



# Report on İzmir and Aydın Removal Center Visits (July - September 2024)



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### Mültecilerle Dayanışma Derneği

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**PRO ASYL**  
DER EINZELFALL ZÄHLT.

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### Mültecilerle Dayanışma Derneği/ Association for Solidarity with Refugees

Uğur Mahallesi 848 Sokak No:16 Konak / İzmir / Türkiye

00 90 232 483 54 21

bilgi@multeci.org.tr

multeci.org.tr



The **Association for Solidarity with Refugees (Mülteci-Der)** is an independent, rights-based civil society organization established in 2008, dedicated to advocating for the rights of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers in Turkey. As part of its mission, **Mülteci-Der** provides legal aid, supports vulnerable individuals, and works to ensure that Turkey's policies and practices align with international human rights standards. The organization is an active member of several national and international networks, including the **European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)** and **Türkiye Mülteci Hakları Koordinasyonu (Turkey Refugee Rights Coordination)**.

**Mülteci-Der** has been providing crucial legal aid to detained migrants, asylum seekers, temporary protection status holders, and refugees across Turkey for more than a decade. Based in İzmir, the association's dedicated team of lawyers offers comprehensive legal support nationwide. These legal professionals are committed to ensuring that the rights of migrants and refugees are protected under Turkish and international law.

In addition to their office-based work, the lawyers of **Mülteci-Der** also conduct regular visits to **Removal Centers (Geri Gönderme Merkezleri)**, where migrants and asylum seekers are detained. During these visits, they provide direct legal services to detainees, assisting them in navigating complex legal processes such as appeals against deportation and applications for international protection. Furthermore, **Mülteci-Der** uses these visits to assess the living conditions and treatment of detainees within the centers, helping to highlight and address any human rights violations or inadequate standards of care.

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	5
2. Overview .....	6
3. Methodology .....	7
4. Key findings .....	8
4.1. Overcrowding .....	8
4.2. Inadequate Healthcare Access.....	10
4.3. Poor Hygiene and Sanitation.....	13
4.4. Legal and Language Barriers.....	14
4.5. Pressure to Sign Voluntary Return Forms .....	16
4.6. Insufficient Support for Vulnerable Groups .....	17
5. Conclusion .....	19
5.1. Right to Adequate Healthcare and Sanitation .....	19
5.2. Legal Representation and Access to Justice .....	20
5.3. Non-Refoulement and Informed Consent .....	21
5.4. Treatment of Vulnerable Groups .....	21
Annex: List of interviewed detainees .....	23

## 1. Introduction

In addition to being the largest host country for refugees, with over 3.5 million Syrians under temporary protection, Turkey also sits at a strategic crossroads on the irregular migration route between Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Over the last two decades, Turkey has developed one of the most extensive migration detention systems in the world, largely with financial support from the European Union as part of migration management agreements, including the EU-Turkey Statement of 2016.

Currently, Turkey operates more than 30 removal centers with a combined capacity of over 20,000 individuals<sup>1</sup>. These centers are used to detain migrants and asylum seekers awaiting deportation or the resolution of their legal status. In addition to these designated facilities, the Turkish authorities also use ad hoc detention sites at border crossings, airports, and police stations to hold individuals temporarily. While Turkey is obligated under international law, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights, to uphold basic standards of humane treatment, concerns have been raised regarding the living conditions and the treatment of detainees in these centers<sup>2</sup>.

This report provides a detailed analysis based on several visits conducted to two removal centers - the İzmir Harmandalı Removal Center and the Aydın Removal Center - between July and September 2024, aiming to provide legal aid to the migrants held in these facilities as well as assessing the conditions of detention, the treatment of detainees, and the fairness of deportation procedures. Through this report, we aim to highlight the urgent need for reforms in Turkey's migrant detention system to ensure that it aligns with national and international obligations concerning the rights of migrants and asylum seekers.

