

URGENT ACTION

RELEASED SYRIAN REFUGEES MUST BE PROTECTED

On 5 October 106 Syrian refugees were released from a camp in Düziçi, in the southern province of Osmaniye, in Turkey. The group included 85 individuals who had been held in the camp since 17 September, after they were rescued from a sinking boat on 15 September. The Syrian refugees have been told they have 16 days to leave Turkey.

Several individuals among the 106 refugees and asylum-seekers contacted Amnesty International on 5 October stating that they would be released from the camp once they signed a document in Turkish, which they could not understand. The contents of the document were not translated for them and they were not provided with a copy. After they signed the document, they were told they had 16 days to leave Turkey.

It remains unclear whether the Syrian refugees will be able to register for temporary protection status in Turkey, which should be afforded to Syrian refugees according to Turkey's Law on Foreigners and International Protection, or whether the authorities will attempt to enforce the order for them to leave the country.

According to information received from a Syrian refugee still at the camp, 56 Syrian refugees remain at the camp, mainly women and children. They are awaiting to be released on the same conditions as the 106 who were released on 5 October.

Please write immediately in Turkish or your own language:

- Urging the Minister of Interior to grant the Syrian refugees temporary protection status in line with Turkey's Law on Foreigners and International Protection;
- Calling on him to ensure that refugees are not forcibly returned to Syria;
- Urging him to ensure that persons are not arbitrarily detained in camps and that any measure that restricts the right to liberty of refugees and asylum-seekers must be exceptional and based on a case-by-case assessment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 NOVEMBER 2015 TO:

Minister of Interior

Mr Selami Altınok
İçişleri Bakanlığı
Bakanlıklar
Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 425 85 09
Email: ozelkalem@icisleri.gov.tr

Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Chair of the Human Rights Institution
Dr Hikmet Tülen
Yüksel Caddesi No. 23, Kat 3, Yenişehir
06650 Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 422 29 96

And copies to:

Directorate General of Migration Management
Mr Atilla Toros
Director General
Lalegül Çamlıca Mahallesi 122. Sokak
No:2/3 06370, Yenimahalle
Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 422 09 00
+90 312 422 09 99
Email: gocidaresi@goc.gov.tr

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. This is the first update of UA 208/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR44/2521/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Around 150 Syrian refugees were held in a camp in Osmaniye province, close to the Syrian border between 17 September and 5 October, and are at risk of being returned to Syria by the Turkish authorities. A smaller group of Iraqi refugees were released from the camp on condition that they return to Iraq within a month. The refugees were travelling to Greece in a boat that sank on 15 September leaving at least 22 dead, including children.

The 150 Syrian refugees formed part of a group of more than 250 refugees from Syria and Iraq who were on a boat attempting to cross from Bodrum, in western Turkey, to the Greek island of Kos on 15 September. The refugees reported that the Turkish coastguard fired several shots at their boat, which subsequently sank. The Turkish coastguard confirms that 249 refugees were rescued and 22 bodies were recovered, including children. The majority of the refugees were initially held in or around Bodrum and subsequently *transferred* to a camp in Düziçi, Osmaniye province, on 17 September. They were transferred against their will and did not receive any information on where they were being transferred to. Official information about the numbers of individuals in need of protection held Düziçi camp has been requested from the Turkish authorities but to-date no information has been received.

According to the Syrian refugees held in the camp, the authorities told them that they will be kept in the camp unless they agree to be returned to Syria using the border crossings of Bab al-Hawa or Bab al-Salam, which are under the control of armed groups that have been responsible for human rights abuses. Refugees in the camp also reported that most of the Iraqi refugees have been released on condition that they return to Iraq within a month. They reported having been told to sign documents in Turkish, which they could not understand. Amnesty International spoke to one Iraqi refugee who has returned to Iraq and is currently in hiding, fearing for his life.

Due to the ongoing conflicts in both Syria and Iraq, refugees and asylum-seekers should not be forcibly returned to their countries, where they would be at real risk of serious human rights violations or abuses. This is known as the principle of *non-refoulement*. The principle of *non-refoulement* applies to situations of generalized violence due to armed conflict, such as in the cases of Iraq and Syria, and is binding on all states. Furthermore, forcing refugees to return to their country of origin with the threat of indefinite detention would also amount to *refoulement*.

Name: Syrian refugees
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 208/15 Index: EUR 44/2622/2015 Issue Date: 8 October 2015