



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

Kurdish refugees in Corsica: asylum or charter flights?

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On Friday, January 22nd, a ship dropped off 140 people on the south coast of Corsica. These people were exhausted and starved. They are women and children desperately trying to escape from what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights calls “terror and misery”. These people are Kurds from Syria, fleeing one of the worst possible existences under one of the worst possible regimes. They are seeking asylum.

The city of Bonifacio sheltered them in a gymnasium, acting with the elementary sense of humanity that is to be expected from the authorities of the French Republic.

The Corsican branch of the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (Human Rights League), that the refugees asked to meet, went to Bonifacio this morning to maintain the appointment made with the Corsican Préfet - a government-appointed official – to examine the conditions that have to be met to respect the fundamental rights of these Human beings. This appointment was canceled by the Préfet. Instead, the refugees were loaded onto coaches to be taken to Solenzara airbase, so as to be dispatched over the immigration detention centers of Lyon, Marseille, Nîmes and Toulouse. In despair they started a collective hunger strike.

Not only is the State breaking its word, but these people's most elementary rights are being brutally violated. These people are not “clandestine immigrants” living and hiding on the French soil, but refugees who have the absolute right to seek asylum, a right guaranteed by the French Constitution as well as by international conventions. At the very most, they can be placed in waiting areas until they make a formal asylum request. In any case, sending them to immigration detention centers constitutes a deliberate violation of the most essential commitments of the French Republic. Provided of course that Mr Besson does not send them back to Syria, in the same way he sent back Afghan refugees to Kabul, a city he deems safe. Human feelings do not discriminate between the misery of the Kurdish people, and that of the people of Haiti. What is an evidence for the citizens has obviously ceased to be so at the uppermost levels of the State.

The Human Rights League, the European Association for the Defense of Human Rights, the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues and the Euro-Mediterranean Network for Human Rights are holding French authorities responsible for the fate of these refugees, especially regarding the respect of their rights to seek asylum and to be treated with dignity as they should be on the French Republic territory.

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