

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL FEATURE

AI index: ACT 30/036/2013

EMBARGO: Thursday 23 May 2013

People on the move: Greek police beat a tortured Turkish woman

This is part of a special 'People on the Move' series, highlighting the human rights violations faced by migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in every part of the world. These profiles are being published around the launch of Amnesty International's [Annual Report 2013](#).

For people who flee across the European Union's borders to seek respite from conflict or persecution, life is not always everything they might have hoped it would be.

Besides being foreigners in a new land and having to navigate the nuances of a different language and an alien culture, they are often treated with suspicion or outright hostility by residents and the authorities alike – discriminated against in law and practice.

One Turkish woman who fled to Greece last year recently shared her story with Amnesty International.

Deniz*, a 47-year-old Turkish national, settled in the Greek capital Athens after leaving her homeland last year to escape political persecution.

Back in Turkey, she had worked to support political prisoners who were on hunger strike – actions which earned her several arrests by the Turkish police, who subjected her to torture in custody.

Deniz is lucky to have found shelter in the house of some friends. Many asylum-seekers live in squalid conditions or sleep rough as a result of the limited number of places in shelters for asylum-seekers.

In addition, according to the Greek Council of Refugees very few asylum-seekers in Greece manage to find employment as a result of the economic crisis the country is facing and a recent circular issued by the authorities. This requires for an asylum-seeker to obtain permission to work, the State Employment Agency must certify that there are no Greek nationals that can occupy the vacancy.

Less than a year after her arrival in Greece, in February this year police in Athens arrested Deniz after the Turkish authorities issued an extradition request for her. She was soon released on bail.

Two months later, on 22 April, she and her lawyer reported to Athens' Exarheia police station in accordance with her bail conditions. Upon arrival there, she was informed there was a warrant out for her arrest, and she was promptly detained.

After around three hours, police transferred her by car to General Attika Police Directorate (GADA as it's known by its Greek initials) because there was no cell for female detainees at the station. Deniz was taken to a room, apparently to be searched. She described the ill-treatment she then received.

Initially there was only one policewoman in the room with her. Although Deniz cannot speak Greek, no translator was provided.

According to Deniz, the policewoman searched her initially with her hands. When the policewoman

asked her to strip naked, she refused, saying she was a refugee and did not want to take her clothes off.

Two policemen in civilian clothes were then called in to the room. "One of the male police officers was pulling me and the other, I believe intended to tear my clothes off," she explained.

"I understood that they were swearing at me. The female police officer was holding my hair.... One of the male officers punched me in my face.... My beating went on for approximately five minutes. Then the guard from the Exarheia police station heard my screams, entered the room and tried to take me away from [them]..... I was then transferred again to the Exarheia police station where I spent the night."

After her ordeal, Deniz filed a criminal complaint and had her injuries treated in a hospital.

She had visible signs of bruising on her face and arm when she recounted the incident to Amnesty International two days later.

At the end of April, the Council of Appeal Judges in Athens rejected the Turkish extradition request, meaning Deniz can remain in Greece. During the same week, the country's Supreme Court rejected an appeal by a public prosecutor against a decision of the Council of Misdemeanor Judges which refused the extradition of two asylum-seekers of Turkish nationality.

** A pseudonym has been used in this case.*