

# **CYPRUS PRISONS DEPARTMENT**

## **Introduction**

The coronavirus outbreak has impacted the whole world and has affected a plethora of individuals, not only those living in the free society but also those deprived of their liberty, in detention facilities and other institutions in Europe.

Subsequently, the Cyprus Prisons Department has taken measures for the prevention of Coronavirus since the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020, following the first coronavirus case in Cyprus, the previous day, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

The preventative measures applied in the Cyprus Prisons Department as from the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020, reflect the general Guidelines of the WHO as well as the CPT's Recommendations, and specifically the CPT's "Statement of principles relating to the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic" (issued on the 20.3.20), the national guidelines of the Ministry of Health as updated, the "Interim Guidance for prisons and places of detention" published by the WHO on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the SPT's "Advice of the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture to States parties and national Preventive Mechanisms relating to the Coronavirus Pandemic" (issued on the 25.3.20), the "Covid-19 Related Statement by the Members of the Council for Penological Co-Operation Working Group" issued by the PC-CP Working Group on the 17.4.20, as well as other documents issued by relevant Organisations and Institutions.

## **Updated measures, 13/04/2020**

In the context of the prevention of the transmittable coronavirus, the Management of the Prisons Department as from 10.3.20, has issued and enforced preventative measures for inmates, newcomer inmates, prison staff, civilian staff, the Mental Health Services, the Social Welfare Services, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Electromechanical Services and other staff working in the Department, visitors, lawyers, suppliers and anyone else who visits our facilities.

All measures and instructions issued by the Administration, are updated according to the developments of the coronavirus threat, and full compliance and cooperation is expected by all.

## **GENERAL PREVENTATIVE MEASURES**

1. The Prisons Department has bought stock of masks, disinfectants, uniforms and protective goggles, for the staff and prison population in case of emergency.
2. Disinfection has taken place in all Blocks, common areas, service vehicles, as well as in all areas used by the public.

3. Electronic temperature screening is for all persons entering our facilities. Further a thermal camera has been installed, for body temperature screening of all persons before entering the closed Prisons (second check).

4. Devices with disinfectant hand-rub have been installed throughout the Prisons along with relevant instructions.

In particular, they were installed at:

- the Entrance Gate
- the search place (X-ray Machines and Archway Metal Detectors) at the Entrance Gate
- Visit Arrangements Offices (Entrance Gate and inside prisons)
- the Clothing & Electronics Warehouse
- the Main Entrance Hall
- the search place (X-ray Machines and Archway Metal Detectors) inside prisons
- the Gatehouse
- the visiting rooms for lawyers
- all visiting rooms for all Blocks (1&2, 5&8, 9, 10, Open Prison)
- the Admissions and Releases Office
- the Security Office
- all Laboratories
- all staff offices in all Blocks
- the Reintegration Center for Prisoners
- all areas used by the public.

5. Storage devices for disinfectants were bought, as well as stock for immediate replacement.

6. The transfers of prisoners to public and private hospitals for scheduled appointments have been limited to the most urgent and essential cases and as regards the escorted leave permits of prisoners which were initially limited, were afterwards temporarily suspended as from 13.3.2020.

7. As regards visits to the Prisons Department, an official announcement has been sent to the mass media.

8. Initially all visits from relatives/ friends of the inmates had been reduced to once a week visit from first-degree relatives only (mother, father, spouse and children), given that they met the entrance criteria set out by the Department in the context of the preventative measures. However, as of 15.3.2020 all visits have been temporarily suspended. The Visit Arrangements Offices have informed all visitors accordingly.

9. The Department's Management began visiting all Blocks as well as all other areas of the prisons, to check the implementation of the measures taken in the context

of the prevention of the transmittable coronavirus and to speak with staff members and inmates.

10. We have cooperated with the Guilds/Unions of the Department to devotedly implement the preventive measures decided by the Management for the staff.

11. At each shift, the frontline staff responsible for searches of persons, staff and inmates before their entrance in the prisons, are provided with the necessary protective equipment (disinfectants, gloves, masks, protective goggles and uniforms).

