

PUBLIC

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14 August 2001

Further information on UA 185/01 (EUR 44/045/2001, 25 July 2001) and follow-up (EUR 44/047/2001, 27 July 2001) - Fear for safety/ torture, ill-treatment

TURKEY/GREECE African nationals deported from Istanbul to Greece

All the African nationals stranded on the border between Greece and Turkey have now left the area: most have returned to Istanbul, while some are believed to have entered Greece.

They had been stranded on the border since 14 July, when Turkish gendarmes attempted to deport them. Representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) searched for the group on the Greek side of the border on 27 July and the Turkish side on 2 August. They did not find anyone, but were able to confirm that the Turkish authorities had taken a group of around 200 people to the Meriç river (known in Greek as the Evros) which forms part of the border between the two countries.

More than 150 African nationals have filed complaints at the Human Rights Association (_HD) office in Istanbul about their treatment by police officers and gendarmes. The group, from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, Liberia, Togo and South Africa have complained of illegal detention, inhumane detention conditions, rape, sexual harassment and ill-treatment while they were held at the Foreign Nationals' Department at Istanbul Police Headquarters and during deportation. They allege that one woman died at the border area on 22 July, and another suffered a miscarriage caused by the conditions in which she was held.

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) visited the Foreign Nationals' Department in 1997 and described it as "...grossly overcrowded...detainees were not provided with suitable means for sleeping (and in particular were not offered mattresses), ventilation and artificial lighting were inadequate, there was poor access to natural light, and sanitary conditions were insufficient for the numbers held."

The report continued: "...many detainees alleged that they had been left unaware of their legal situation...Further, it was far from clear whether detainees were allowed to receive visits from relatives and lawyers, and access to the detention facility for representatives of relevant organizations was at best uncertain".

Judging from the complaints filed with the _HD, conditions at the Department have not improved. Cells were crowded and detainees were apparently not provided with food, clean water or medical attention, so that several reportedly became sick. Representatives of human rights groups attempted to visit the group, but were turned away.

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. Those who wish to do so may send a final round of appeals, in English, German or your own language:

- calling for a prompt, comprehensive, independent and impartial investigation into allegations that a group of around 200 African nationals were tortured and ill-treated by police and gendarmerie officers;
- calling for the CPT's recommendations about detention conditions at the Foreign Nationals' Department at Istanbul Police headquarters to be

implemented, and for conditions at all Foreign Nationals' Departments in Turkey to be brought into line with international standards.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

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Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

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Salutation: Dear Minister

and to diplomatic representatives of Turkey accredited to your country.