

URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN REFUGEE AT RISK OF RETURN TO TURKEY

A Syrian refugee is at risk of being forcibly returned from Greece to Turkey under the EU-Turkey deal. His asylum application was dismissed on the grounds that Turkey is a “safe third country.” A decision on his appeal before Greek courts is expected within days. He is currently in police custody on the Greek island of Lesbos.

Noori (not his real name), a 21-year-old Syrian refugee, is at risk of forcible return to Turkey after his asylum application was declared inadmissible. His lawyers have petitioned Greek courts in order to annul this decision. Noori is currently in police custody on the Greek island of Lesbos.

On 14 September the Council of State, Greece’s highest administrative court, issued an interim order halting his deportation until it decides whether or not to suspend the Appeals Committee’s decision allowing for Noori’s forcible return to Turkey. The decision is expected within days. If Noori is deported, he will be the first asylum-seeker too to be forcibly returned to Turkey since the EU-Turkey deal came into force in March.

Noori filed an asylum application before the Greek Asylum Service on 4 August, shortly after his arrival from Turkey on the Greek island of Lesbos. The EU-Turkey deal, which was signed on 18 March, paved the way for Greece to return asylum-seekers and refugees to Turkey. Noori’s application was declared inadmissible, both at first instance and on appeal, on the grounds that Turkey is a “safe third country” for him. However, Turkey is not currently a safe country for asylum-seekers and refugees to be returned to. It does not offer full refugee status to Syrian refugees. The vast majority of asylum-seekers and refugees do not have the means to support themselves and are not granted state support. As a result many refugees are destitute and living in appalling conditions. There are also grave concerns about the treatment of those returned to Turkey, particularly as independent monitors do not have access to the closed centres to which deportees are being returned.

Please write immediately in Greek or your own language:

- Urging the Greek authorities to ensure that Noori is not returned to Turkey and to examine the substance of his asylum claim in Greece;
- Calling on them to immediately halt the return of all asylum-seekers and refugees to Turkey where refugees do not have access to full protection.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 DECEMBER 2016 TO:

Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic

Alexis Tsipras
Prime Minister’s General Secretariat
15 Vasilisis Sofias Avenue, 10674
Athens, Greece
Fax: + 30 210 338 5432
Email: primeminister@primeminister.gr

Salutation: Your Excellency

Chief of Staff of the Hellenic Police

Zacharoula Tsigoti
P. Kanellopoulou 4 10177
Athens, Greece
Fax: +30 210 697 7102
Email:
generalstaff.commander@hellenicpolice.gr

Salutation: Dear General

And copies to

Alternate Minister for Migration

Ioannis Mouzalas
Stadiou 27 10183
Athens, Greece
Fax: +30 213 136 4418
Email: gram.anaplypourgou@ypes.gr

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

SYRIAN REFUGEE AT RISK OF RETURN TO TURKEY

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Noori, is 21 years old and the eldest sibling of a family of eight sisters and brothers. He told Amnesty International that he was training to be a nurse but had to halt his studies because of the war. He left Syria on 9 June 2016 and only managed to enter Turkey after four attempts. During his first two attempts he claimed that he was arrested by the Turkish police and beaten by the Turkish military before being sent back to Syria. On his third attempt, he said that the group he was with was attacked by an armed group that killed 11 of them. He managed to enter Turkey on his fourth attempt and stayed for a-month-and-a-half. Noori explained that he has no relatives left in Turkey and that his aim was to travel to Greece in order to move on to a country where he has relatives. He also explained that he was attacked twice by smugglers and thieves while in Turkey.

Noori arrived in Greece on 28 July 2016 and applied for asylum on 4 August. He was informed about the outcome of his appeal against the initial decision of the Greek Asylum Service on 9 September. The Appeals Committee supported the decision that Turkey was a “safe third country” for him, arguing that the protection provided to Syrian refugees in Turkey meets the standards of the Geneva Convention (Refugee Convention) and would respect the international principle of non-refoulement (which prohibits the transfer of anyone in any manner whatsoever to a place where they would be at real risk of serious human rights violations). It therefore upheld the decision to refuse to examine the substance of Noori’s asylum claim and allowed his return to Turkey.

This is the third case seen by Amnesty International, in which asylum applications in Greece have been found inadmissible on appeal on the false presumption that Turkey is a “safe third country” for refugees. J.B. and M.F., the two other Syrian asylum seekers whose applications had been found inadmissible by the Appeals Committees, have not yet been returned to Turkey (see: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR25/4613/2016/en/).

Name: Noori (not his real name)

Gender m/f: m

UA: 223/16 Index: EUR 25/4915/2016 Issue Date: 4 October 2016