12. We have provided the frontline staff, serving at the search places (X-ray Machines and Archway Metal Detectors) with electronic thermometers, in order to check the body temperature of every person (visitors, lawyers, prison staff, civilian staff, prisoners etc.) who meets all the criteria (as mentioned in paragraph 5 – PREVENTIVE MEASURES FOR STAFF) for entering the Prisons Department. Those who do not meet the criteria for entering the prisons are asked to leave the facilities, immediately. Note that if any person or staff present body temperature 37+ degree Celsius, are barred from prisons.

13. Instructions have been issued for prison officers serving at the Infirmary to always wear gloves when administering medication to inmates, at the Department's Infirmaries and Blocks.

14. General practice nurses and mental health nurses working in the Department have both been instructed, to at least wear gloves and a mask when examining inmates and/or administering medication.

15. The Department receives clothing from prisoners' relatives/friends only if the entrance criteria are met and given that the clothing is clean and the relevant formal declaration is signed by the relative/friend, stating that the clothes they are about to deliver have been washed at least at 40 degrees Celsius.

16. All projects/constructions within the prisons have been temporarily suspended in order to restrict the number of persons entering the prisons.

17. All prison gyms have been temporarily closed so as to avoid overcrowding in the fitness rooms/gymnasiums. However, a program for everyday outdoor exercise is set for all Blocks, by maintaining social distancing.

18. In all the kitchens, in addition to the specialized personal equipment and kitchen uniforms always worn by the inmates and staff members who work there, a special gelatin frame was placed in front of the benches during food serving so that there is no contact between the kitchen workers and the inmates being served.

19. In cases of newcomer inmates who were transferred to the Prisons Department from abroad or from the Courts or police detention centers, or any other inmate who

presents symptoms such as cough, respiratory distress or fever, will be placed in a special site in the context of the prevention of the transmittable coronavirus.

20. On the 9.4.2020 the General Practitioner of the Prisons Department, along with a member of the nursing staff, underwent training for coronavirus sample reception, for the needs of the Department.

21. As from 13.4.2020, all personnel working in the prisons, including prison staff, civilian staff, medical staff, the Mental Health Services, the Social Welfare Services as well as teachers visiting the Department's Schools, should always bear the personal protective facial shield, provided by the Prisons Department. Moreover, it is their responsibility to keep the shield safe and clean.

## **INFORMATION MATERIAL WITH PREVENTATIVE MEASURES**

1. Information material, flyers of the World Health Organization on individual hygiene, health and coronavirus prevention guidelines have been posted at

- the Entrance Gate
- the Entrance
- all Blocks
- all kitchens and restaurants of the Prisons Department
- all visiting rooms of the Prisons Department
- all Schools of the Prisons Department
- the Clothing & Electronics Warehouse
- the Visit Arrangements Offices (Entrance Gate and inside prisons)
- the Personnel clothing Store/Warehouse
- the Infirmaries of the Prisons Department
- the Mental Health Services of the Prisons Department
- the Garage(cars) and Manor (agricultural cultivation/corps)
- the Laboratories of the Prisons Department
- all personnel offices
- all staff offices in all Blocks.

2. In addition, we have issued announcements along with information material from the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health, to frontline staff who are the first to come into contact with the public, particularly members serving at the Entrance Gate and members of the Visit Arrangements Offices who are in immediate contact with visitors (Suppliers, civilian staff, Lawyers, Police, Prison Staff, Mental Health Services, Department of Public Works, Department of Electromechanical Services, Social Welfare Services) regarding the prevention of the transmittable coronavirus.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS/GUIDELINES FOR INMATES**

1. Announcements were issued on 10.3.2020 and 11.3.2020, in both Greek and English, to all inmates regarding the visits by their relatives/friends urging them to reduce the visits to the utmost necessary.

Specifically, inmates were instructed to inform their first-degree relatives (mother, father, spouse and children) who were going to visit them, to postpone their visits if they:

- Present symptoms (fever, cough or sore throat, respiratory distress) and/or
- Have recently travelled in the past 15 days and/or
- Have been in contact in the past 15 days, with a person with respiratory tract infections,

in the context of the prevention of the transmittable coronavirus.