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1 Global Detention Project (2024) Turkey Country Report  
<https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/europe/turkey>

2 See among others; Mülteci-Der (2020). Access to Legal Aid for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Turkey: Challenges and Obstacles; Human Rights Watch (2019). Turkey: Mass Deportations of Syrians, Detention of Refugees; Amnesty International (2017). A Blueprint for Despair: Human Rights Impact of the EU-Turkey Deal; European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) (2019). Report to the Turkish Government on the Visit to Turkey. Amnesty International. (2016). Europe's Gatekeeper: Unlawful Detention and Deportation of Refugees from Turkey. Amnesty International.

## 2. Overview

This report offers a detailed analysis of the conditions and practices observed at two migrant detention facilities in Turkey: the İzmir Harmandalı Removal Center and the Aydın Removal Center. Between July and September 2024, legal teams from the Association for Solidarity with Refugees (Mülteci-Der) conducted a series of visits to these centers. The primary objectives of these visits were to provide legal aid to detained migrants, evaluate the living conditions and treatment of detainees, and assess the procedural fairness in the handling of international protection and deportation cases. The report focuses on key issues such as access to healthcare, the adequacy of facilities, and the overall adherence to both national and international legal standards concerning the rights of asylum seekers and migrants.

The legal teams involved in these visits focused on several key objectives. Firstly, they aimed to document the living conditions within the detention centers, including the adequacy of food, water, sanitation, and housing. Overcrowding, poor hygiene, and a lack of essential services were commonly cited issues by detainees, raising alarms about potential violations of basic human rights. Secondly, the teams sought to evaluate the treatment of detainees, particularly in terms of interactions with staff, the occurrence of any reported violence or abuse, and the provision of necessary medical care. The presence of vulnerable groups, including children, and those with medical or psychological needs, added urgency to these evaluations.

Another crucial aspect of the visits was to investigate the procedural fairness associated with international protection claims and deportation processes. Many detainees had reported being pressured to sign voluntary return forms without fully understanding the consequences, while others claimed that their legal rights had been obstructed due to language barriers and the unavailability of interpreters.

By conducting these visits, the legal teams aimed to shed light on these pressing issues, engage with authorities, and advocate for reforms where necessary. The ultimate goal was to ensure that Turkey's migrant detention system aligns with international human rights standards, including those set forth in the 1951 Refugee Convention, the

European Convention on Human Rights, and various United Nations treaties on the treatment of migrants and refugees. This report, therefore, serves as both a documentation of conditions observed in the İzmir and Aydın Removal Centers and a call to action for improvements in the treatment and handling of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers detained in Turkey.

### 3. Methodology

The report is based on a series of site visits conducted between July and September 2024 by legal teams. The methodology employed includes observational assessments, interviews with detainees, and case file reviews. The observations and findings presented in this report stem from site visits conducted by Mülteci-Der lawyers during this period. Visits to the İzmir Removal Center took place on July 12, August 1, August 23, and September 5, 2024, while the Aydın Removal Center was visited on September 26, 2024.

**Observational Assessments:** The assessments focused on physical infrastructure, staff behavior, and operational procedures, with particular attention to issues such as overcrowding, hygiene, access to healthcare, and detainee treatment.

**Detainee Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 detainees to gather information about living conditions, access to healthcare, legal representation, and experiences related to deportation processes. An anonymized list of interviewees is included as an annex to this report.

**Case File Reviews:** The legal case files of detainees were examined, with a focus on deportation orders, administrative detention decisions, and applications for international protection.



## 4. Key findings

Throughout the visits to the İzmir Harmandalı and Aydın Removal Centers from July to September 2024, several critical issues were consistently observed, affecting the dignity, health, and legal rights of detainees. These include overcrowding, inadequate healthcare, poor hygiene, legal and language barriers, pressure to sign voluntary return forms, and insufficient support for vulnerable groups. The following section offers a detailed examination of these issues, supplemented by direct quotes from detainees interviewed during the visits.

