

MAY 2025

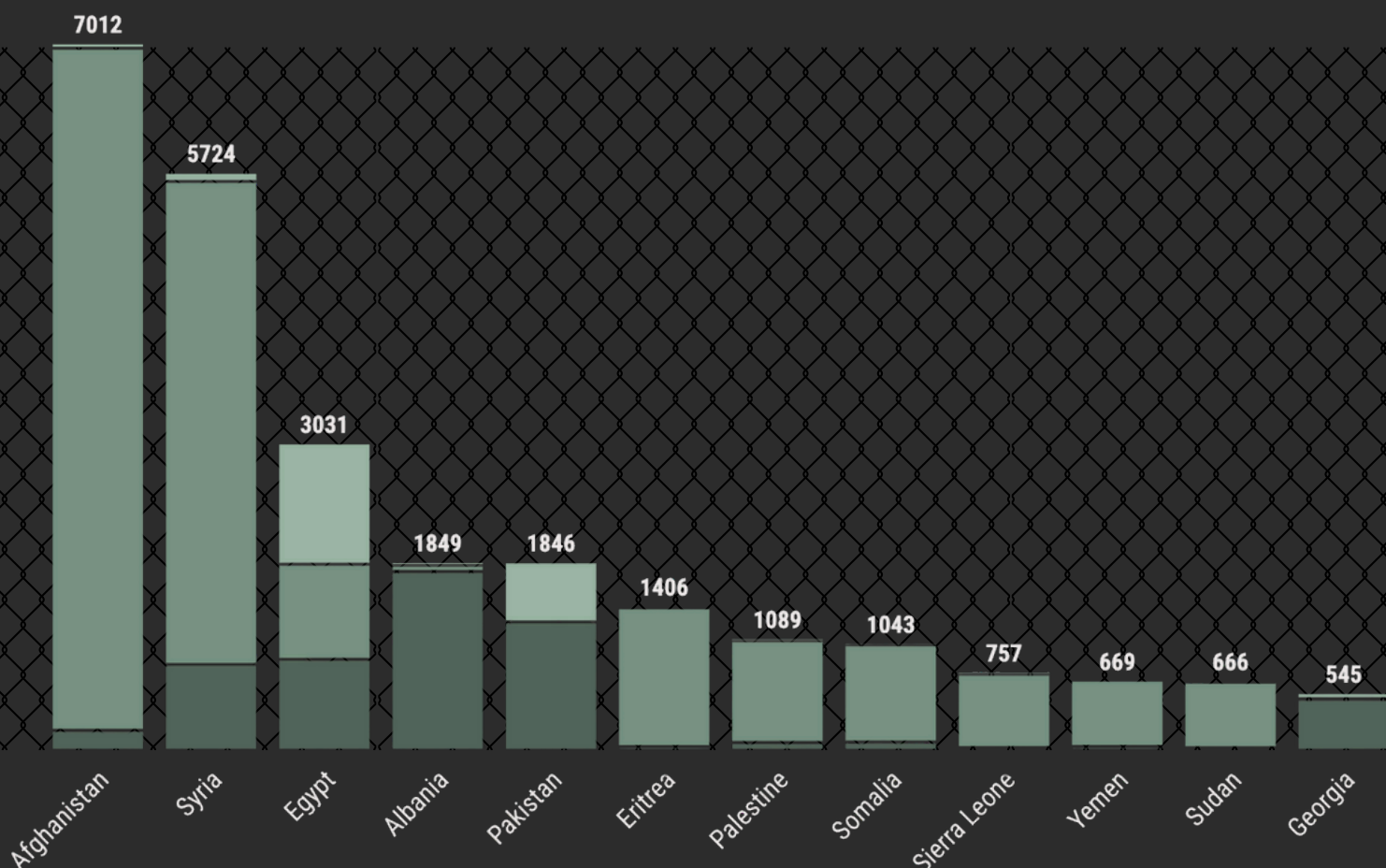
POLICY NOTE

# IMMIGRATION DETENTION STATISTICS IN GREECE IN 2024

Systematic deportation and detention orders  
against refugees

Main nationalities subject to immigration detention: 2024

Return (L 3907/2011)    Deportation (L 3386/2005)    Asylum (L 4939/2022)



