

URGENT ACTION

DETENTION OF REFUGEES MUST BE INVESTIGATED

Ninety-five refugees from the city of Kobani, Syria, who had been unlawfully detained in a sports hall in the Turkish border town of Suruç since 5 October have been released. They must be given access to medical care and an investigation must be carried out into their unlawful detention and allegations of ill-treatment.

At around 4pm on 20 October, 95 refugees from Syria were taken from the sports hall in Suruç, south-eastern Turkey, where they had been unlawfully detained since 5 October, to a tented camp in the Aligör neighbourhood in Suruç. After their arrival in the camp, they were released by the Turkish authorities and are believed to have joined their respective families in Turkey. These 95 individuals were the remaining refugees from a group of almost 300 initially detained in the sports hall. Two groups of 82 and 40 refugees were coerced into returning to Syria on 14 and 16 October, respectively, and a third group of around 85 were released to a camp in Turkey.

Lawyers acting on behalf of the refugees told Amnesty International that there has been no response from the authorities to the refugees' complaints of unlawful detention and ill-treatment, or the return of the two groups of refugees they had made. It is also unclear what medical care has been provided to the refugees following their release from detention. Some of the refugees reported to Amnesty International that they had serious medical conditions and that they had been denied access to medical examinations and medication while in detention.

During the past two weeks there have been multiple reports of refugees arriving from Kobani (also known as Ayn al-Arab) and being denied access to Turkey. There are also reports that injured people have faced excessive and life threatening delays before they were granted access to the country.

Please write immediately in Turkish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to carry out a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into the refugees' unlawful detention and allegations of ill-treatment, and of the return of two groups of refugees to Syria;
- Urging them to ensure that all of the released refugees are given access to medical examinations and receive any necessary medical treatment;
- Urging them to ensure that all refugees coming from Syria are afforded prompt access to Turkey and are not subjected to excessive delay, detention or any other punitive measure for attempting to seek asylum in Turkey.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 DECEMBER 2014 TO:

Minister of Interior

Mr Efkan Ala
İçişleri Bakanlığı
Bakanlıklar
Ankara, Turkey
Tel: +90 312 422 40 00
Fax: +90 312 418 17 95
E-mail: ozelkalem@icisleri.gov.tr

Salutation: Dear Minister

Directorate General of Migration

Management
Mr Atilla Toros
Director General
Lalegül Çamlıca Mahallesi 122. Sokak
No: 2/3 06370
Yenimahalle, Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 397 12 03
Email: gocidaresi@goc.gov.tr

Salutation: Dear Mr Toros

And copies to:

Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights
Meclis İnsan Haklarını İnceleme Komisyonu
Mr Ayhan Sefer Üstün
Commission Chairperson
TBMM İnsan Hakları İnceleme Komisyonu
Bakanlıklar, 06543 Ankara, Turkey
Fax: +90 312 420 53 94
Email: insanhaklarikom@tbmm.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 260/14. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR44/018/2014/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International was granted access to the refugees detained in the sports hall on 18 October. One refugee told Amnesty International that he was a 17-year-old child. Many are young adults aged between 18 and 24, although in the group there are also older men in their 40s and 50s. The men told Amnesty International that they have repeatedly demanded to be released in order to join their families who are refugees in Turkey.

The group were amongst a larger group of almost 300 refugees who were detained when they attempted to cross into Turkey at the Mürşitpınar border gate on 5 October. The refugees told Amnesty International that they had refused to sign papers agreeing to be returned to Syria and not to attempt to re-enter Turkey.

The refugees told Amnesty International that two groups were returned to the city of Kobani in Syria, where fierce armed clashes continue between the armed group that calls itself Islamic State and the YPG (People's Defence Units), the armed group of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) which has held the city since July 2012. The refugees told Amnesty International that the groups that were sent back to Kobani had been coerced into signing the papers and told that they would be detained indefinitely unless they agreed to be returned to Syria. This would amount to constructive *refoulement*, which is prohibited under international law and Turkey's domestic law.

The refugees told Amnesty International that they were not given reasons for their detention and were repeatedly told that they would be released by the Turkish authorities. They said "If we have committed a crime, then take us before a court and let them prove it." Many of the refugees told Amnesty International that their families did not know that they were in detention. Those whose family members were aware of their detention were not allowed to see them when they arrived at the sports hall.

Refugees told Amnesty International that they were individually interrogated on the third day of their detention, during which time they were ill-treated by gendarmerie officers who put them on the floor and stood on their limbs. Some of the refugees told Amnesty International that when they were questioned as to whether they were members of the Kurdish PYD administration, they were threatened with knives put to their throats and told "We will cut off your heads and throw them into Syria".

The refugees were held in a sports hall 24 hours a day with inadequate ventilation and only one filthy toilet and shower for the 95 detainees. Amnesty International spoke to nine men who had urgent medical complaints. One man told Amnesty International that he had suffered a heart attack while in detention in the sports hall. An ambulance took him to hospital but he was returned to the sports hall after an hour and not provided with medication or further medical examination. The refugees told Amnesty International that none of the others had been given any access to medical examination, treatment or medication during their detention. A further eight men reported medical problems to Amnesty International including a spinal injury, respiratory problems, a heart condition, anaemia, urinary infection, kidney stones and skin diseases. Many of the refugees told Amnesty International that their conditions had arisen or worsened during their detention.

The refugees told Amnesty International that they were civilians, nine were journalists working for the Hawar news agency and had remained in Kobani to transmit news of the situation there to the outside world. Many men said that they worked as drivers, showing their driver identification cards.