### 4.1. Overcrowding

Overcrowding was one of the most critical and pervasive issues observed in both the İzmir Harmandalı and Aydın Removal Centers. Detainees reported that rooms were consistently filled far beyond their intended capacity, leading to severely cramped and uncomfortable living conditions. The lack of space forced many detainees to sleep on the floor, while others had to share beds, often with multiple individuals taking turns to rest. The overcrowded rooms contributed not only to physical discomfort but also to a palpable increase in tension among detainees, as confined spaces, lack of privacy, and poor sleeping arrangements exacerbated frustration, irritability, and, at times, conflict.

The physical impact of overcrowding extended beyond discomfort, with detainees describing suffocating conditions, particularly during the summer months, when the rooms became unbearably hot and ventilation was inadequate. With so many people packed into small spaces, the rooms lacked sufficient airflow, making it difficult to breathe and rest. These conditions also posed significant health risks, as the cramped quarters made it easier for infectious diseases to spread. Combined with the poor hygiene and sanitation standards already present in the centers, overcrowding magnified the risks of illness, especially respiratory infections and skin conditions caused by insect bites.



Moreover, the lack of sufficient beds in the rooms was a consistent source of distress for detainees. Many described the experience of having to sleep directly on the floor, which added to the physical strain and exhaustion. Sharing beds also became a necessity for some detainees, which not only affected their ability to sleep but also their sense of personal dignity and security. This constant state of discomfort fostered a sense of hopelessness and frustration among detainees, who saw little prospect of relief from these harsh conditions.

- **Example (İzmir Removal Center):** During this visit, detainees openly voiced their frustrations regarding the extreme overcrowding. In one instance, up to 13 people were housed in a room designed for far fewer individuals. **IRC1**, a detainee, described the overcrowded conditions in vivid detail:

*“We’re crammed into these rooms like animals. There are at least 12 of us in here, and there aren’t enough beds, so some of us sleep on the floor. It’s impossible to move around, and the heat makes it even worse.”*

IRC1’s words reflect the dehumanizing impact of overcrowding, as detainees felt reduced to mere numbers, packed into inadequate spaces without consideration for their basic needs. The unbearable heat further compounded the issue, with inadequate ventilation creating stifling conditions that made it difficult for detainees to sleep or even breathe comfortably.

- **Example (İzmir Removal Center):** Overcrowding continued to be a severe problem in the İzmir Removal Center during subsequent visits. **IRC6** described the overcrowding in his room, where 13 people were forced to share a space with only 7 beds:

*“There are 13 people in my room, but only 7 beds. We have to take turns sleeping, and the space is so tight that it’s suffocating. Everyone is on edge because it’s so uncomfortable.”*

**IRC6’s** testimony illustrates the daily struggles detainees faced due to the lack of adequate sleeping arrangements. The need to rotate sleeping schedules added an additional layer of stress, preventing detainees from getting proper rest, which in turn

heightened tensions. The feeling of being “suffocated” by the overcrowding was a common sentiment among detainees, further underscoring the psychological toll these conditions took on those held in the center.

In both cases, overcrowding made it nearly impossible for detainees to maintain even a minimal level of comfort. The cramped conditions not only posed immediate physical challenges, such as disrupted sleep and constant discomfort, but they also contributed to an overall atmosphere of instability and stress. Detainees, already in a vulnerable state, were further burdened by the daily strain of living in such overcrowded and claustrophobic environments.

Furthermore, the lack of proper ventilation and overcrowding facilitated the spread of infectious diseases, as many detainees shared close quarters without sufficient space to isolate individuals who were sick. Combined with inadequate access to healthcare, the risk of disease outbreaks became a major concern, especially in the summer months, when temperatures soared and the already poor air quality inside the rooms worsened.

