authorised neither for the cells nor for the shared spaces in which detainees are confined. The RCM delegation was not able to meet with any detainee, and was essentially in contact only with the director, the lawyer and the doctor of the prison. Until this very day, not one civil society organisation has taken the initiative to inquire into the treatment of detained migrants.

Due to the escalation of border controls coupled with the signature of a readmission agreement with Serbia and Hungary, the city of Subotica was forced to deal with an elevated number of people blocked at the frontiers. Thus, though the detention of foreigners is not by any means the original function of the Subotica prison, the proportion of migrants amongst its population has grown significantly over the past three years⁴⁰. As the carceral population has reached critical thresholds, the conditions of detention have become particularly indecent. In order to deal with the increases in the number of detained foreigners, mattresses were put everywhere that it was possible to do so (in the hallways, the pantries and larders, etc.). The administration of the carceral establishment has deplored the insufficiency of their annual nutritional budget, and the medical personnel decry a situation in which they do not have the means to provide the necessary healthcare to all detainees.

³⁹ Cf. press clippings – Romania and the [video from the protest on the 21st of March](#)

⁴⁰ Growing from 335 in 2009 to almost 2000 in 2012

According to the prison agents, when they arrive, migrants are receive a medical consultation and are able to wash themselves. No means for washing clothes are made available. Detainees are then limited to two showers a week. Maintained in their cells all day, they are only able to breathe fresh air in the exterior courtyard between half an hour and an hour a day. No recreational activity is allowed for. The account given by the sole detainee who could be interviewed puts these official claims into doubt. He claimed to have never been able to see a doctor upon arriving, and that he had further never been granted access to the exterior courtyard during his ten-day detention.

The Regional Minority Centre also discovered other systemic deficiencies at the origin of numerous rights violations: no control procedure exists in order to determine the age of foreigners detained, meaning that there is the risk of minors being detained illegally. Likewise, no procedure exists in order to facilitate asylum requests, and no demand for protection has ever been filed in the Subotica prison. The juridical service confirmed that it is not involved in such procedures, due to an absence of means. No translation service has ever been made available to them.

While the RCM is maintaining its efforts and pursuing actions seeking to obtain rights of access to the Padinska Skela expulsion centre (*Prihvatište za strance*), a visit might be planned to the prison in Vranje, situated in the south of Serbia, near the frontier with Bulgaria and Macedonia.