

PUBLIC

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30 September 2008

Further Information on UA 263/08 (MDE 13/139/2008, 17 September 2008) Forcible return

TURKEY **24 Uzbekistani nationals, including 15 children**
New name: **Another Uzbekistani man**

The 24 Uzbekistani nationals, and an Uzbekistani man now known to have been deported with them, returned to Turkey irregularly on 23 September from Iran. They had been released on or around 20 September by the group that had been holding them in Iran. They remain at risk of forcible return to Uzbekistan.

The group, all recognised refugees, had been deported to Iran on 12 September. They have since told human rights lawyers that they had been called to the Van General Directorate of Security (GDS) at 2pm to collect educational materials for their children, and food. After an hour and a half, the men and women of the group were separated and taken into custody. Police searched them and confiscated their belts, phones and money. At around 4pm, they were taken to a small town on the border with Iran, Caldiran, where they were put into two army vehicles and escorted by around 30 to 40 soldiers to the border. When they realised they were being deported, they resisted, and soldiers and police officers beat them with truncheons and rifle butts and threatened to rape the women and girls if they persisted in resisting deportation.

They were forced to walk into Iranian territory (the border is not marked), where they were taken captive by an unidentified group, who released them after about a week for a ransom of US\$5,000, which had been arranged by an Uzbekistani couple who were also at risk of being deported to Iran (see UA 265/08, EUR 44/016/2008, 18 September 2008).

They walked across the mountainous border, reaching the eastern city of Van on 23 September. They did not pass through any border post.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The UN Committee against Torture concluded in November 2007 that torture was widespread and systematic in Uzbekistan. Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of forcible returns of asylum-seekers or criminal suspects to Uzbekistan. Most of those forcibly returned have been held incommunicado, increasing their risk of being tortured or otherwise ill-treated. They have often been sentenced to long prison terms after unfair trials, on the basis of confessions extracted under torture.

In April 2008, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the extradition of 12 refugees from Russia to Uzbekistan "would give rise to a violation of Article 3 (prohibition of torture) as they would face a serious risk of being subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment there."

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Turkish, English or your own language:

- urging the Turkish authorities not to deport the 24 Uzbekistani refugees, who were illegally deported to Iran on 12 September but are now back in Turkey;
- asking them to order a thorough and impartial investigation into the illegal deportation of Uzbekistani refugees on 12 September;
- asking them also to order an investigation of the refugees' claim that Turkish police and soldiers beat and threatened to rape them.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Interior

Mr. Besir Atalay

Icisleri Bakanligi, 06644 Ankara, Turkey

E-mail: besir.atalay@icisleri.gov.tr

Fax: +90 312 418 1795

Salutation: Dear Minister

Ministry of Interior – Department for Foreigners Borders Asylum

Mehmet Terzioglu

Yabancilar Hudut Iltica Daire Baskanii

Emniyet Genel Mudurlugu

Dikmen Caddesi No: 89, Dikmen/Ankara, Turkey

Fax: +90 312 466 90 11

Email: illegalmig@egm.gov.tr

Salutation: Dear Mr Terzioglu

COPIES TO:

Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights

Mehmet Zafer Uskul, Commission Chairperson

TBMM İnsan Haklarını İnceleme Komisyonu

Bakanlıklar, 06543 Ankara, Turkey

Email: inshkkom@tbmm.gov.tr

Fax: +90 312 420 53 94

Salutation: Dear Mr Uskul

Van Province Human Rights Commission

Ömer Özcan and Hasan Yılmaz, Commission Chairpersons and Deputy Governors of Van

T.C. Van Valiliği İnsan Hakları Kurulu

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and to diplomatic representatives of Turkey accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 November 2008.