The persistent overcrowding in both the İzmir and Aydın Removal Centers illustrates a failure to provide humane living conditions for detainees. It not only violated basic human rights but also jeopardized the physical and mental well-being of those held in detention. These conditions fostered an environment where physical health deteriorated, and emotional distress became the norm, highlighting the urgent need for reforms to alleviate overcrowding and improve the overall living conditions in these facilities.

## 4.2. Inadequate Healthcare Access

There have been numerous claims suggesting that healthcare access in both the İzmir Harmandalı and Aydın Removal Centers may be grossly inadequate, potentially posing significant risks to the physical and mental well-being of detainees. According to some reports, detainees often have to wait for extended periods to see a doctor, and when medical attention is finally provided, it is frequently described as insufficient or inappropriate for the severity of their conditions. Allegedly, this lack of timely and effective healthcare has exacerbated existing medical problems, leaving chronic

conditions untreated. Furthermore, claims have been made that detainees with serious medical needs are regularly denied access to specialized care, leading to the deterioration of their health and contributing to a sense of frustration and neglect.

A recurring theme in interviews with detainees is the alleged delay in accessing healthcare services. Detainees have reported that requests for medical assistance often go unanswered for days or even weeks, and when medical personnel finally respond, the treatment provided is often said to be limited to basic pain relief, regardless of the underlying health issue. Some detainees expressed frustration with what they described as a dismissive approach to their healthcare needs, stating that medical staff seemed to focus on temporary symptom relief rather than addressing the root cause of their health problems. The prolonged waiting times and allegedly inadequate responses may reflect the broader strain on healthcare resources within these centers, where overcrowding likely compounds the difficulty in delivering timely and comprehensive care.

There are also claims that detainees with chronic conditions—such as diabetes, kidney disease, or respiratory issues—face particularly significant dangers due to the alleged lack of proper medical treatment. Some reports suggest that without access to necessary medications or specialized care, the health of these individuals deteriorates rapidly, potentially placing their lives at risk. The combination of overcrowded, unsanitary living conditions and the alleged failure to provide adequate healthcare reportedly creates an environment in which preventable complications arise, further endangering detainees' well-being.

- **Example (İzmir Removal Center):** IRC9 reportedly struggled to receive adequate medical treatment for an injury sustained while fleeing his home country. He described receiving minimal attention for his condition:

*“I hurt my foot when I was escaping from my home country, but here they just give me painkillers and nothing else. I asked to see a doctor, but it’s been weeks, and no one has come. My foot is still swollen, and I don’t know what to do.”*

IRC9’s experience, if accurate, highlights a potentially systemic issue in the removal center’s healthcare system, where injuries and chronic conditions may be met with only superficial care. His account raises concerns that detainees could be at risk of

developing long-term health problems due to untreated injuries or insufficient medical attention.

- **Example (İzmir Removal Center): IRC13** described her difficulties managing a serious chronic condition. Having undergone a kidney transplant before her detention, **IRC13** claimed that she required regular medication and dietary restrictions, but her needs were reportedly ignored upon her arrival at the Aydın Removal Center:

*“I had a kidney transplant, but since I got here, I haven’t received my medication. I keep telling them, but they don’t listen. The food here isn’t good for my condition, and I’m worried my health is getting worse. No one cares.”*

**IRC13’s** account, though unverified, suggests a potential failure to provide adequate medical care for detainees with chronic conditions, which could lead to life-threatening complications. If true, her inability to access essential immunosuppressant medication could result in kidney failure or transplant rejection. Her claim that “no one cares” points to the broader frustration and sense of neglect that many detainees reportedly feel, particularly those who rely on consistent medical care for survival.

The absence of adequate healthcare, as described by some detainees, may not only jeopardize physical health but could also exacerbate psychological distress. For individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions or those who develop anxiety and depression due to the harsh detention conditions, access to mental health services is reportedly limited or non-existent. Several detainees have described feelings of hopelessness and despair, compounded by the lack of attention to their medical needs, leaving them to suffer both physically and mentally without recourse.

