



Press release from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, NOAS and AITIMA

## Out the Back Door: illegal deportations of refugees from Greece

Oslo/Athens, 22 October 2009: **European states party to the Dublin Convention may be in breach of the UN Refugee Convention by returning asylum seekers to Greece. In a report published today, NOAS, NHC and the Greek organization AITIMA show that refugees are subject to considerable risk of deportation from Greece without having their need for protection assessed.**

The report presents the experiences of asylum seekers who have been deported across the border to Turkey under the cover of night, and who have not been given a chance to have their need for protection assessed in any European country. In Turkey, they run a considerable risk of being sent onwards, to their home country.

- We have documented how asylum seekers, along with other immigrants, are rounded up by the police and transported to the Turkish border near Evros in Northern Greece. The lack of basic legal safeguards in Greece is the main reason why this is allowed to happen, as well as the Greek policy of deporting immigrants without this being in any way regulated by formal procedures, says senior advisor in the Norwegian Organisation for Asylum Seekers (NOAS), Sylo Taraku

Protection from being returned to a place where a refugee may be at risk of persecution, so-called *non-refoulement*, is the very corner stone of international refugee rights. This also applies to indirect returns, which places a responsibility on European states if countries like Greece and Turkey return persons onwards to persecution.

-We challenge European governments to immediately stop all returns to Greece under the Dublin II regulations, in order to respect the recommendations made by UNHCR in April 2008. This is not a question related to immigration policy, but a question of basic rights, says Berit Lindeman in the Norwegian Helsinki Committee

-The European Union must also seek to establish a fair responsibility sharing mechanism to ease the relatively high numbers of asylum seekers arriving in Greece. Greece's new Government must immediately make sure the illegal deportations are stopped and to establish and implement a fair asylum system in line with the EU standards, Spyros Rizakos of AITIMA adds.

The report *Out the Back Door: The Dublin II Regulation and illegal deportations from Greece* has been published on [www.nhc.no](http://www.nhc.no) and [www.noas.no](http://www.noas.no)

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