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**RUSSIAN FEDERATION: ANYTHING BUT SAFE FOR ASYLUM-SEEKERS**

The Russian Federation is failing in its duty to protect asylum-seekers fleeing human rights violations, Amnesty International said in a report released today.

"People fleeing from human rights violations and seeking protection in the Russian Federation are routinely denied access to asylum procedures," Amnesty International said. "Left in a legal limbo, often for years, these people are unable to obtain any protective identity documents from the Russian authorities, and are often harassed and ill-treated by law enforcement officers."

The Amnesty International report reveals that asylum-seekers in the Russian Federation are at constant risk of being detained, and those arriving at the international airports are often subjected to *refoulement* -- forced return to areas where they might face human rights violations.

"In the transit zone of Sheremetevo-II airport in Moscow, for instance, asylum-seekers are forcibly returned from the airport -- without even the most cursory examination of their asylum requests -- back to their countries of origin where they may face persecution, torture or threats to their lives," Amnesty International said.

According to the human rights organization, the problem concerns not only the Russian Federation but the international community as a whole.

"Amnesty International has monitored numerous cases where asylum-seekers have been sent from European countries back to Russia on the basis of 'safe third country' practice," Amnesty International said. "However, European governments should recognize the reality of inadequate refugee protection in the Russian Federation -- for many asylum-seekers, Russia is anything but 'safe'."

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