# Immigration detention statistics in Greece in 2024

## Systematic deportation and detention orders against refugees



### Returns & deportations

**31,629** Hellenic Police decisions: **12,390** return decisions (Return Directive) and **19,239** deportation decisions (derogation from the Directive). Main nationalities are by far Afghanistan (7,095) and Syria (6,011)

**5,865** returns of third-country nationals, of which 4,330 concern nationals of Albania and Georgia, not represented in arrivals via Evros, Central and Eastern Mediterranean



### Review of return & deportation orders

**306** decisions challenged through an administrative appeal to the Hellenic Police (0.97%)

**3.2%** approval rate in appeals before the Hellenic Police



### Immigration detention

**29,233** detention orders: **7,608** in return procedures (Return Directive), **19,148** in deportation procedures (derogation from the Directive) and **2,477** in the asylum process (Reception Conditions Directive)

**99.5%** detention rate in deportation procedures

**61.4%** detention rate in return procedures



### Judicial review of detention

**4,130** orders challenged through objections in administrative courts (14.1%)

**42.2%** approval rate in objections before administrative courts

**0.96%** rate of detention orders quashed in *ex officio* review by the same courts based on the same provisions



### Detention conditions

**1,463** people detained in pre-removal centres at the end of 2024, of whom **557** in Amygdaleza and **289** in Paranesti. Main countries include Egypt (487 detainees) and Pakistan (350 detainees)

**163** people detained in police stations at the end of 2024

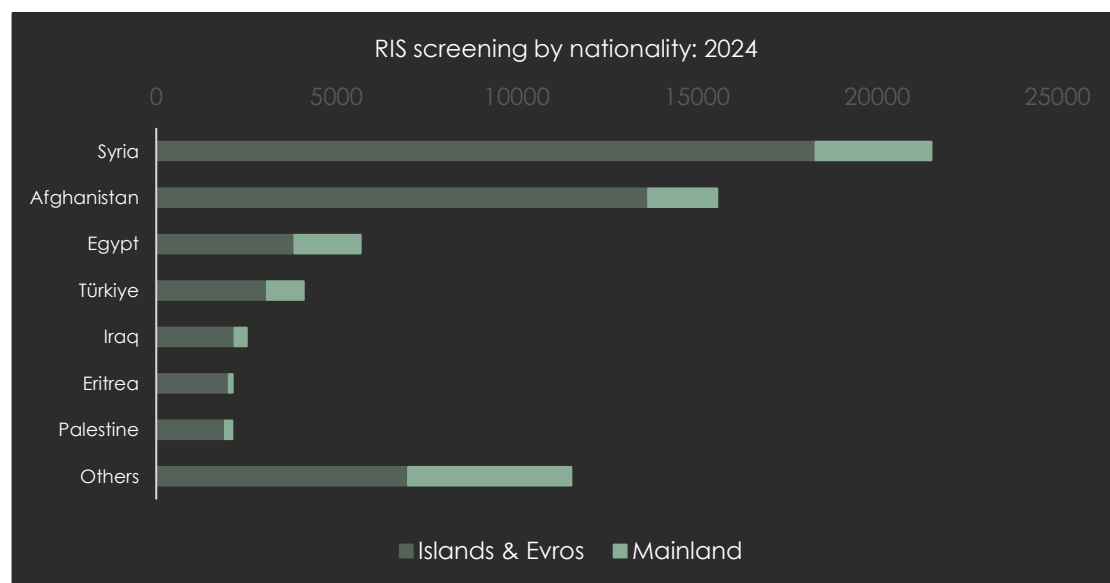
This note analyses official statistics on return, deportation and immigration detention in Greece in 2024, made available by the Greek authorities in response to parliamentary questions.<sup>1</sup> The figures confirm for yet another year a persisting arbitrary practice of systematic use of deportation and immigration detention against refugees and migrants, even for countries where returns are neither permissible nor feasible in practice such as Syria and Afghanistan.