Subsequently, as from 13.3.2020 the visits were reduced to a single visit per week by first degree relatives only (mother, father, spouse, and children) given that they met the entrance criteria set out by the Department in the context of the preventative measures. However, as from 15.3.2020 all visits have been temporarily suspended.

2. The Department's Visit Arrangements Offices have informed by phone all visitors accordingly, that all visits are temporarily suspended in the context of the urgent measures announced by the Government on the 15.3.2020.

3. Instructions were given to all inmates who would go on leave with/without escort such as:

(a) during their leave, to avoid contact with persons who:

- Present symptoms (fever, cough or sore throat, respiratory distress) and/or
- Have recently travelled in the past 15 days and/or
- Have been in contact in the past 15 days with a person with respiratory tract infections

(b) Failure of any inmate to comply with above instructions, will immediately terminate their leave permit.

(c) (i) The inmate upon their departure,

will sign the relevant formal declaration (Document Φ.223 B1) in which they responsibly declare that during their leave, they will arrange not to come into contact with persons who:

- Present symptoms (fever, cough or sore throat, respiratory distress) and/or
- Have recently travelled in the past 15 days and/or
- Have been in contact in the past 15 days with a person with respiratory tract infections

(ii) The inmate upon their arrival,

will sign the relevant formal declaration (Document Φ.223 B2) in which they responsibly declare that during their leave, they did not come into contact with persons who:

- Present symptoms (fever, cough or sore throat, respiratory distress) and/or
- Have recently travelled in the past 15 days and/or
- Have been in contact in the past 15 days with a person with respiratory tract infections

**Escorted exit permits for inmates have been temporarily suspended in the context of the prevention of the transmittable coronavirus as from 12.3.20.**

4. Prisoners have been informed with an announcement that the delivery of clothing to the Department by their relatives/friends, will be permitted by those who meet the entrance criteria, after completing the relevant formal declaration by visitors (Document Φ.223) and formal declaration for delivery of clothing (Document Φ.223Γ).

5. All gym activities have been suspended from 16.3.2020 and training of inmates is allowed in outside spaces, particularly in the football and basketball grounds, courtyards and other spaces outside of the Blocks. Relevant instructions were issued for both staff and inmates.

6. In the same context, the prisons Management, has offered for free extra personal soaps to each inmate instructing them to wash their hands often, specifically during the hours they are outside of their cells and especially before and after:

- taking meals,
- the use of communal areas inside the blocks,
- the use of telephone booths and use of SKYPE equipment,
- the use of communal areas for outdoor training or use of yards,

according to the pictures and instructions shown on the flyers of the World Health Organization.

7. As regards the suspension of visits (see above, no.1&2), in the context of the prevention of the transmittable coronavirus in the Prisons Department, following the relevant Announcement dated 17.3.20, the Management of the Department has decided to extend the use of telephone booths from 0800 hours to 20:30 hours, on a daily basis including the Weekends and holidays, with the aim of the inmates maintaining contact with their family and social environment.

8. Furthermore, in the same context, as from 6.4.2020 all inmates (including Cypriots) are able to use SKYPE to communicate with relatives and friends. [Since 2015, only non-Cypriots who did not have visits were able to use SKYPE].

9. As from 10.4.2020, all inmates who will be transferred out of prisons to the courts, after the body search is carried out, they will bear individual single use protective equipment, consisted of a robe, gloves and a surgical face mask. This equipment will be worn by inmates at all time while they are out of the Prisons Department, up until their return to the prisons where they are required to dispose it in a special yellow bin for medical waste, as explained in the relevant announcement dated 10.4.2020.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS/GUIDELINES FOR STAFF**

### **A. MANAGEMENT OF INMATES**

1. Members of the staff serving at the Entrance Gate as well as at the Visit Arrangements Offices have also been instructed, to inform lawyers or other visitors of inmates who arrive at the Department, that in case they:

- Present symptoms (fever, cough or sore throat, respiratory distress) and/or
- Have recently travelled in the past 15 days and/or
- Have been in contact in the past 15 days with a person with respiratory tract infections,

to postpone their appointments, in the context of the prevention of the transmittable coronavirus.

In case that visitors who experience any of the above symptoms (respiratory tract infections) come to the Department, they will be barred from entering the facilities for the purpose of preventing the transmission of the coronavirus to any person (staff or inmate).