In both the İzmir and Aydın Removal Centers, the healthcare infrastructure reportedly falls short of meeting the demands of the detainee population. According to some accounts, there is no system in place to prioritize vulnerable individuals or those with chronic conditions, resulting in detainees enduring untreated injuries and escalating psychological distress. The healthcare services provided, if the claims are accurate, are often inadequate—not only in terms of immediate medical attention but also in the

follow-up care required for long-term or chronic conditions. This could lead to prolonged suffering for detainees who might otherwise recover with appropriate treatment.

### 4.3. Poor Hygiene and Sanitation

Hygiene and sanitation conditions in both the İzmir Harmandalı and Aydın Removal Centers have been described as extremely poor by the interviewed detainees. Numerous detainees have reported widespread issues, including insect infestations in living quarters and even in the food provided. Bathrooms were said to be frequently clogged and unclean, contributing to unsanitary conditions that exacerbated health risks and psychological distress. Access to basic hygiene products, such as soap and clean water, was reportedly limited, with several detainees expressing frustration over the inability to maintain personal hygiene.

Detainees' accounts of these conditions suggest a serious breakdown in facility maintenance and hygiene protocols, though it is difficult to confirm the extent of the problem without independent verification. These conditions, if accurate, could pose significant health risks, particularly in overcrowded environments where infectious diseases can spread rapidly.

- **Example (İzmir Removal Center):** Hygiene concerns were a common theme among detainees at the İzmir Removal Center. **IRC1** described his experience, claiming that the cleanliness of the food and living areas was highly questionable:

*“The food they give us is full of insects, and the places where we eat are dirty. There are bugs everywhere, in the rooms and even in the food. We tell the guards, but nothing changes.”*

- **Example (İzmir Removal Center):** **IRC10** echoed similar concerns about unsanitary conditions in her living quarters. According to her account, the room she shared with others was not only overcrowded but also infested with insects, which caused physical discomfort and distress:

*“We sleep two people to a bed, and sometimes on the floor. The room is full of insects, and my brother and I have been bitten all over our bodies. The bathrooms are clogged, so we can’t even take a shower. It’s disgusting.”*

At the Aydın Removal Center, reports of poor hygiene and sanitation were also widespread. Detainees highlighted the lack of access to essential hygiene products, particularly soap, and the scarcity of clean water. These issues were said to disproportionately affect families with young children, who are particularly vulnerable to infections and diseases in unsanitary environments.

- **Example (Aydın Removal Center): ARC18** shared her experience of living in a container with no roof for several months. According to her, basic hygiene provisions were scarce:

*“For four months, I stayed in a container with no roof, with about 50 other people. We had no beds, just blankets on the floor, and we were given a small bar of soap that lasted two or three days. After that, we couldn’t wash ourselves. It was terrible.”*

#### 4.4. Legal and Language Barriers

Numerous reports from detainees at both the İzmir Harmandalı and Aydın Removal Centers suggest that significant language barriers hindered their ability to navigate the legal processes surrounding their detention and potential deportation. According to these accounts, the absence of professional interpreters left many detainees unaware of their legal rights and unable to effectively communicate with their legal representatives. These language challenges reportedly prevented many detainees from submitting petitions for international protection or mounting an adequate defense in deportation proceedings.

Some detainees claimed that legal consultations often took place without any interpretation services, leading to miscommunication or complete confusion. This issue was particularly problematic for those unfamiliar with Turkish or English, who found themselves isolated in a system that requires precise and clear communication. Without

access to interpreters, detainees may have been unable to understand critical legal information, such as their right to apply for asylum, appeal a deportation order, or access legal aid.