## Registered arrivals in Greece

Official data refer to a total of 62,053 arrivals in Greece over the past year.

Greek law provides that people arriving or present in the country without documentation must be immediately referred to the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum for screening, prior to an asylum or return procedure.<sup>2</sup> The Hellenic Police continues to explicitly admit that “all – almost – foreigners entering our country make an asylum application during the reception and identification procedure”.<sup>3</sup>

During the same period, the RIS screened a total of 65,072 people, of whom 8,228 in Evros, 43,697 in the in the Closed Controlled Access Centres (CCAC) on the islands and 13,147 on the mainland. The main nationalities screened by the RIS were as follows:



Source: Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Reception and identification statistics, Dec 2024, [here](#) and [here](#)

The main countries of origin of persons screened by the RIS were Syria (21,500) and Afghanistan (15,561). These two nationalities made for more than 50% of the population undergoing screening.

<sup>1</sup> Hellenic Parliament, *Στοιχεία διοικητικής κράτησης και απελάσεις μεταναστών και αιτούντων άσυλο*, available [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Article 38(1) Greek Asylum Code, L 4939/2022, Gov. Gazette A' 111/10.06.2022.

<sup>3</sup> Hellenic Police Headquarters, Reply to parliamentary question, 7017/4/27283-στ', 1 April 2025, available [here](#); 7017/4/26888-γ', 13 August 2024, available [here](#).

## Return procedures

The Hellenic Police issued a total of 31,629 removal orders from the Greek territory over the past year, up from 29,869 in 2023. Throughout 2024, it took 12,390 return decisions pursuant to L 3907/2011 transposing the Return Directive and 19,239 deportation decisions under L 3386/2005 in derogation from the Return Directive. This means that the majority of removal orders were taken in derogation from the Return Directive.

We continue to stress that police authorities systematically circumvent EU law by indiscriminately issuing deportation decisions against newly arrived people who seek asylum and thereby have a right to remain in Greece.<sup>4</sup> Data show that the main countries of origin of persons subject to deportation orders in derogation from the Return Directive were by far Afghanistan and Syria, even though the overwhelming majority of nationals of those countries who apply for asylum are recognised as refugees:

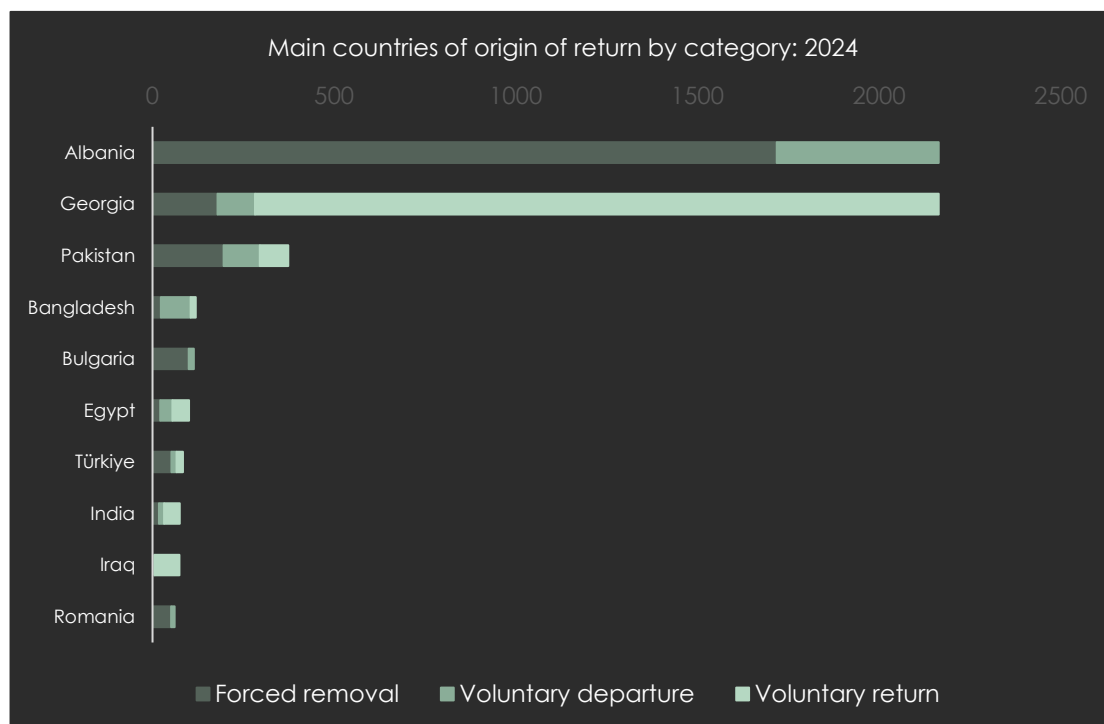


Source: Ministry of Citizen Protection, Reply to parliamentary question, 1 Apr 2025

Throughout the past year, Greece carried out a total of 5,865 returns and deportations. This represents a decrease from 6,340 in 2023, despite a higher number of return and deportation orders.

Out of the 5,865 removals carried out last year, 2,550 were forced removals, 944 were voluntary departures within a set deadline under a return decision, and 2,371 were voluntary returns supported by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM):

<sup>4</sup> RSA, *New Pact on Migration and Asylum: Impermissible regression of standards for asylum seekers*, July 2024, 21-22, available [here](#); *Persisting systematic detention of asylum seekers in Greece*, June 2022, available [here](#).



Source: Ministry of Citizen Protection, Reply to parliamentary question, 1 Apr 2025

Official statistics demonstrate that the vast majority of returns and deportations – nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total – carried out in 2024 solely concern nationals of Albania (2,165) and Georgia (2,165), not represented in the data on arrivals via Evros, the Central and Eastern Mediterranean. Most returns were forced in the case of Albania, while in the case of Georgia most were voluntary and implemented through IOM.

Main countries of origin of persons deported from Greece included again two European Union Member States: Bulgaria (114) and Romania (61).

## Administrative appeal against the return or deportation order

Deportation or return decisions issued by police authorities may be challenged by an administrative appeal before the Hellenic Police within a short deadline of five days.

Statistics on administrative appeals against deportation or return orders still reflect systemic deficiencies in relation to access to this remedy. Out of 31.629 decisions issued by the Hellenic Police in 2024, only 306 were appealed: merely 0.97% of the total.

Important contrast on the accessibility of remedies may be offered by the asylum procedure, where the Asylum Service issues a return or deportation order together with the rejection of the asylum application, as a rule.<sup>5</sup> In 2024, the Asylum Service issued 10,550 rejections on the merits and 7,330 inadmissibility decisions, while a total of 12,039 appeals against such decisions were lodged with the Appeals Authority.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Article 87(8) Greek Asylum Code.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Migration and Asylum, *ΣΤΑΤΙΣΤΙΚΑ*, December 2024, 8-10.

