

URGENT ACTION

EGYPT MEANS TO DEPORT REFUGEES, CHILDREN

The Egyptian authorities are preparing to deport 13 Syrians to Turkey and 28 Palestinians from Syria to the Gaza Strip. The group, which includes at least 13 children and 10 women, had sought refuge in Egypt after fleeing the armed conflict in Syria. Under international law, Egypt has a responsibility to protect people fleeing the conflict.

The Egyptian navy arrested the group for “attempting to exit Egypt illegally” on 9 August, near the port of El-Dekhela in Alexandria. A prosecutor ordered their release, but the security forces have continued to hold the group in El-Dekhela police station for “national security” reasons. After the immigration office classified the group, the government ordered that the 13 Syrians be deported to Turkey and that the 28 Palestinians, who had been living as refugees in Syria, be deported to the Gaza Strip.

The office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Cairo has confirmed that at least eight of the Syrians are registered as refugees. All the Palestinians hold documents or file numbers showing that they are registered with the Syrian office of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Anyone fleeing the conflict in Syria should be considered to be in need of international protection, including Syrian nationals and Palestinian refugees who live in Syria. The responsibility for providing this protection falls on the country where these individuals are – in this case Egypt. In particular, Egypt is a signatory to the Organization of African Unity Refugee Convention, which regards people fleeing internal armed conflicts as refugees.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Urging the authorities not to deport the 41 Palestinians and Syrians to Turkey and the Gaza Strip respectively;
- Calling on them to give all members of the group access to UNHCR and, for the Palestinians, access to the Palestinian diplomatic mission in Egypt, if they wish.
- Urging them to uphold their international obligations, under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, to provide international protection for those fleeing serious human rights violations or armed conflicts.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 SEPTEMBER 2013 TO:

Minister of the Interior

Mohamed Ibrahim Youssef Ahmed
Ministry of the Interior
25 El Sheikh Rihan Street
Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +202 279 455 29
Email: moi@idsc.gov.eg

Salutation: Dear Minister

Prosecutor General

Counsellor Hesham Mohamed Zaki
Barakat
Office of the Public Prosecutor
Supreme Court House
1 “26 July” Road, Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +202 2 577 4716

Salutation: Dear Counsellor

And copies to:

Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign
Affairs for Human Rights
Mahy Hassan Abdel Latif
Human Rights and International
Humanitarian and Social Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt
Fax: +202 2 574 9713

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

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

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A reporter has told Amnesty International that the men in the group are being held in a cell in El-Dekhela police station with detainees held on suspicion of criminal offences. The women and children are being held in a separate place in the station. All were in handcuffs, until their lawyers succeeded in convincing the police to remove them. At least two of the children are suffering from health problems, one from a heart problem and another from an inflamed intestine.

According to UNHCR, there are 107,112 refugees from Syria registered or awaiting registration in Egypt. After the military removed Mohamed Morsi from power on 3 July 2013, much stricter entry requirements were suddenly imposed on Syrians entering Egypt, requiring them to obtain visas before travel. Since 1 July the authorities have arrested at least 160 Syrians, and deported at least 48. On 26 July UNHCR expressed concern about the situation facing Syrian refugees in Egypt, warning of arbitrary arrests amid a "growing anti-Syrian sentiment".

Around half of the some 500,000 Palestinian refugees living in Syria have become displaced by the conflict and related human rights abuses. More than 1,400 have been killed, the vast majority of them civilians, according to local activists. In the light of the difficult humanitarian situation caused by the continuing blockade on Gaza and the lack of any system for receiving refugees, Palestinians from Syria should under no circumstances be forced to go to Gaza.

Name: 28 Palestinians, 13 Syrians

Gender m/f: both

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