- **Example (İzmir Removal Center): IRC9** described the challenges he faced when trying to apply for international protection. According to his account, he struggled to communicate with his lawyer due to the lack of a common language:

*“I want to apply for asylum, but my lawyer doesn’t speak my language, and I don’t understand Turkish. I don’t know what’s happening with my case, and no one can explain it to me. I feel lost.”*

**IRC9’s** account highlights the potential consequences of inadequate translation services. Without understanding the legal process, detainees like **ARC9** may feel powerless and disconnected from critical decisions regarding their future.

- **Example (Aydın Removal Center):** Another detainee, **ARC20**, reportedly faced similar issues after being transferred to Aydın. **ARC20** described signing legal documents, including papers that may have been related to his voluntary return, without understanding their content:

*“I was transferred from another center, but here, they don’t have anyone who speaks my language. I signed some papers, but I don’t know what they were. I’m scared that I might have agreed to something without knowing.”*

**ARC20’s** claim suggests that detainees may have signed documents, including voluntary return forms, without fully understanding the implications. If true, this raises questions about the voluntariness of such agreements and whether detainees were adequately informed of their rights.

Additionally, there are claims that detainees in both centers were sometimes pressured into signing documents without proper explanation or access to legal counsel in a language they could understand. These documents, often written in Turkish, were reportedly presented to detainees without interpreters present, potentially leaving them in a vulnerable position where they felt compelled to comply without full comprehension of the consequences.



#### 4.5. Pressure to Sign Voluntary Return Forms

Several detainees in both the İzmir Harmandalı and Aydın Removal Centers have claimed that they were pressured into signing voluntary return forms without being fully informed about their legal rights or the potential consequences of deportation. According to these accounts, the conditions under which detainees were asked to sign these forms raise concerns about whether the decisions were truly voluntary or coerced. Detainees alleged that they were given little to no explanation about the documents they were signing, and in some cases, felt they had no real choice in the matter.

These claims, if accurate, suggest that detainees may have been placed in situations where the psychological pressure to comply was significant. The lack of clear communication regarding their rights, combined with the threat of indefinite detention if they refused to sign, allegedly led some individuals to agree to deportation against their will. This practice, if confirmed, would raise serious concerns about whether detainees' consent to voluntary return was genuinely informed, as required under international law.

- **Example (İzmir Removal Center)** : Several detainees at the İzmir Removal Center expressed concerns that they were being pushed into signing voluntary return forms under duress. **IRC9** shared his experience:

*“They keep telling me to sign a paper to go back to my country, but I don’t want to. They say if I don’t sign, I’ll be stuck here forever. I feel like I don’t have a choice.”*

**IRC9’s** account suggests that detainees may have felt coerced into signing the forms due to perceived threats of indefinite detention. If these claims are accurate, they highlight the pressure detainees may experience when asked to agree to voluntary return, especially if they are not fully informed of their rights or the alternatives available to them.

- **Example (Aydın Removal Center)**: At the Aydın Removal Center, detainee **ARC21** recounted a similar experience of being pressured to sign voluntary return papers. According to her account:

*“A few days before you came, they called us into the office in groups and told us we had to sign the papers to go back, or we’d be deported anyway. They didn’t explain anything, and some people were scared, so they signed.”*

**ARC21’s** claims raise concerns about the use of group meetings to pressure detainees into signing return forms. Without adequate explanations or legal support, detainees may have felt that they had no real alternative but to sign, especially if they feared forced deportation regardless of their consent.

These reports point to a potential pattern where detainees may be pressured into making decisions about their deportation without being fully informed of their rights. In both centers, detainees allegedly reported that they were presented with voluntary return forms and were not given the opportunity to consult with legal counsel or receive detailed explanations about the consequences of signing. The pressure to sign, coupled with the threat of indefinite detention or forced deportation, may have led some detainees to feel that they had no choice but to comply.