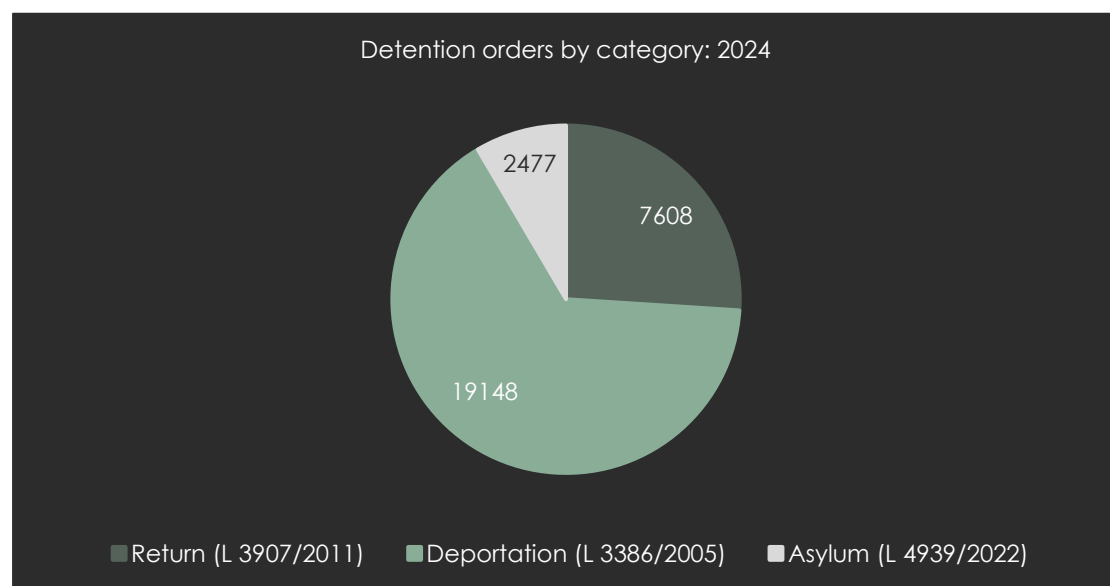
The persisting, complete absence of free legal assistance by the state poses a serious barrier on the accessibility of the remedy to persons facing deportation or return, in contravention of Greece's obligations.<sup>7</sup> More than three years since the Council of the European Union recommendations on ensuring "effective access to free legal assistance",<sup>8</sup> Greece introduced legislation with a view to creating a free legal assistance scheme for people in immigration detention.<sup>9</sup> Such a scheme is still not in operation in practice, however.

In addition, our serious concerns about the effectiveness of the administrative appeal before the Hellenic Police in reviewing the legality of deportation or detention orders remain valid.<sup>10</sup>

These concerns are corroborated by official Hellenic Police figures per which 294 administrative appeals were dismissed and only 10 were granted in 2024, i.e. only 3.8% of the very few administrative appeals lodged during the year.

## Resort to immigration detention

The Hellenic Police took 29,233 detention orders in 2024.



Source: Ministry of Citizen Protection, Reply to parliamentary question, 1 Apr 2025

Official figures for 2024 show that Greece continued to impose pre-removal detention systematically in removal proceedings and not as a measure of last resort, as required

<sup>7</sup> Article 28(4) L 3907/2011.

<sup>8</sup> Council Implementing Decision setting out a recommendation on addressing the deficiencies identified in the 2021 evaluation of Greece on the application of the Schengen acquis in the field of return, 13662/21, 10 November 2021, paras 1-2, available [here](#). See also European Commission, Reply to written question P-5159/2021, 19 January 2022, available [here](#).

<sup>9</sup> Article 39(2) L 3907/2011, inserted by Article 46 L 5130/2024.

<sup>10</sup> RSA, *Immigration detention in Greece in 2023: Refugees arbitrarily deprived of their liberty despite unfeasible deportations*, May 2024, 5, 8-9, available [here](#); *Immigration detention in 2022: Sharp rise in detention orders, no access to remedies and legal aid in Greece*, April 2023, 4, available [here](#).

