

URGENT ACTION

ISRAELI GOVERNMENT STOPS FORCED DEPORTATIONS

The Israeli government has declared that it will not pursue forcible deportations of Eritrean and Sudanese asylum-seekers to third countries under the Israeli ‘*Procedure for Deportation to Third Countries*’. This follows the release of 280 asylum-seekers who had been detained as a result of the policy, after an order by the High Court of Justice.

Israeli authorities have now declared that they will not forcibly deport **Eritrean and Sudanese asylum-seekers** from Israel to an African “third country”. They will no longer be issuing deportation notices and conducting deportation hearings. However, the government has declared that Eritrean and Sudanese asylum-seekers, considered by Israel to be “infiltrators”, will still be encouraged to “voluntarily” leave Israel.

The Israeli authorities should ensure that Eritrean and Sudanese asylum-seekers are provided with documentation allowing them to live and work regularly in Israel and protecting them from unlawful detention and deportation. The authorities should under no circumstance pressure African asylum-seekers to “voluntarily” leave Israel when the time comes to renew their visas, in accordance with their international obligations not to transfer anyone to a country where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations, or where they would not be protected against such transfer.

From 4 February 2018, 280 Eritrean and Sudanese asylum-seekers who were already held in Holot detention centre, located in the Negev/Naqab desert, were issued deportation notices under Israel’s new ‘*Procedure for Deportation to Third Countries*’. Having refused to leave Israel, they were then detained in the Saharonim prison while awaiting deportation. All the 280 asylum-seekers were released between 2 and 15 April 2018, as ordered by the High Court of Justice, in the context of a case on the legality of Israel’s deportations to unspecified “third countries” in Africa, widely believed to be Uganda and Rwanda. The High Court ordered the government to stop the deportations after it failed to provide additional information on the deportation agreements. However, the 280 asylum-seekers were only granted one-month visas, which forbid them from working and living in the seven largest cities in Israel.

Those released included “**Tesfai**” (not his real name), a 29-year-old Eritrean asylum-seeker who had his asylum claim rejected without explanation. He was arrested in November 2017 for not having a valid visa. After 100 days in detention, he was told to leave Israel to go to Rwanda. When he refused, he was detained under the new policy introduced by the Israeli Population, Immigration and Border Authority (PIBA) for not cooperating with his removal.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.

This is the first update of UA 64/18. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/8126/2018/en/>

Name: Thousands of Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers
Gender m/f: male

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