

PUBLIC

AI Index: EUR 25/012/2001

11 December 2001

Further information on UA 312/01 (EUR 25/011/2001, 7 December 2001) - Fear of forcible return

GREECE55 Iraqi Kurds and Afghans

Other foreign nationals denied the opportunity to apply for asylum

The Greek government have told local non-governmental organisations that the 55 Iraqi Kurds and Afghans will not be forcibly returned to Turkey.

All 55 have reportedly been released and granted 15-day temporary residence permits, and have been transferred to Athens with the assistance of the UNHCR. This should give them the opportunity to apply for asylum if they wish to do so. Those who file a formal application for asylum will be allowed to remain in Greece while their applications are considered.

Thirty four others who arrived with them were forcibly returned to Turkey on 3 December. One of them was an Iraqi Kurd, Abdulkader Aziz Mamakala, who was returned even though he reportedly had visible scars from the torture he had suffered in Iraq.

The Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) and other non-governmental organisations had appealed to the government on this case, as had a Greek opposition MP. The Greek coastguard have recently prevented at least three ships from entering Greek waters, without giving those on board any opportunity to apply for asylum, and Amnesty International remains concerned at the Greek authorities' reluctance to grant unauthorized migrants the opportunity to apply for asylum.

Many thanks to all those who took action. If possible please send a final round of appeals, in English, French, Italian, German or your own language:

- welcoming reports that the remaining 55 Afghans and Iraqi Kurds who landed in Euboia on 17 November will not be forcibly returned to Turkey, and have been released on 15-day temporary residence permits and transferred to Athens;
- expressing concern that 34 others who arrived with them were forcibly returned to Turkey on 3 December, among them Abdulkader Aziz Mamakala, a Kurd who had reportedly been brutally tortured in Iraq;
- reminding the authorities that as a party to the 1951 UN Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, Greece is obliged not to return anyone to a country where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations or where they would not be guaranteed effective protection against forcible return;
- urging the authorities to ensure that all unauthorized migrants arriving in Greece have the opportunity to apply for asylum;
- pointing out that the Ministries of Public Order and Foreign Affairs have given assurances that the Protocol signed by Greece and Turkey on 8 November will not be applied to refugees entitled to protection.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

Mr Kostas Simitis

Office of the Prime Minister

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Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Public Order
Mr Mihalis Chrysochoidis
Ministry of Public Order
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Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs
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Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Greece accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 January 2002.