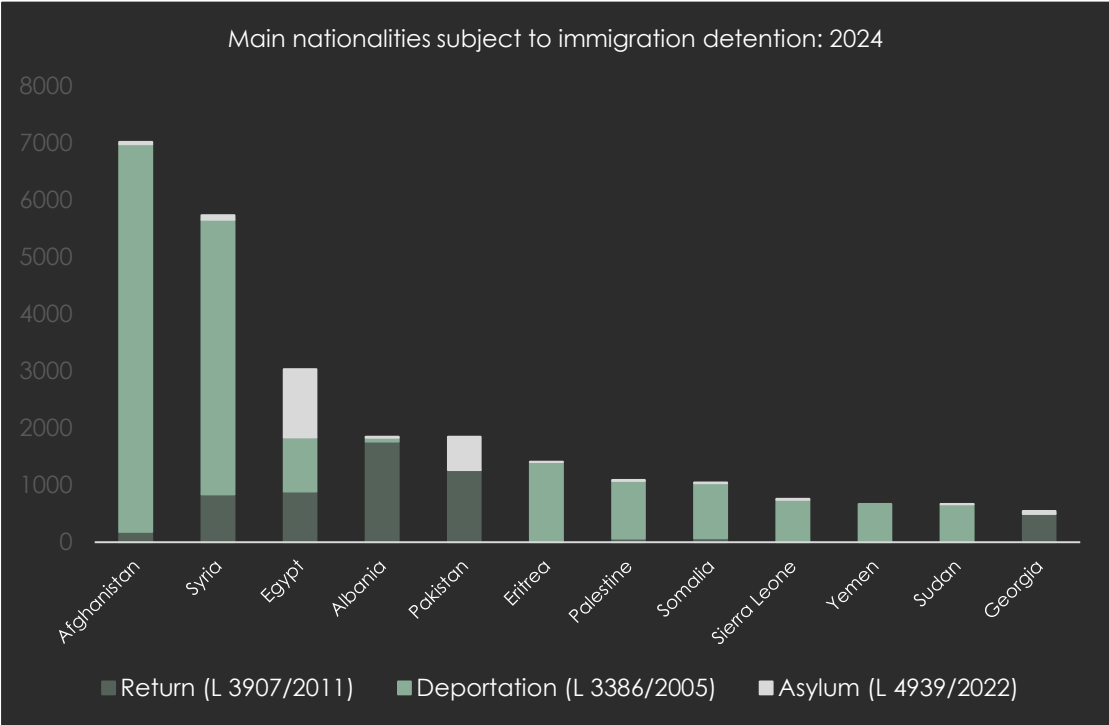
by international, EU and domestic law. In fact, deprivation of liberty is an almost automatic adjunct to deportation orders issued under L 3386/2005 in derogation from Return Directive safeguards. 99.5% of deportation orders were accompanied by detention, as opposed to 61.4% of return orders under L 3907/2011 transposing the Return Directive:



Source: Ministry of Citizen Protection, Reply to parliamentary question, 1 Apr 2025

**Detention with no prospect of removal**

The main nationalities of people subjected to immigration detention in 2024 were Afghanistan (7,012) and Syria (5,724). The figures raise severe concerns as to the legality and purpose of Greece's recourse to deprivation of liberty:



Source: Ministry of Citizen Protection, Reply to parliamentary question, 1 Apr 2025

Pre-removal detention may only be imposed where there is a reasonable prospect of removal from the Greek territory, among other conditions. Yet, in the case of people

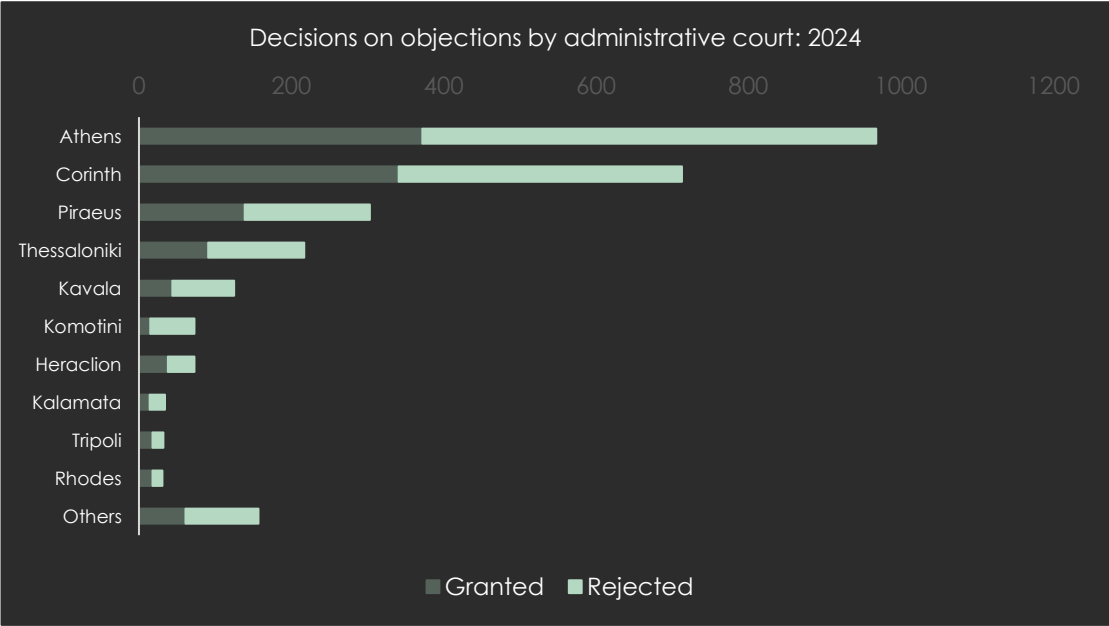
originating from countries such as Afghanistan, Syria, Eritrea, Palestine, Yemen or Sudan, pre-removal detention was used without any removal prospect either to the country of origin or to Türkiye. We recall that the percentage of positive Asylum Service decisions remain extremely high and exceed 99% for several of the above countries.

