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Egypt: Release of detained Syria refugees is welcome step

Amnesty International welcomes the release of 188 refugees from Syria who were being held in police stations across Egypt, following a decision by the Egyptian government on 10 December. This is an important step towards improving the respect of the rights of refugees from Syria.

However, according to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, 18 refugees from Syria continue to be held in police stations. Amnesty International considers there to be no clear legal basis for their ongoing detention and is urging the Egyptian authorities to immediately release them.

According to activists, at the time of the government decision, 206 refugees were being held in police stations across Egypt. A total of 188 were released in the days following the government decision, leaving 18 now remaining in detention.

Amnesty International has also been calling on the international community to increase its humanitarian contribution to the Syria refugee crisis, provide support to the main host countries, including Egypt, and resettle the most vulnerable refugees from Egypt and Syria's neighbouring countries.

Background

The Egyptian government estimates that 300,000 refugees have sought safety in Egypt. Amnesty International documented arrests, arbitrary detention and deportation of refugees from Syria in Egypt in a report entitled *We cannot live here any more: Refugees from Syria in Egypt*, issued on 17 October 2013. In recent months, the Egyptian authorities have arrested and detained hundreds of refugees from Syria who were attempting to reach Europe by boat from Egypt. Those detained were held in poor conditions and included scores of children, some of them without their parents.