2. Moreover, the staff members serving at the Entrance Gate have been instructed that in case that visitors other than those of the inmates (Suppliers, civilian staff, Lawyers, Police, Prison Staff etc.), who experience any of the above symptoms (respiratory tract infections) come to the Department, they will be barred from entering

the facilities for the purpose of preventing the transmission of the coronavirus to any person (personnel or inmate).

b) The same instructions were also given to all employees coming at the Prisons Department for emergency/unplanned jobs.

As from 15.3.2020 all visits have been temporarily suspended and prisoners have been instructed to inform their relatives/friends when communicating with them.

3. Staff members who are involved/ come into contact with suppliers of basic materials/ "necessity goods" who are about to visit the Department, that if they:

- Present symptoms (fever, cough or sore throat, respiratory distress) and/or
- Have recently travelled in the past 15 days and/or
- Have been in contact in the past 15 days, with a person with respiratory tract infections,

to not visit the Department themselves but to arrange the delivery of the products in an alternative manner, in the context of preventing the transmission of the coronavirus.

4. Instructions were also given to staff members receiving inmates returning from the Courts and newcomer inmates, to complete the relevant Document Φ.223A "Formal Declaration-Inmates" (Greek / English) in which the prisoner must declare whether:

(a) Prior to their transfer to the Prisons Department they **had/had no** contact with persons who:

- Present symptoms (fever, cough or sore throat, respiratory distress) and/or
- Have recently travelled in the past 15 days and/or
- Have been in contact in the past 15 days, with a person with respiratory tract infections.

(b) They **have / have not** travelled out of Cyprus in the past 15 days.

In case the inmate gives a positive response to the above, the staff members will receive further instructions on how to manage such cases, following the medical examination by the Doctors and/or the nursing staff.

5. The Sergeant serving at the Gatehouse was instructed that:

(a) All inmates fill in the relevant documents upon their departure and arrival at the prisons.



(b) In cases where a prisoner is on escorted leave, and the members of staff escorting them realise upon their arrival at the visiting site that there are persons who:

- Present symptoms (fever, cough or sore throat, respiratory distress) and/or
- Have recently travelled in the past 15 days and/or
- Have been in contact in the past 15 days, with a person with respiratory tract infections

The leave permit will be immediately terminated and the inmate will return to the prisons.

**Escorted exit permits for inmates have been temporarily suspended in the context of the prevention of the transmittable coronavirus.**

(c) In case a prisoner of the Open Prison or from the Reintegration Center who was on leave, upon their return to prisons presents symptoms of fever, cough or sore throat or respiratory distress, irrespectively of their statement that they had not contacted any persons presenting such symptoms, the medical and nursing staff will be immediately informed, to take further action. Nevertheless, all inmates returning from their leave are placed in quarantine for 14 days and they are monitored daily by the medical staff.

6. The usual regime in prisons has changed temporarily in order to maintain social distancing. This means prisoners can no longer take part in usual recreational activities such as using the gym (outdoor exercise is recommended) or going to worship (in-cell worship is recommended), and a few jobs have been suspended temporarily. Only kitchen staff and wing cleaners continue with their jobs but people still get paid. Some of them assist in the cleaning of the wings and the hygienic places.

7. All staff members serving at the search place (X-ray Machines and Archway Metal Detectors) inside prisons and the Information Desk, as well as the Sergeant serving at the Gatehouse are all responsible for the accurate enforcement of the announcement dated 10.4.2020, by all inmates, upon their return from the courts.

## **B. PROTECTIVE MEASURES FOR STAFF**

1. All staff members have been instructed as from 11.3.2020 to restrict travelling to only if strictly necessary and on 16.3.2020 new instructions were given to completely avoid travelling outside Cyprus, as well as come into contact with persons who:

- Present symptoms (fever, cough or sore throat, respiratory distress) and/or
- Have recently travelled in the past 14 days abroad.

Moreover, the members were also instructed that in case they have travelled in the past 14 days and/or they present any of the pre-mentioned symptoms to immediately call the 24-hour call center 1420 and consult with our Department's Human Resources

Office regarding the issue of isolation/staying at home and for the relevant sick leave, according to Newsletter no. 1605 of the Ministry of Finance.

