

Newsletter August 2021

Dear Amnesty Activists and supporters. The fear, terror and despair of Afghan women men and children trying to flee the Taliban regime has brought the plight of refugees back into our view and conscience. War, oppression and persecution are forcing people to flee and find a place of safety. Those braving to cross the Mediterranean in little unseaworthy boats are doing so because there is no way back, behind them is death and the hell of Libyan detention camps. But instead of compassion most refugees are met with violence when they try to cross into Fortress Europe. I am attaching the latest Amnesty report on Libya:

Libya: ‘No one will look for you’: Forcibly returned from sea to abusive detention in Libya

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The report is detailing the torture, rape, abuse and extortion inflicted on refugees, and the complicity of Frontex the European border agency collaborating with the Libyan coastguard . But even those who managed to get into Europe are suffering violence at the hands of border police, and abuse in detention or asylum centres as in Switzerland.

It is time to show compassion and solidarity with refugees. We are organising a demonstration and Day of Action for the 23rd of October, campaigning for safe and legal routes for refugees, the right to asylum and respect for the dignity and human rights of refugees.

Demonstration Defend the Right to Asylum !

Refugees Welcome !

Saturday 23rd October

Assemble 12 noon at Embassy of Switzerland

Finish at 3.30 pm at the Home Office.

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Complicit in Torture, Rape, Extortion and Murder-

Fortress Europe kills !

War, oppression and persecution are forcing people: men, women, children to leave their homes and seek safety and a future for their children in another country. The vast majority of refugees are hosted in developing countries.

Few take the perilous and dangerous journey to reach Europe lured by the promise of democracy , rule of law and respect for Human Rights. They are let down badly.

At the external borders in Greece, Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary refugees experience brutality at the hands of the border police , who are briefed to keep refugees out. Families and unaccompanied children are languishing in overcrowded tents which are frequently flooded with little water and sanitation on the Greek islands.

Worst : the European Union and Frontex are cooperating with Libya at keeping refugees out of Europe no matter what the human cost. Surveillance drones and planes are directing the Libyan coastguard to the little boats full of refugees desperate to escape the hell of Libyan detention camps. Once caught a terrible fate awaits most. Women and girls are abused and raped . All face inhuman conditions in overcrowded detention camps with little food, water and sanitation. Many are forced to work under inhuman conditions, torture and extortion are rife. Some refugees die, we don't know how many.

“No-one will look for you “ said a refugee who managed to escape.

El Hiblu 3

Before they were known as the El Hiblu 3, they were three teenagers with a passion for football and basketball. Aged 15, 16 and 19 at the time, they wanted what we all do: a safer, better life. That common goal brought them from Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire to Libya. Desperate to escape the violence and torture cells reserved for refugees and migrants there, they boarded a dinghy with over 100 others bound for Europe. The dinghy soon ran into trouble and was rescued by the El Hiblu, an oil transporter. The El Hiblu's crew then tried to return those rescued to Libya –which was unlawful –despite promising that they wouldn't. A protest broke out. The three youths were asked to help calm the situation. Acting as interpreters, they defended the right of those rescued not to face torture again in Libya. The crew turned the ship towards Europe. However, as it entered Malta's waters, the Maltese authorities stormed the ship, claiming the three had taken it by force. They charged the youths with offences so serious that they could be jailed for life. This despite finding almost no evidence to support the charges. The three youths had simply tried to defend their safety and to protect those rescued with them. Now they're in the dock.

For several years members of Ngo's and charities like "Jugend rettet" "Medicines sans Frontieres", "Save the children" as well as Individuals who save lives have been criminalised ,ships impounded, the crew taken to court.

But even those refugees who made it into Europe are not safe. Federal asylum centres in Switzerland are rife with abuse against asylum seekers.

Denmark is deporting or forcibly returning refugees to countries where their lives are in danger. Of particular concern is the coerced removal of Syrian refugees into removal centres where they are under pressure to "voluntarily" return while Denmark waits for the diplomatic situation to enable them to deport directly.

In the UK the Nationality and Borders bill is awaiting its third reading in Parliament. If this bill goes through it will make vulnerable people even more vulnerable and set a terrible example. Criminalising people just for trying to reach a place of safety is morally and legally indefensible. People cross the

Channel and put themselves in serious danger because there are simply no safe alternatives open to them.

The UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights states in article 14 :

Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

Asylum is a Human Right ! Refugees Welcome!

