

MEDIA ADVISORY

New Amnesty International Field Report

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia/Kosovo Province

Humanitarian Evacuation Programme: a solution to the refugee crisis?

As thousands of refugees continue to pour back into Kosovo, despite warnings that the situation is not yet sufficiently safe, Amnesty International is calling on the international community to live up to its promises to share equally the responsibility for protecting the remaining refugees in Macedonia.

In its new field report released today, the organization highlights the problems and anguish faced by refugees due to the lack of information regarding the continuation of the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme. *Under the programme, systems of identifying those refugees most in need of evacuation were never properly established and the registration process of the refugees, which has been fraught with difficulties, has further compounded the situation.*

In its recommendations, Amnesty International urges:

The continuation of the Humanitarian Evacuation Programme -- which threatens to be closed down in early July -- *until there is an independent and impartial assessment that refugees may return to Kosovo in safety. The responsibility to protect refugees must be shared equally between countries.*

Prompt and accurate registration of refugees. This is crucial for refugees to show that they are entitled to the rights provided for in international standards. Provision should also be made to ensure that refugees are able to obtain individual refugee identity documents, which would be recognized as documentation upon and after return to Kosovo.

- *Countries hosting refugees evacuated from Macedonia to ensure that they are afforded the rights attendant on their status as refugees, and in particular, that they receive effective and durable protection against refoulement.*

*** The following people will be available for interviews: Refugee Officers, Leanne MacMillan and Saul Takahashi, who will be in Geneva for the EXCOM Meeting, can be contacted on mobile: +44 378 352 989; Jan Shaw, interviewed refugees in Macedonia between late March and early June: +44 410 298 795; Balkan field Press Officer, Brendan Paddy, on mobile phone: +44 831 640 150 (a landline may be available for broadcast interviews).**

**** For a copy of the 10-page report, *Humanitarian Evacuation and the International Response to Refugees from Kosovo*, or for a copy of the 8 minute Video News Release, *Human rights must be guaranteed*, please call Amnesty International's press office in London: +44 171 413 5566.**