**Judicial review of detention**

4,130 objections against detention were lodged in 2024, corresponding to 14.1% of the total number of detention orders. This means that less than one out of five detention orders were challenged before the courts. The aforementioned barriers to access to the administrative appeal against return and deportation decisions, coupled with the persisting complete absence of free legal assistance, undermine access to this remedy.

Still in 2024, the overwhelming majority of objections against detention were lodged before the Administrative Court of Athens (2,248), followed by the Administrative Courts of Corinth (797), Piraeus (317) and Thessaloniki (222).

42.2% of objections against detention examined on the merits by the administrative courts were granted in 2024:



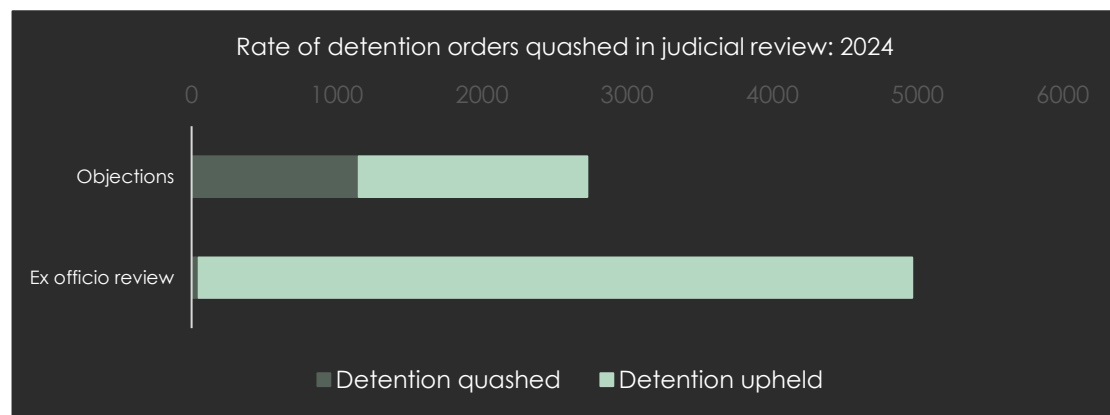
Source: Ministry of Justice, Reply to parliamentary question, 21 Feb 2025

For yet another year, sharp disparities persisted between judicial review of detention in objections and *ex officio* judicial review of extensions of detention orders based on domestic asylum and return legislation, even though these concern the very same provisions and are carried out by the same courts.

Ex officio review of legality of immigration detention: 2024					
	Asylum (L 4939/2022)		Return (L 3907/2011)		Quashed percentage
	Quashed	Upheld	Quashed	Upheld	
Corinth	1	2,606	0	0	0.03%
Kavala	3	593	0	190	0.38%
Komotini	4	391	0	69	0.86%
Athens	0	411	33	442	3.72%
Others	0	72	7	143	3.15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4,073</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>0.96%</b>

Source: Ministry of Justice, Reply to parliamentary question, 21 Feb 2025

These figures demonstrate enduring, manifest discrepancies in the operation of existing mechanisms for judicial review of the legality of detention. The administrative courts quashed 42.2% of detention orders brought before them through objections but found less than 1% of orders they reviewed *ex officio* to be unlawful.

