

URGENT ACTION

HUNDREDS UNLAWFULLY HELD IN INHUMAN CONDITIONS

Hundreds of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants of all ages are being unlawfully detained in the Reception Centre for Foreigners “Gazi Baba” in Skopje, the capital. The centre is overcrowded and conditions are inhuman and degrading, with extremely limited access to adequate sanitation and healthcare. In some cases people are having to sleep on the floor. They have no access to legal aid or protection.

Most of them, including whole families, are fleeing armed conflict in Syria and are detained so that the authorities establishing their identity and to serve as witnesses in criminal proceedings against smugglers. In some cases they are arbitrarily detained for months, some times for more than 6 months, without the possibility to challenge their detention in court.

Amnesty International has received direct and indirect reports exposing the inhuman and degrading conditions in “Gazi Baba”. The reception centre has an official capacity of 120 to 150 people. According to a Ministry of Interior official, around 200 individuals are normally detained in the dilapidated facility. Other sources indicated that at times up to 350 people have been detained in the centre. Despite repeated calls, Amnesty International has been denied permission to visit the centre.

Testimonies gathered from former detainees, photographic evidence, as well as information from international organizations have confirmed that the detention conditions in the overcrowded centre are grossly inadequate. People in some cases have to sleep on the floor and access to adequate sanitation and healthcare is extremely limited. Lengthy detention periods in these conditions amounts to inhuman and degrading treatment. Automatic detention of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants is unlawful, while children, particularly unaccompanied children, should never be detained solely for migration purposes.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Urging the Minister of Interior to immediately stop the unlawful detention of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants at the Reception Centre for Foreigners;
- Calling on the Minister of Interior to improve the detention conditions for those individuals for whom detention is lawful, proportionate and necessary following an individualized review procedure with the possibility of appeal;
- Urging the Head of the Asylum Department to take immediate steps to provide those detained in the centre with the opportunity to seek asylum, and to ensure their claims are fairly and individually assessed.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 MAY 2015 TO:

Minister of Interior

Ms Gordana Jankuloska
Ministry of Interior
Dimce Mircev 9.
1000 Skopje
Macedonia
Fax: +389 2311 2468
Email: gordana_jankuloska@moi.gov.mk
and kontakt@moi.gov.mk
Salutation: Dear Minister

Head of Asylum Department

Ms Bratka Dajanovska Milcevska
Ministry of Interior
Dimce Mircev 9.
1000 Skopje
Macedonia
Fax: +389 2311 2468
Email: kontakt@moi.gov.mk
Salutation: Dear Ms Milcevska

And copies to:

Head of Sector for Border Affairs and Migration
Mr Marinko Kocovski
Sector for Border Affairs and Migration
Dimce Mircev 9.1000 Skopje
Macedonia
Fax: +389 2311 2468
Email: marinko_kocovski@moi.gov.mk

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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Concerns about the length of detention and the conditions at the Reception Centre for Foreigners, as well as the detention of children, pregnant women and nursing mothers have also been expressed by the Macedonian Ombudsperson's Office, following their visits to "Gazi Baba". On International Migrants Day, 18 December 2014, the Ombudsperson recalled international standards which prohibit the detention of children, and called for them to be provided with adequate social, medical and psychological assistance.

In October 2014, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment visited the centre. The publication of their report is pending the consent of the state.

Everyone, including all migrants and asylum-seekers, regardless of migration status, has the right to liberty, including protection from arbitrary arrest and detention. A presumption against detention should be established by law. Under international law, no one should be deprived of their liberty unless on grounds and in accordance with procedures established by law. The Human Rights Committee has observed that in order not to be arbitrary, the arrest and detention of migrant workers and members of their families, including those in an irregular situation, must be (a) prescribed by law, (b) necessary in the specific circumstances and (c) proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued.

Any decision restricting the right to liberty of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers must always be based on a detailed and individualized assessment, including the personal history of the individual concerned, and, as relevant, the risk of absconding, if any. Such assessment should consider the necessity and appropriateness of any restriction of liberty, including whether it is proportionate to the objective to be achieved. Further, the person concerned should be provided with a reasoned decision, in a language that they understand. Amnesty International is not aware that any of these considerations and safeguards have been duly observed with regards to the detainees held at "Gazi Baba".

In January 2015, Amnesty International delegates visited Skopje but were denied permission to enter the centre. Amnesty International delegates were allowed to visit the Vizbegovo asylum centre on the outskirts of the capital. Only about 30 asylum seekers were being accommodated at that asylum centre which has a capacity to accommodate up to 150 people.

Name: Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the Reception Centre for Foreigners
Gender m/f: both

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