

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

19 December 2019 index number: EUR25/1612/2019

AMNESTY CALLS ON GREECE TO URGENTLY DISCLOSE THE EVIDENCE FOR THE PROPOSED DEPORTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER HELPING REFUGEES IN LESVOS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES THE GREEK AUTHORITIES TO IMMEDIATELY DISCLOSE THE INFORMATION RELIED UPON FOR THE PROPOSED DEPORTATION OF HUMANITARIAN WORKER SALAM ALDEEN, WHO HAS BEEN DETAINED IN LESVOS SINCE 11 DECEMBER 2019.

Amnesty International is calling the Greek authorities to urgently disclose the information used for threatening the CEO of the Danish NGO Team Humanity, Salam Aldeen, an Iraqi national and resident of Denmark, with deportation from Greece, where he has been in custody for over a week.

Amnesty understands that, as of October 2019, Aldeen was listed under the Greek national list of ‘undesired foreigners’ (EKANA) because he is considered to pose a threat to national security. As a consequence, upon attempting to embark on a flight for Athens, he was apprehended and detained. Amnesty understands that Aldeen was not notified of the decision to include him in such a list and, to date, the reasons for listing him and the national security grounds relied upon remain secret.

The Greek authorities must disclose any relevant information on which the deportation order is based as a matter of urgency and provide Aldeen with a fair process to challenge it. Otherwise, they should release Aldeen and allow him to resume his crucial humanitarian work.

As of 18 December, Aldeen’s lawyer received confirmation of the decision to deport Aldeen from Greece. Based on Greek legislation, Aldeen can be detained awaiting deportation for up to 6 months since his initial apprehension. This period can be extended for a further 12 months.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned that Salam Aldeen has been apprehended and detained in Greece and is now subject to a deportation order and a re-entry ban – based solely on secret information – which would prohibit him from returning to Greece for 3 years, thereby preventing him from carrying out his humanitarian activities.

This comes at a time when the Aegean islands face a stark increase in new arrivals and the work of NGOs and humanitarian workers is all the more crucial. Around [40,000 people](#), including 13,800 children, are currently forced to live in appalling conditions on the Greek islands. The island of Lesbos alone, where Aldeen’s NGO operates, hosts more than 20,000 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. More than 18,000 of them live in abysmal conditions in the infamous ‘Moria’ camp, designed to host just under 3,000 people.

Aldeen is a well-known humanitarian worker who has been operating [in Lesbos since 2015](#), doing life-saving work with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants on the island. His detention and pending deportation must be seen in the wider context of the Greek government’s crackdown on NGOs and humanitarian actors who assist these vulnerable people.

This is not the first time that Salam Aldeen has been targeted by the Greek authorities. In January 2016, together with a colleague from Team Humanity, Mohammed Abbassi, and three Spanish fire-fighters from the rescue NGO Proem-Aid, Aldeen was arrested and charged with [attempted ‘smuggling’](#) in connection with a search and rescue operation in Lesbos. They were [acquitted of all charges in May 2018](#).

Amnesty fears that the present decision to detain and deport Aldeen represents yet another attempt by the Greek authorities to obstruct the work of NGOs and individuals working with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants on the islands.

Specifically, we note that Greece's decision to include Aldeen in the EKANA list on grounds of national security is unsubstantiated as it is based solely on secret information that the Greek authorities have not disclosed to Aldeen or his lawyer. In order to mount an effective challenge to his ongoing detention and impending deportation, Aldeen must be given access to the information on which the order is based and afforded a meaningful opportunity to appeal it.

The Danish authorities should provide Aldeen with consular assistance and urge the Greek government to provide Aldeen and his legal representative with all relevant information regarding the allegation that he is a security threat.