

# Amnesty International

## PUBLIC APPEAL

Bulgaria

### Fakia social care home for children

*In these conditions, another winter can only bring more suffering.*

Ivan Fišer, Amnesty International Researcher

Living conditions and inadequate treatment in the Fakia social care home for children with mental disabilities are life-threatening, in violation of numerous standards of international law and professional best practice. The situation in Fakia, an institution with 40 children, remains critical (see *Appeal case leaflets – AI Index: EUR 15/006/2002, October 2002*). The institution, located in the mountains is still without central heating and providing only basic living quarters. The children's lives are at risk, particularly in winter months when transportation to the nearest hospital can be difficult. In January 2000, two boys suffering from fever died because the roads were impassable and they were not taken promptly to a hospital. For the past three years the municipal and national authorities have been unable to agree on the most appropriate location for the new institution, although a German charity had reportedly offered to provide the bulk of the required finances.

In May 2003, a senior official of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy assured Amnesty International that the institution's move was imminent. However, the organization was recently informed that the closure of Fakia has once again been postponed, this time to December 2003.

**Please write to Christina Stoycheva (Head of the International Cooperation Unit at the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy) and Nikolay Angelov (Executive Director of the National Agency for Social Assistance), with a copy to Alexander Manolov Pramatarski (Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Children, Youth and Sport Affairs) and call on them to:**

- **ensure** that the living and material conditions for Fakia's children are in line with standards of international law and professional best practice;
- **ensure** that medical care is adequate and that the Fakia children are monitored and regularly reassessed by a team of specialists as a standard practice;
- **ensure** that if the authorities determine that a home cannot be reformed to meet standards of international law and professional best practice, it is closed permanently and the children moved to appropriate facilities at the earliest possible opportunity.

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