

URGENT ACTION

OVER 2,000 AFGHANS AT RISK OF DEPORTATION

In recent weeks, Turkey has deported 7,100 Afghan citizens, and at least 2,000 more are detained and at risk of deportation. Detainees report being pressured to “accept” a return to Afghanistan.

In late 2017, Turkey hosted about 145,000 refugees from Afghanistan. In 2018, increasing numbers of Afghans have entered Turkey through the country's eastern border with Iran, with Turkey's Ministry of the Interior citing a figure of 27,000 arrivals this year. The Turkish authorities have responded by detaining people and sending them back to Afghanistan. Turkey's Minister of the Interior said 7,100 Afghans have been deported on charter flights in recent weeks, and estimated that figure rising to 10,000 in the coming days. The sharp increase in the rate at which Turkey is deporting Afghans might be linked to a migration agreement signed between the two countries on 9 April.

At present, over 2,000 more people appear to be detained and at risk of deportation. According to confidential sources, about 2,000 Afghans are being held in a container camp in Düziçi in Osmaniye province, and potentially hundreds more in a Removal Centre in Erzurum Province. There may be Afghans held in other places of detention, pushing the figure higher. Detainees appear to be mostly single men, although families are also detained.

Amnesty International has spoken by phone with three people detained in the Düziçi camp (two men and one woman), and one man deported to Kabul. “Farhad,” a 23-year old lawyer from Baghlan province, said he fled to Turkey to avoid forcible recruitment by the Taliban. “Ramin,” a 25-year old baker from Paktita province, explained that he left Afghanistan because of the war. The detainees told Amnesty International they were initially detained in Erzurum province in late March, then transferred by bus to Düziçi, where they have been held since about 8 April.

The Turkish authorities state that returns to Afghanistan are voluntary. However, detainees say they are being informed that they will be sent back to Afghanistan, and people are told they must put their fingerprints on a document written only in Turkish, and which they don't understand. This document could be a “voluntary repatriation form,” which the Turkish authorities have previously used in coercive circumstances with Syrian and other refugees. Confidential sources state that Afghans are presented with a “choice” between deportation and detention. Although some people – especially families – were reportedly able to seek asylum and then released, the people with whom Amnesty International spoke said that their requests to do so have been ignored.

Please write immediately in Turkish, English or your own language urging the Turkish authorities to:

- Immediately release the detained Afghans;
- Ensure the detained Afghans have access to national asylum procedures;
- Halt all returns to Afghanistan, until they can take place in safety and dignity.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 5 JUNE 2018 TO:

Minister of Interior

Süleyman Soylu

İçişleri Bakanlığı Bakanlıklar

Ankara, Turkey

Twitter: @suleymansoylu

Fax: +90 312 418 1795

Salutation: Dear Minister

Directorate General of Migration

Management

Mr. Abdullah Ayaz

Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü

Çamlıca Mahallesi

122. Sokak No:4

Yenimahalle/Ankara, Turkey

Fax: +90 312 422 09 00 / +90 312 422

09 99

Email: gocidaresi@goc.gov.tr

Salutation: Dear Mr. Ayaz

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ABDURRAHMAN BİLGİÇ, Embassy of the Republic of Turkey, 43 Belgrave Square, SW1X 8PA, 020 7393 0202, embassy.london@mfa.gov.tr

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Refugees in Turkey

Turkey hosts the world's largest refugee population, with 3.5 million Syrians, 145,000 Afghans, 140,000 Iranians, as well as thousands of people from other countries.

Conditions in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is currently gripped by a non-international armed conflict between what are known as "Anti-Government Elements" and Pro-Government Forces. Among the Anti-Government Elements are the Taliban and the group calling itself the Islamic State, but more than 20 armed groups are operating inside the country. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan reported that 2016 was the deadliest year on record for civilians in Afghanistan, with 11,418 people killed or injured. According to the UN, conflict-related insecurity and violence inflicts severe harm on civilians, especially women and children. The deterioration of the security situation persisted in 2017, with over 10,000 civilian casualties that year. The conflict is volatile and involves multiple groups that are constantly seeking to gain or regain territory, and whose actions can be unpredictable.

Many people in the country are also at particular risk of persecution, regardless of whether they live in an area under the effective control of Pro-Government Forces or Anti-Government Elements. In areas under the control of the government, state agents routinely perpetrate human rights violations. Pro-government armed groups are responsible for abuses such as deliberate killings, assault, extortion and intimidation. In regions in which Anti-Government Elements are in control, human rights violations are widespread. These include extrajudicial executions, torture and ill-treatment, as well as denials of the rights to free movement, freedom of expression, political participation, and access to education and the right to health care. Moreover, both sides of the conflict perpetrate human rights violations in areas outside their respective control.

International legal standards

Under the international legal principle of *non-refoulement*, Turkey cannot transfer anyone to a place where they are at real risk of serious human rights violations – such as persecution, or torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. At present, given the grave security and human rights situation across the country, all forced returns to Afghanistan constitute *refoulement*.

International law also places obligations on Turkey to justify any restrictions on the right to liberty. The legal basis for the detention of these Afghan migrants and asylum-seekers is unclear, as such measures can only be justifiable under extremely limited circumstances. Given the fact that thousands of people appear to have been apprehended and detained in a short amount of time, there is a high risk that the detention of these Afghans is arbitrary and unlawful.

Turkey is also obliged, under international law, to ensure that all people intending to seek asylum from persecution are given an effective opportunity to do so.

Name:

Gender m/f: all