More than 1,350 Syrian nationals have expressed their desire to be repatriated. 755 have already left Cyprus

The Minister of Interior Mr. Ioannou and the Deputy Minister of Migration and International Protection held a joint conference to present the government's strategy for migration management and analyse the measures taken up to date to address migration in Cyprus.

For the disproportionate migratory pressure on Cyprus, a new approach with holistic intervention. The measures taken focused on reducing arrivals, speeding up the processing of applications, improving infrastructure and increasing the number of returns. More people leaving than arriving to Cyprus. The Interior Minister referred to improved levels of control of persons arriving to Cyprus through Istanbul Airport, as well as the information campaign conducted in Sub-Saharan African countries on the realities on the island in relation to irregular migrants.

The minister further referred to the Minister the intensification of controls in workplaces and in the community to detect irregular migrants, but also to the immediate withdrawal of benefits for persons whose asylum application is definitively rejected. At the same time, the minister cited the reinforcement of the Asylum Service with additional staff, resulting, on the one hand, in the shortening of the time for the examination of applications from 12-24 months to between 1-3 months and, on the other hand, in the processing of a significant number of pending applications. In terms of return, the minister referred to the revision of the voluntary returns programme and the inclusion of a financial incentive ranging from ?1,000 to ?1,500 which have resulted in the multiplication of returns compared to 2022 in the years 2023 and 2024.

Reversing the negative picture. Reducing by 69% the number of asylum seekers between 2022 and 2024. In particular, the reduction of African applicants exceeded 85% compared to 2022, while the increased arrivals by sea of Syrian nationals were effectively addressed by the decision to suspend the processing of applications and, since May, arrivals by sea have been zero. In this context, Ioannou noted that lower arrivals have contributed to better management of the reception system and helped reduce the time to complete the examination of asylum applications to three months or even one for certain categories of

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applicants. A total of 18.055 third country nationals have left since the beginning of Christodoulides administration.

Mr. Ioannides noted that in 2024, the total number of departures (deportations, voluntary returns and relocations) amounted to 10,941 people. Also, within 2024, 8,213 third country nationals were repatriated through the voluntary return programme, compared to the 4,636 people who used the programme within 2022. More than 1,350 Syrian nationals have expressed their intention and desire to repatriate - 755 have already left Cyprus. Mr. Ioannidis noted that from 9 December 2024 onwards, there are an have an average of 40 requests per day from Syrians to withdraw their application or revoke their status. Specifically, from December 9, 2024 to January 31, 2025, 1,367 Syrian nationals have expressed their intention and desire to be repatriated. As a result, 944 have withdrawn their applications for international protection, 11 have renounced their refugee status and 412 have withdrawn the subsidiary protection status granted to them.

Of these, 755 have already left Cyprus. Mr. Ioannidis clarified that "forced return to Syria is not possible until there is stability and the conditions in the country are clarified, so that a decision can be taken at EU level". Reduction by 90% of Pournara's residents and upgrade of the reception infraestructure. From 3,145 persons (highest number of residents in 2022) to just 274 (lowest number of residents in 2024). on 31 December 2024, the number of residents was 359.

Source(s)

- Government Portal, Press and Information Office | Κυβερνητική Πύλη (5 February, 2025), Ο Υπουργός Εσωτερικών και ο Υφυπουργός Μετανάστευσης και Διεθνούς Προστασίας παρέθεσαν κοινή συνέντευξη Τύπου για το μεταναστευτικό [The Minister of Interior and the Deputy Minister of Migration and International Protection held a joint press conference on migration], https://www.gov.cy/esoterika-themata/o-ypourgos-esoterikon-kai-o-yfypourgos-metanastefsis-kai-diethnous-prostasias-parethesan-koini-synentefxi-typou-gia-to-metanasteftiko/

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