#### 4.6. Insufficient Support for Vulnerable Groups

Reports from detainees suggest that vulnerable groups, including families with children, individuals with disabilities, and those with serious medical or psychological needs, may have received insufficient care and support at both the İzmir Harmandalı and Aydın Removal Centers. According to these accounts, the centers failed to provide the tailored assistance these groups require, which allegedly added to their distress and made their experience in detention particularly challenging. Detainees described conditions that appeared to overlook the specific needs of these vulnerable populations, leaving them without the necessary accommodations or medical attention.

- **Example (İzmir Removal Center):** IRC11 voiced concerns about the impact of the detention environment on her children’s health. According to her account, the conditions in the center, particularly the heat and insect infestations, were

negatively affecting her children, and they had not received the necessary medical attention:

*“My children are sick, and the rooms are so hot. My daughter has sores all over her body from the insects, and no one will help us. We’ve been here for over a month, and they haven’t seen a doctor. I don’t know what to do.”*

**IRC11’s** claims highlight the challenges that families with young children may face in a detention setting, particularly in relation to inadequate medical care. If accurate, her account raises concerns about the lack of attention given to the health and well-being of children, who are especially vulnerable to harsh living conditions.

- **Example (İzmir Removal Center):** In the İzmir Removal Center **IRC16** shared his fears regarding the lack of support for his disabled brother, who is deaf and unable to speak. According to **IRC16**, the center did not provide the necessary care or accommodations for his brother, leaving them both feeling anxious and unsure of how to cope:

*“My brother is deaf and can’t speak, and no one here understands how to help him. He needs special care, but they don’t have anything for him. I’m scared for his safety.”*

**IRC16’s** account suggests that the center may have lacked the specialized resources needed to accommodate detainees with disabilities. If true, this raises concerns about the capacity of the detention facilities to properly care for individuals with physical or sensory disabilities, who may require additional support and services that were reportedly not provided.

The conditions described in both centers appear to have been particularly harsh for families with children and individuals with disabilities. According to these reports, the centers did not offer the kind of targeted assistance necessary to address the unique needs of these groups, leaving detainees to manage challenging circumstances without appropriate medical care, social support, or disability accommodations. Families with young children, for example, allegedly faced overcrowded and unsanitary conditions that

posed significant health risks, while individuals with disabilities reportedly did not receive the specialized care or communication assistance they required.

## 5. Conclusion

The cumulative findings from these visits highlight a range of systemic issues within the İzmir Harmandalı and Aydın Removal Centers. While the specific details of the detainees' accounts remain unverified, the consistency of the complaints suggests potential violations of basic human rights standards, particularly regarding conditions of detention, healthcare, legal representation, and the treatment of vulnerable groups. These concerns are not only relevant under international law but also raise questions about compliance with Turkey's national legal framework governing the treatment of detainees, including its obligations under Turkey's Constitution and relevant national legislation such as the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP).

### 5.1. Right to Adequate Healthcare and Sanitation

The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) (No. 6458) outlines Turkey's obligations towards foreigners under detention, including the provision of healthcare services. Article 59 of the LFIP guarantees that detained foreigners have access to healthcare services and that their basic needs are to be provided during their stay at removal centers. According to claims, the failure to meet these standards, such as the reports of inadequate medical care and unsanitary conditions, could represent a breach of Turkey's obligations under its own national law as well as under international standards.

Internationally, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), in Article 12, guarantees the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The Nelson Mandela Rules (UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners) further emphasize the requirement for states to ensure that

prisoners or detainees receive healthcare equivalent to that available in the community. Reports of detainees with chronic conditions left untreated in both the İzmir and Aydın centers suggest potential violations of both national and international obligations.

Turkey's domestic obligations under Article 17 of the Turkish Constitution further reinforce the protection of individuals from inhuman or degrading treatment, which includes ensuring proper healthcare and hygienic conditions in detention. Article 17 explicitly prohibits torture and mistreatment and mandates the protection of individuals' physical and mental well-being.