Demonstration on Saturday 23rd October to defend the Right to Asylum and Day of Action

Assemble at 12 noon outside the **Embassy of Switzerland**

16-18 Montagu Place London W1 H 2BQ

We will be campaigning at the Swiss Embassy against Human Rights violations in Swiss Federal Asylum Centres.

From there we will be walking to the **Embassy of Malta** (Arrival 1.30pm)

Malta House, 36-38 Piccadilly London W1 J 0LE

There we will be campaigning for the acquittal of the three young boys, charged with serious crimes for using their language skills to negotiate the rescue of more than hundred refugees to Malta.

From there we will be walking to **Europe House** , the European Parliament Liaison Office in the UK . (Arrival 2.30pm)

32 Smith Square, London SW1P 3EU

We will be calling for:

Suspension of any co-operation with Libya on migration and border control, and in particular any assistance facilitating the containment of people in Libya

ensuring that civilian vessels, including boats operated by NGOs, are fully able to carry out their lifesaving SAR activities, without hindrance, including in Libya's SAR region;

Opening of additional safe and legal routes into Europe, through the offer of a meaningful number of places for resettlement and alternative pathways for protection for the thousands of people in need of protection stranded in Libya, and review migration policies with a view to facilitating regular pathways for migrants.

Finally we will be visiting the **Home Office** at

2 Marsham Street, London SW1P4DF. (Arrival 3pm).

We will be demanding safe and legal routes for asylum seekers and access to fair asylum procedures irrespective of the method of arrival.

Join us !

For more information please contact Ulrike.schmidt@amnesty.org.uk

Day of Action

For those who can not travel to London we are proposing a nationwide **Day of Action on 23rd October** . One idea for the day of Action could be Amnesty supporters placing paper boats in public places with messages calling for safe and legal routes for refugees

Find out how to make a sailing boat from paper here :

<https://www.wikihow.com/Fold-an-Origami-Sail-Boat>

Please discuss ideas for a Day of Action in your groups and let us know !

We will be collating all your ideas and actions via a # on social media

Further information and background by Rovena Tanazi

Rovena.Tanazi@amnesty.org.uk

Malta (The El Hiblu 3) Our long term case for adoption by groups

In Malta, there are three youths who face arbitrary and unjust charges held against them by the Maltese authorities. If found guilty of these grave offences, they could face life in prison. The male youths were among a group of over 100 people who survived and fled Libya and were rescued by a cargo ship called the El Hiblu 1 in March 2019. The crew on the ship attempted to return the rescued people back to Libya, which is not a safe place for migrants, as it is where torture, abuse, rape and extortion are common occurrences for refugees and migrants in Libya. The rescued migrants thus protested against the illegal return as they feared for their lives to be disembarked in Libya.

No evidence by the Maltese Authorities suggest any violence or damage to the ship which rescued the El Hiblu 3 and over 100 others from a dangerous dingy. The youths played a diplomatic role on the ship, calming the rest of the passengers, with one of them translating to the ship's captain and all three being allowed to sit with the captain and crew to reassure the other passengers that they would not be returned to Libya. Witnesses in the trial, which is still ongoing, also concur with this version of events described here.

Despite this, they were arrested upon arrival in Malta and now face a number of serious convictions all because they took a stand for their life and the rights of others. They, like the other migrants, sought safety in Europe, but now risk suffering a miscarriage of justice because they opposed an unlawful return.

As the trial runs, the El Hiblu 3 describe feeling powerless, robbed of a voice and a free, happy life. With your support, we can ensure they feel empowered by our love and support and make sure we push forward the truth of what really happened in March 2019. They deserve to get on with their lives and have these charges against them dropped and the case closed. This is the justice they deserve after everything they have experienced.

Read more about their case here: [Amnesty Public Statement](#).

BBC podcast on the El Hiblu 3 here: [The Documentary Podcast - Malta and the El Hiblu 3 - BBC Sounds](#).

Read a recent BBC news article here: [Malta: The teenagers pulled from the sea and accused of terrorism - BBC News](#).

Sign our petition here: [Demand justice for the El Hiblu 3 | Amnesty International](#).

Write a letter to the Attorney General asking him to drop the charges against the El Hiblu 3 here: [EUR3325802020ENGLISH.PDF \(amnesty.org\)](#) and look at our other attachments for some guidance in writing a letter.

