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TURKEY: UN urges Turkey not to deport persecuted Ahmadi asylum-seekers

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“Türkiye must not deport members of the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light seeking asylum”: UN experts



[The European Times](#) (05.07.2023) – UN human rights experts* asked Turkey last Tuesday not to deport over 100 members of a persecuted religious minority who were seized last month at the Turkish-Bulgarian border. They also urged the government to do an accurate risk assessment of their situation in order to **avoid refoulement** (the practice of sending refugees or asylum seekers), which could result in serious violations of human rights. Two NGOs (CAP Freedom of Conscience and Human Rights Without Frontiers) also advocated for the same during a conference organized by the OSCE ODIHR.

The UN experts tell Turkiye Ahmadis are at risk

“Under international law, the Government of Türkiye is called to act in line with its obligation not to deport 101 members of the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light, who may be at risk of serious human rights violations if they are returned to their countries of origin,” the experts said.

On May 24, 2023, a group of [104 Ahmadis](#) including 27 women and 22 children, arrived at the Turkish side of the Kapikule border, requesting asylum in Bulgaria. Turkish police allegedly used excessive force to stop them, injuring at least 30 members of the gathering, including nine women. Turkish authorities arrested them at the Edirne police station.

According to the experts, numerous people have been tortured or subjected to cruel, inhuman, or humiliating treatment by police officers, including beatings, sexual harassment, and purposeful sleep deprivation.

The group was subsequently moved to the deportation centre in Edirne, and the Turkish Ministry of Interior issued deportation orders for 101 people.

The UN experts stated:

“Since the inception of the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light

in 1999, its members have been labelled as heretics and infidels and are often subjected to threats, violence, and illegal detention”.

And further added that these Ahmadis:

“(Ahmadis) are particularly at risk of detention due to blasphemy laws, in violation of their right to freedom of religion or belief,”

The group consists of people who fled to Turkey from various Muslim-majority nations owing to religious persecution.

According to the experts, one of those facing deportation spent six months in jail in his home country after being accused of offences such as insulting Islam and offending the Prophet. Another 15 have recently been released on bond after being arrested for belonging to a ‘deviant cult’ in their country.

“The prohibition of refoulement is absolute and non-derogable under international human rights and refugee law,” the experts said.

“States are obliged not to remove any individual from their territory when there are substantial grounds to believe the person could be subjected to serious human rights violations in the State of destination,” the UN experts said.

“Given the risks of human rights violations this group faces as a religious minority, Türkiye is required to make an individual, impartial and independent assessment of the protection needs of each person and the risks they may face if returned to their countries,” the experts said.

Denouncing the situation at the OSCE

CAP Freedom of Conscience and Human Rights Without Frontiers, two well-known NGOs working to defend Freedom of Religion or Belief inside Europe and abroad, and who have been keeping the

UN experts timely informed of the situation, also too the opportunity of the **Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting III** of the OSCE ODIHR meeting on **27 June 2023** in **Hofburg, Vienna**, **stated** that they:

“are deeply concerned about the situation of over 100 members of the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light who have been blocked by the Turkish authorities at the Turkish-Bulgarian border since the end of May. Ankara has decided to deport them back to their home countries where they would face imprisonment, torture and even execution in the case of Iran. They were denied entry of the European Union and faced violent treatment by the Turkish authorities, assaulting, kicking, and beating them with batons and firing gunshots in the air. Afterwards, they were transferred to the Edirne detention center where they still are. The Ahmadi Religion minority has been subjected to harsh persecution in numerous Muslim-majority countries such as Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, and Turkey because they are considered heretics. CAP/ Conscience et Liberté and Human Rights Without Frontiers urge Turkey to immediately annul all deportation orders and to grant them asylum in a safer land outside Turkey”.

The experts: Nazila Ghanea, **Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief**; Felipe González Morales, **Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants**; Priya Gopalan (Chair-Rapporteur), Matthew Gillett (Vice-Chair on Communications), Ganna Yudkivska (Vice-Chair on Follow-Up), Miriam Estrada-Castillo, and Mumba Malila, **Working Group on arbitrary detention**; Fernand de Varennes, **Special Rapporteur on minority issues**.

The Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups are part of what is known as the **Special Procedures** of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council’s independent fact-finding and

monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

[Further reading about FORB in Turkey on HRWF website](#)

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