Warsaw, 22 July 2016

ACCESS TO ASYLUM DENIED IN POLAND

The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, a non-governmental organisation based in Poland, providing legal assistance to refugees and migrants for more than 25 years, would like to draw the attention of the international community, including international human rights bodies and civil society organisations, to the problem of repeated denial of access to the asylum procedure in Poland.

For the past several months we have been observing an increase in the number of reports from individuals who were denied the possibility to apply for international protection at eastern border crossing points of Poland, in particular in Brest/Terespol (a border crossing point between Belarus and Poland). The reports say that, in spite of repeated (even up to 10-15 times), clearly formulated requests, invoking the experience of persecution in the country of origin, asylum seekers are refused the right to lodge an application and enter Poland.

We are particularly concerned about the situation of asylum seekers from Tajikistan, many of whom have informed us about unsuccessful attempts to claim protection in Brest/Terespol in the last few weeks. It is important to note that the political situation in Tajikistan deteriorated significantly in 2015 when the authorities delegalized the main opposition party and started mass arrests of opposition politicians, lawyers, journalists and NGO activists. Reports show also that government critics and dissidents abroad may be subjected to abductions and torture when returned to Tajikistan. Tajik nationals are not safe in Belarus either, as they are at risk of being extradited to Tajikistan under bilateral agreements between these two countries.

We therefore call upon your institution to support our appeal and help us pressure the Polish government to act in accordance with its international obligations, including the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees with its core principle of non-refoulement. In the light of the above-mentioned facts, it is clear that Tajik nationals fleeing persecution may be exposed to further violations of their rights if denied the right to seek asylum in a safe country.


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