Write to the Maltese High Commissioner here: maltahighcommission.london@gov.mt

You can use this message to post on twitter along with the hashtag: 2 years ago, three youths arrived in Malta in handcuffs. Their crime? Helping fellow asylum-seekers to escape torture in Libya. Two years on, they still risk life sentences. Time for justice for the #ElHiblu3

You can also retweet this message: [Amnesty EU on Twitter: "Three youths faced a life-threatening situation. Faced with being unlawfully returned to #Libya where torture & suffering are rife, they helped save about 100 people seeking asylum. Two years on, they still risk life sentences in Malta. Demand justice for #Elhiblu3 https://t.co/8deN467dy1" / Twitter](#)

Greece

In Amnesty's recent report '[Greece: Violence, Lies, and Pushbacks](#)' launched on the 23rd June this year, Amnesty reported that Greece continue to use pushbacks and has committed other serious human rights abuses in order to prevent migrants and refugees from entering the EU.

This report focuses on the Evros region in particular, between June and December 2020 and the 16 individuals who have provided testimonies of their experience have informed us of unlawful forced returns, violence, arbitrary detention and poor, unacceptable conditions in detention centres. The incidents documented in the report violate Greek, EU and international human rights law and this must be acknowledged by the Greek authorities, as they continue to endanger the lives of refugees and migrants through inaction and failure to meet international human rights standards.

Greece continue to hold onto their baseless excuses that the evidence compiled that expose Greece for pushbacks and their poor treatment of refugees and migrants, are false or untrue. Greece also is unwilling to undertake an effective investigation into the many reports of human rights abuses faced by refugees and migrants, highlighting a complete disregard for humanity and international law.

As Greece shows unwillingness to shift their stance and accept the reality of the experiences of refugees and migrants, we are asking for your help to call on Greece to immediately halt all unlawful summary returns, acknowledge the severity of pushbacks, investigate allegations of unlawful returns, arbitrary detention and violence. Additionally we urge

Greece to halt the arbitrary detention of refugees and migrants and improve its migration detention system.

The testimonies of refugees and migrants in this report provide for a difficult read, as the detail of their experiences is shocking and heart breaking. They have truly seen the horrors of humanity when trying to seek safety. Join us in our aim to ensure that Greece respects refugees and migrants and does not continue to maintain illegal, heinous practices that are not only immoral, but breach their duty to international human rights law.

Write to the Greek Embassy here: gremb.lon@mfa.gr.

Croatia

In Croatia, Amnesty has also reported on the police violence and abuse inflicted on refugees and migrants in their report '[Pushed to the edge](#)'. This research which was carried out between June 2018 and January 2019, found that refugees and migrants who made it to Croatia were often denied an opportunity to seek international protection. Instead they were often subject to violence, abuse and intimidation by the police at the border and were systematically and deliberately pushed back and collectively expelled to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Croatia rejects the allegations of illegal pushbacks and police violence, maintaining that the police acted within the restrictions of national and EU law. They also claim that reports of police abuse are "thoroughly investigated", that no evidence of unlawful use of force was found and accuse refugees and migrants for making false. Yet the Croatian authorities try to prevent scrutiny of police practice at the borders and the country's migration policies. It has also denied the Croatian Ombudsperson access to migrant-related information and has increasingly targeted NGOs who are simply providing aid to refugees and migrants. Additionally, volunteers have been harassed by the police, detained without formal charges and threatened with criminal convictions for simply speaking the truth about police violence.

Amnesty calls on the Croatian authorities to stop border and local police from exercising force, intimidation, violence and abuse on refugees and migrants seeking access to Croatian territory. We also call on Croatia to promptly set up an effective and impartial investigation into the allegations of excessive use of force by the police and appropriate actions must be taken against perpetrators. Finally, the authorities must stop targeting and harassing organizations and activists who work to improve refugee and migrant rights and instead should respect and provide a safe environment to conduct their work.

We need your help to call on the Croatian authorities to ensure they meet our calls, otherwise our failure to ensure Croatia are committed to our calls can continue to put refugees and migrants at further risk if they attempt to cross into Croatia.

Write to the Croatian Embassy here: croemb.london@mvep.hr

The EU is also responsible!

The EU's anti-migration agenda has influenced many European member states to maintain higher security of their borders, but this has inexcusably encouraged member states to breach EU and International law by continuing and even providing worse, substandard treatment to refugees and migrants. The EU however turns a blind eye on this and fails to hold these countries to account, but instead they cooperate with Libya, which is known by [Amnesty](#) to be a dangerous and unsafe place to disembark refugees and migrants, thus undermining any respect they claim to have for refugees and migrants.

