

Annette Groth

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# Press release

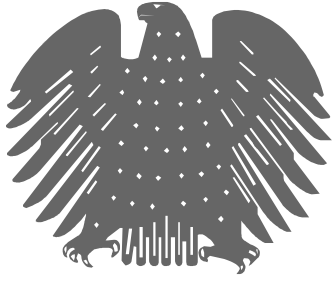
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**In her capacity as a member of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Annette Groth was part of a delegation which travelled to Greece from 13 to 16 January 2013. The aim of the visit was to inspect humanitarian standards in refugee camps – which are really detention centres – in the Evros region and Athens. The members of the delegation were also able to hold talks with refugees, representatives of the NGOs working in the detention centres and of Frontex, the High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration. Annette Groth, spokeswoman on human rights for the Left Party parliamentary group, has issued the following statement on the trip:**

## **Improving the situation for refugees in Greece at last**

“The situation in the detention centres in Greece is terrible: a lack of basic sanitary facilities, inadequate medical care, defective or non-existent heating, cells with no daylight. In the Petrou Ralli detention centre, women wept as they begged us to get them out. One Syrian woman said that she would rather die in Syria than spend a year in the detention centre. Many people have been living there for three months in unacceptable sanitary conditions. They are allowed out into the yard once a week; the rest of the time is spent in windowless cells, crowded in five to a cell. There are significant shortcomings in terms of the medical and psychological care and legal assistance provided. One of the biggest problems for the refugees is that it is impossible for them to communicate with their families. Mobile phones are taken from them and they have no money for phone cards. This means that their families do not know if they are still alive or where they are.

“Following the delegation’s severe criticism of the horrifying sanitary conditions in the detention centre in Petrou Ralli, Athens, the Greek government announced its intention to close this prison at the end of March. Furthermore, all minors and female refugees are to be released from all of the detention centres. This announcement is indeed a major success.



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“It shows that political pressure can lead to improvements in the inhuman conditions facing refugees. The Greek government has also made a commitment to process the backlog of over 50,000 applications for asylum as quickly as possible.”

Annette Groth’s statement continues:

“Greece must not be left to face this situation alone. Europe needs to show its solidarity, and the only form this can take is for all EU states to accept more refugees, particularly from Syria! Dublin II must be suspended! The European solution cannot be to spend ever more money on the construction of “Fortress Europe”, i.e. on fences, walls and surveillance tools. We are calling for a large share of the 200 million euros Greece receives in the framework of European border management to be spent on the refugees and ensuring that their accommodation meets human-rights standards.”