2a. Members who have travelled abroad in the past 14 days, have been instructed to stay at home until 14 days have elapsed since their return.

2b. Relevant instructions were also given to all employees of the Department of Electromechanical Services, Department of Public Works, Mental Health Services, Social Welfare Services, and other staff working at the Cyprus Prisons Department.

3. Announcements have also been issued to all staff, along with information and guidelines for the prevention of the transmission of coronavirus in their workplace.

4. Instructions have been given to staff members and particularly frontline staff (serving at the Entrance Gate, Body Searches, Visit Arrangements Offices, the search places (X-ray Machines and Archway Metal Detectors), at Entrance Gate and inside prisons, Clothing & Electronics Warehouse, who carry out searches for all inmates, visitors, prisons staff and other civilian staff that perform any job at the Department, relatives and friends of inmates, for delivering clothing, for relevant handling in case of presenting symptoms (fever, cough or sore throat, muscle aches and difficulty breathing), for the measures to be taken in the context of preventing the transmission of the coronavirus.

5. Instructions were also given to staff members serving at all entry points for visitors, whether for a visit (visits are suspended), for delivering clothing or items to the Warehouse, for depositing money, for arranging appointments or lawyers of the inmates, to complete the Document Φ.223 - "Formal Declaration-Visitors" (Greek / English) in which the visitor must indicate whether:

(i). They **had / had no** contact with persons who:

- Present symptoms (fever, cough or sore throat, respiratory distress) and/or
- Have recently travelled in the past 15 days and/or
- Have been in contact in the past 15 days, with a person with respiratory tract infections

(ii). They **have / have not** travelled out of Cyprus in the past 15 days. Any visitor who respond positive positively to the above, will be barred from entering the Prisons Department. Note that if any person or staff present body temperature 37+ degree Celsius, are barred from prisons.

6. As regards body searches of newcomer inmates, depending on the formal declaration signed by them (Document 223A), before the staff members carry out the search, medical screening will take place before they enter the prisons (quarantine). Depending on the results of the medical examination and given that the inmate would have to enter the prisons, the members will carry out the body search in a special

room, wearing gloves, mask and protective goggles or face shield, for preventive reasons. Newcomers from abroad whether they present or not any of the prementioned symptoms, are placed in quarantine. Note that newcomers are placed in the quarantine place only if the results of the COVID-test before their transfer to prisons is negative.

7. The staff members carrying out searches at the Entrance Gate and the search places (X-ray Machines and Archway Metal Detectors), during the body searches of every person, they will wear uniforms (robe), gloves, mask and protective goggles.

8. The staff members serving at the Visit Arrangements Offices (at Entrance Gate and inside prisons), will wear gloves and mask.

9. Instructions were also given to members of staff serving at the Clothing & Electronics Warehouse for inmates, to wear masks and gloves upon receiving clothing and other items from relatives/friends who were allowed entrance in the prisons since they met the relevant criteria and were checked at the Entrance Gate, for delivering clothing that is clean and washed at least at 40 degrees Celsius, for which they fill in a relevant form.

10. All staff training and seminars have been suspended as from 16.3.2020.

11. The staff serving in the special Block (quarantine block) where cases of newcomer inmates are transferred to the Department from abroad or from the Courts or police detention centers, or any other inmate who presents symptoms such as cough, respiratory distress or fever, in the context of the prevention of the transmittable coronavirus, will bear Personal Protective Equipment. Further, the concerning inmate will be wearing protective equipment.

12. All members who carry out interviews from newcomer inmates, will bear Personal Protective Equipment (robe, gloves, mask, face shield).

13. Upon/during delivery of the inmates' canteens, both the staff members and inmates working for the canteen delivery shall be provided with Personal Protective Equipment.

14. All personnel working in the prisons was provided with a protective facial shield, including prison staff, civilian staff, medical staff, the Mental Health Services, the Social Welfare Services as well as teachers visiting the Department's Schools.

15. All staff members who have come into contact with suspected or confirmed coronavirus cases, are barred from entering the Prisons Department and are required to take a coronavirus test and home-isolate for 14 days.

**Cyprus Prisons Department**  
**24.4.2020**