The El Hiblu 3 along with over 100 passengers had sought safety in Europe after surviving the horrors of Libyan detention and yet the EU unashamedly continues to provide resources and assist the Libyan authorities to intercept people in the Central Mediterranean. They do this whilst knowingly breaching the international legal principle of 'non-refoulement' to not return someone to a place where their safety is at risk and knowing that Libya is responsible for a number of widespread human rights violations.

As for Croatia, the EU is aware of the country's draconian response to refugees and migrants and is claimed to have asked Croatia to address reports of pushbacks and violence. However, this response has not been consistent as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and various other EU bodies have commended Croatia for making progress in curbing an irregular flow of migrants into the EU and protecting the external EU borders. Despite also knowing about Croatia's unlawful and immoral practices in dealing with refugees and migrants, the EU continue to allocate significant funds to assist Croatia to improve their border security. Additionally, whilst it was assumed the EU would have oversight over these funds and ensure there is a monitoring mechanism in Croatia so that they abide by human rights laws, the EU have proved to be dishonest about their desire to uphold the rights of refugees and migrants. The guardian exposed the EU for covering up evidence that proves the Croatian government had failed to supervise border forces, leading to the same abhorrent practices continuing. Interestingly enough, the commission were also going to present a report suggesting that Croatia's monitoring mechanism had helped ensure that activities at the border were in compliance with International, European and national law and were 'conscientious' and of 'high quality'.

In Amnesty's report on Greece, the EU appear to also prioritise border control over human rights by calling Greece Europe's shield. Frontex, the EU agency that monitors their external borders, has also been repeatedly pushed by Amnesty to withdraw from operations in Greece, especially considering the new evidence that serious human rights violations have been committed in the area close to their operations. Continuing operations can lead to complicity and displays the EU as engaging with these violations. If Frontex can be found responsible for engaging in pushbacks in the Evros region (which an inquiry failed to consider) then the EU have seriously breached their obligations to refugees and migrants human rights by allowing frontex's operations to continue.

The EU's tolerance of allowing member states to escape from their responsibilities to European and International human rights law and to put refugees and migrants at great risk

is disgraceful. Their cooperation with Libya is also dishonourable and illustrates their true disregard for refugees and migrants lives. Though member states are responsible for their own actions, the EU is responsible for holding guilty states to account, which is why we are calling on you to help us question where their EU's morals, principles and duties lie in regards to protecting refugees and migrants. They need to ensure that refugees and migrants are treated as human beings and are not harmed by their border policies.

Take action on social media:

- Once you have read our demands for the EU in our reports, you can help us push the EU to meet them and their obligations to European and International law on twitter [@EU_Commission](#) and [@Europarl_EN](#) and [@EUdelegationUK](#). Don't forget to [@AmnestyUKEurope](#) as well!
- You can also take action on Facebook to call on the EU to deliver our proposals ([European Parliament](#) and [European Commission](#)).

**“I ASK THAT THEY TREAT
ASYLUM SEEKERS LIKE
HUMAN BEINGS”**

Further information and background on abuse in federal asylum centres in Switzerland by Jovana Bosnjak Jovana.Bosnjak@amnesty.org.uk

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN SWISS FEDERAL ASYLUM CENTRES

People held in federal asylum centres operated by private security companies in Switzerland have been subjected to a range of abuse at the hands of security guards, including violence and coercive measures, the use of pepper gel and being locked in a metal container resulting in hypothermia, said Amnesty International.

The findings - contained in a new 25-page Amnesty report - 'Human Rights Violations in Swiss Federal Asylum Centres' - shows how people have suffered abuse across a lengthy period in facilities operated by the State Secretariat for Migration in Basel, Giffers, Boudry, Altstätten and Vallorbe.

Drawing on testimony from more than 30 people - including 14 victims of abuse, 18 current and former security guards, lawyers, social workers and social educators who witnessed mistreatment - Amnesty's report shows that a culture of abusive behaviour towards people housed in federal asylum centres had developed because of an assumption that people seeking asylum are potentially violent and dangerous.

Security guards criticised training methods at the centres, expressing their shock at instructions and encouragement from their superiors to quickly resort to violence and coercive measures. In particular, staff were shocked at the use of a "reflection room", a metal container where people - including children - are detained in freezing-cold temperatures.

