

URGENT ACTION

INFAMOUS 'GAZI BABA' RECEPTION CENTRE CLOSED

The Reception Centre for Foreigners "Gazi Baba" has been closed. This brings an end to the detention of hundreds of refugees and migrants, in inhumane and degrading conditions. The last detainees were released on 24 July.

On 18 July the Macedonian Ministry of Interior informed the media that they had begun the process of releasing small groups of detained asylum seekers, refugees and migrants from the Gazi Baba Reception Centre for Foreigners. Most of them were transferred to the Asylum Reception Centre, if they wished to claim asylum, although the majority seem to have left soon afterwards.

The Ministry of Interior, working with the prosecutor's office, had expedited cases in which refugees or migrants were due to appear as witnesses in proceedings against their smugglers, so that the detainees could be released.

The decision by the Ministry of Interior to release all those detained in Gazi Baba was – in no small part – a result of international pressure, including the letters received from Amnesty International's members and activists, as well as criticism by other local and international organizations, including the UN Committee against Torture.

The Ministry of Interior has not yet responded to Amnesty International's request for further information, but we understand from other organizations that Gazi Baba will be refurbished as an open centre for vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees, including families and unaccompanied minors. The Ministry also plans to open a temporary detention centre for refugees and migrants suspected of crimes or misdemeanours (like being irregularly in the country), until a new centre – meeting international standards – is built.

This does not mean an end to the detention of refugees and migrants. There has also been no change in the law which leads to refugees and migrants being detained as witnesses. We will continue to monitor the situation.

Many thanks to all those that took action. No further action is required from the UA network.

This is the first update of UA 46/15. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR65/1083/2015/en/>

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

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