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PRESS RELEASE

The rightful struggle of refugees in Greece

During the first decade of the 21st century Greece has been grossly violating international refugee law and refugees' rights.

The situation has deteriorated since 2009 with the practical suspension of the asylum system, the growing impoverishment of refugees and the racist attacks against them.

The government elected in October 2009 announced the reform of the asylum system. However, and despite the ongoing process of legislative changes, so far the situation has remained unchanged. There have been announcements of new institutions (new appeals' committees, asylum service, screening centers, reception centers), but their implementation requires significant investments. Given the economic problems of the country, the inefficiency of the civil service to absorb and manage EU funds and the weakening of the public sector due to the policy of cutting public expenditure, it is uncertain if and when these institutions will be implemented.

It is reasonable, therefore, that refugees intensify their protests. After many years of harassment and since they feel deceived by all sides, even by those who state that they support them, they turn to hunger strikes as a final resort in order to fight for their fundamental rights.

The state, taking advantage of the allegations that hunger strikers are threatening public order and public health, deploys the riot police to remove forcibly the hunger strikers with the sewed mouths and their families.

However the refugee problem cannot be solved through violence nor by plans of dubious effectiveness, but only with immediately applicable solutions based on the respect of international refugee law which will ensure the rights of refugees.

The refugees cannot wait longer. It is the duty of all sides involved (government, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, civil society) to take action for the immediate solution to the problem of refugees in Greece.