Amnesty found that six of the 14 people it interviewed had required hospital treatment for their injuries, and two were denied medical treatment even though they had requested assistance. It was also found that those who had suffered abuse were unaware of how to lodge complaints, with access to justice limited.

Concerns about abuses were brought to Amnesty's attention by social workers and security guards, as well as people seeking asylum who are or were housed in the centres, and legal representatives who work or have worked in the facilities

Amnesty is calling on the Swiss authorities to address negative stereotypes and racist views about those seeking asylum in the country, especially people from North Africa, and to stop placing unaccompanied minors in asylum centres.

The Government must address urgent systemic issues and take measures to end the cycle of abuse, eradicate racism and protect the human rights of people in federal asylum centres

Amnesty International Report:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/switzerland-violence-and-racism-asylum-centres-run-private-security-companies-new>

Austria: “We just want some rights!”, Migrant care workers denied rights in Austria

In Austria more than 60,000 workers care for older people in their homes, most of whom are women migrant workers from Central and Eastern Europe, who are often subjected to various intersecting forms of discrimination and abuse. Live-in care workers are under-protected and undercompensated. They receive low wages, work excessively long hours without adequate breaks and experience barriers in accessing social security. Amnesty International calls on the Austrian authorities to extend minimum wage protection and working hours protection to all live-in care workers, to strengthen labour inspections and to provide counselling and remedies for discrimination and abuse at work.

Thousands of Romanian and Slovak live-in care workers face discriminatory pay and working conditions during pandemic

Women paid less than men, while migrant workers paid less than Austrians

‘
We have no holiday pay and no unemployment benefits’ - Dora, Romanian care worker

Amnesty’s 34-page report - We just want some rights - documents serious workers’ rights concerns for migrant women in Austria working as live-in carers for older people.

Read the report: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/austria-women-migrant-care-workers-exploited-during-pandemic>

Many of the women - from Central and Eastern Europe - are subjected to discrimination and abuse.

Care workers in Austria told Amnesty that unfair wages, lack of sick pay and inadequate breaks were a daily reality before the pandemic, but Covid-19 had made working conditions unbearable.

Marco Perolini, Amnesty International’s Western Europe Researcher, said:

“In Europe, more and more people are working in precarious conditions, but women migrant workers are especially under-compensated, under-protected and exploited.

“Care work is emotionally and physically exhausting at the best of times, but during the pandemic, many women migrant workers worked excessively long hours and shifts for months on end.

“We are calling on the Austrian authorities to extend minimum wage protection and working hours protection to all live-in care workers, to strengthen labour inspections and to provide counselling for discrimination and abuse at work.”

Sign the petition here: <https://www.amnesty.at/mitmachen/actions/24-stunden-unverzichtbar/>

Turkey: August updates

METU



On July 16th there was a hearing of the METU PRIDE CASE. Before the trial date, Amnesty International Turkey sent 155,339 signatures from from 13 sections on the online petition we drew your attention to in previous newsletters to the Ministry of Justice and the total number has reached almost

255,000. It shows a huge and encouraging level of support. Thank you for your efforts in encouraging your members and supporters to sign the petition.

Unfortunately, the case has been postponed one more time to October 8th and students Melike & Özgür still face 3 years in prison for peacefully protesting about the cancellation of their annual Pride march.

We will keep you updated on progress with the case and with requests for further actions.

Büyükada



3 years ago on 15 August, we celebrated the release on bail of the Honorary President of AI Turkey Taner Kılıç, who had already been wrongfully imprisoned for 14.5 months (see video <https://twitter.com/i/status/1426861257337016320>)

In July 2020 the four remaining defendants in the so called Büyükada case, **Taner Kılıç İdil Eser, Özlem Dalkıran and Günal Kurşun**, were convicted on terrorism-related charges, in the absence of any evidence of criminal acts and despite the fact that allegations against them had repeatedly been disproven

in the course of the trial. As we have reported in previous newsletters, the case has now reached the final stage of appeal and a decision is expected from the Court of Cassation within the coming weeks or months. The Turkish

judicial holiday means that the decision will now not come until September at the earliest.

If the convictions of any of the Büyükada Four are upheld, this would represent a further miscarriage of justice and deal yet another blow to open society in Turkey.

We will keep you informed regarding progress and requests for further actions.

[#WeAllStandUp#WithTaner](#)

Chris Ramsey
Country Coordinator, Turkey