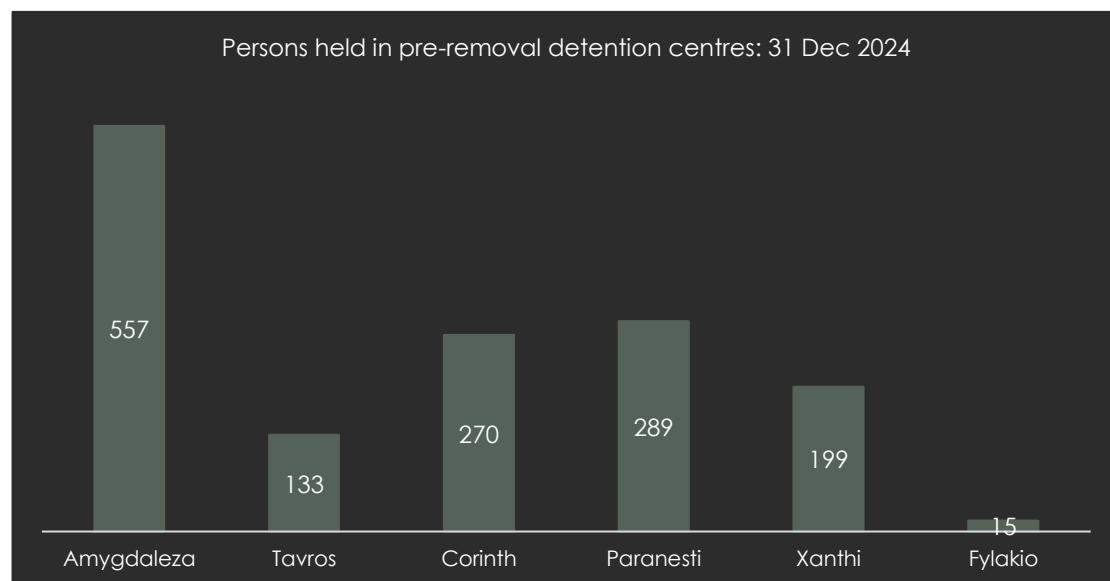


Source: Ministry of Justice, Reply to parliamentary question, 21 Feb 2025

There is therefore a pressing need for free legal assistance in line with EU law and with the assurances of the Greek government, with a view to ensuring fair and effective review of detention. Greek authorities, however, have yet to introduce a free legal assistance scheme for persons held in immigration detention.

## Detention conditions

1,626 people were in immigration detention at the end of 2024 – a slight decrease compared to the previous year. Of those, 1,463 were detained in six pre-removal detention centres and 163 in police stations throughout Greece:



Source: Ministry of Citizen Protection, Reply to parliamentary question, 1 Apr 2025

Egypt (487) was the main country of origin of people detained at the end of last year, mainly in Paranesti (185) and Amygdaleza (142). The second main country of origin was Pakistan (350), whose nationals were mainly held in Corinth (156) and Amygdaleza (126).

Türkiye and Afghanistan are among the top five countries of origin of people in immigration detention at the end of 2024.

Data provided in reply to parliamentary questions refer to deployment of Health Units SA (Ανώτατη Εταιρία Μονάδων Υγείας, AEMY) personnel in the pre-removal detention centres at the end of 2024 as follows:

AEMY staff by pre-removal centre: 31 Dec 2024						
Profile	Amygdaleza	Tavros	Corinth	Paranesti	Xanthi	Fylakio
Doctors	2	1	2	1	0	1
Nurses	4	3	3	3	1	3
Psychologists	2	1	1	1	1	1
Social workers	2	1	2	1	1	1
Interpreters	2	2	2	1	1	1
Health visitors	2	1	1	1	0	0
Administrative staff	1	1	1	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>

Source: Ministry of Citizen Protection, Reply to parliamentary question, 1 Apr 2025

These figures reflect constant shortages in health care for people held in immigration detention. For instance, no doctor was present in Xanthi, where almost 200 people were detained, while Paranesti had one doctor for almost 300 people.



<https://rsaegean.org/en/immigration-detention-statistics-in-greece-in-2024/>



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