## 5.2. Legal Representation and Access to Justice

Article 81 of the LFIP guarantees the right of detainees to access legal representation and assistance in removal centers. Despite this provision, detainees have claimed that they faced significant language barriers and lacked access to interpreters, which hindered their ability to understand legal proceedings or submit petitions for asylum or international protection.

The absence of adequate interpretation services could constitute a violation of Article 31 of the Turkish Constitution, which protects the right to legal assistance, and Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which mandates that all individuals in legal proceedings must be provided with an interpreter if they do not understand the language of the proceedings. Similarly, Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) guarantees the right to a fair trial, including the right to access legal assistance and to understand the charges brought against an individual, which would be impossible without translation services.

If detainees were unable to comprehend the legal processes or were pressured into signing documents, such as voluntary return forms, without full knowledge of their rights, this would represent a violation of both international and Turkish law.

### 5.3. Non-Refoulement and Informed Consent

Turkey is bound by the principle of non-refoulement, which is enshrined in Article 4 of the LFIP. This principle prevents the deportation of individuals to countries where they may face persecution or serious harm. The detainee reports of pressure to sign voluntary return forms raise concerns about compliance with this critical provision of the LFIP, which mirrors the 1951 Refugee Convention, to which Turkey is a signatory. Article 33 of the 1951 Convention prohibits the return of refugees to places where their life or freedom may be threatened.

Similarly, Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and Article 3 of the Convention Against Torture (CAT) prohibit the deportation of individuals to countries where they could face torture, inhuman, or degrading treatment. If detainees in Turkey's removal centers are being coerced into signing voluntary return forms without informed consent, and without understanding their right to seek asylum, this would constitute a breach of these international obligations, as well as Turkey's national legal frameworks.

### 5.4. Treatment of Vulnerable Groups

The treatment of vulnerable groups in detention, particularly families with children, individuals with disabilities, and those with medical or psychological needs, is of particular concern in both centers. Turkey's LFIP, under Article 59, mandates that vulnerable individuals, including minors, must be treated with special consideration in removal centers. This reflects Turkey's international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which require that children and persons with disabilities receive special care and protection, especially in detention settings.

The CRC obliges Turkey to ensure that the best interests of the child are the primary consideration in all actions concerning children, including those in detention. Reports that children in these centers are suffering from health issues and are not receiving

appropriate medical attention or support could indicate a violation of Article 3 of the CRC, as well as Article 24, which guarantees children the right to healthcare.

The CRPD mandates that persons with disabilities must be provided with appropriate accommodations and support to live with dignity and autonomy. The alleged lack of specialized care for individuals with disabilities, such as those reported in Aydın, would potentially violate these obligations under both Turkish law and international conventions.



## Annex: List of interviewed detainees

### **İzmir Removal Center**

1. IRC1, Male
2. IRC2, Male
3. IRC3, Male
4. IRC4, Male
5. IRC5, Male
6. IRC6, Male
7. IRC7, Male
8. IRC8, Male
9. IRC9, Male
10. IRC10, Male
11. IRC11, Female
12. IRC12, Female
13. IRC13, Female
14. IRC14, Female
15. IRC15, Female
16. IRC16, Male
17. IRC17, Male

### **Aydın Removal Center**

18. ARC18, Female
19. ARC19, Male
20. ARC20, Male
21. ARC21, Male
22. ARC22, Male

Mültecilerle Dayanışma Derneđi / Association for Solidarity with Refugees is a civil society organization that has been carrying out rights-based work since 2008 to ensure asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants affected by forced migration can access their rights and services with dignity, in line with universal human rights, as well as international and national law.

**Mültecilerle Dayanışma Derneđi**  
**Association for Solidarity with Refugees**

Address: Uđur Mahallesi 848 Sokak No:16

Konak / İzmir / Türkiye

Tel : 0090 232 483 54 21

E-mail: bilgi@multeci.org.tr

Web: multeci.org.tr

