

**Joint Statement by  
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly - Turkey  
Amnesty International - Turkey**

**ILLEGAL DEPORTATION of ASYLUM SEEKERS in TURKEY MUST STOP**

(August 9, 2007, Istanbul) In a joint press statement issued today, Amnesty International (AI) Turkey and Helsinki Citizens' Assembly- Turkey (hCa) expressed their grave concerns about the widespread cases of the illegal deportation of asylum seekers, as well as the denial of their right to have access to asylum procedures in Turkey.

The two human rights organizations fear that there is a growing trend by Turkish authorities to ignore asylum applications. Several confirmed cases of illegal deportations of asylum seekers have come to the attention of hCa and AI Turkey.

On July 29, 2007, three Iranian asylum seekers of the Baha'i faith were deported from Mus Hurriyet Police Station where they had been in detention since July 12, 2007. They were deported despite numerous attempts on the part of the asylum seekers to lodge asylum applications, as well as UNHCR's instructions that their application to be taken. Their current situation is unknown. Given the severe persecution of Bahai's in Iran, however, it is feared that the men will face inhumane treatment on the account of their faith.

Ozlem Dalkiran, the program director of the Refugee Advocacy and Support Program of hCa said: "*Deportation to a country where an individual faces a risk of persecution is a violation of the 'non-refoulement' principle of the Geneva Refugee Convention to which Turkey is a party.*"

On July 20, 2007, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issued a temporary stay on the deportation of an Afghani asylum seeker in five hours after his lawyers requested the Court's intervention. In that cases, the asylum asylum seeker had applied for asylum two weeks earlier, and got no response from the ministry of interior and was to be deported from Istanbul that day.

The Refugee Program Coordinator of AI Turkey, Gökçe Saraydın stated: "*We request that the Ministry of Interior treat this intervention as a legal precedent and adjust its current practices accordingly.*"

hCa and AI Turkey call upon Turkey's government authorities to fulfill their legal obligation to provide all asylum seekers access to the asylum procedure in Turkey, and to respect the principle of *non-refoulement* - the prohibition of the forcible return of an asylum seeker or refugee to a country where his or her life or liberty may be at risk. The current practice of refusing to accept asylum applications and deporting asylum seekers and refugees constitutes a violation of the principle of *non-refoulement*. Turkey is required to uphold this principle pursuant to its obligations under international treaties such as the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the European Human Rights Convention, and the Convention Against Torture as well as its national regulations. Furthermore, the violation of the non-refoulement principle clearly contradicts the Turkish Government's 2005 National Action Plan on Asylum and Migration, the 1994 Asylum Regulation and the Circular on asylum issued on June 22, 2006.

**Background information on the ECHR case:**

- H.E.N applied to Amnesty International Turkey while in detention in Ayvacik district of Canakkale, Turkey. An AI delegation visited him in Ayvacik Gendarmarie Station.
- H.E.N applied for asylum on July 7, 2007. His application reached to the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Ankara branch on July 9, 2007.
- No reply from MoI was received.  
H.E.N. is transferred to Istanbul for deportation along with the other Afghani nationals on July 19, 2007
- The same day, AI Turkey sent a fax to the Turkish authorities requesting that the deportation procedures should immediately cease in light of the failure to provide an official response to H.E.N.'s asylum application. However, the organization received no reply to their request.
- The legal representatives of H.E.N applied to the ECHR and within five hours, the court issued a temporary stay on the deportation.

**For further information:**

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