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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 delegatized 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.

For more information on the situation in Tajikistan please see: Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2016 – Tajikistan*, Human Rights Watch, *Tajikistan: Severe Crackdown on Political Opposition*, February 2016.

President of the Board
Danuta Przywara

To:

1. European Ombudsman - eo@ombudsman.europa.eu
2. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner - ccpr@ohchr.org
3. OHCHR Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants - migrant@ohchr.org
4. International Organization for Migration - hq@iom.int
5. IOM Poland - iomwarsaw@iom.int
6. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Bureau for Europe - belbr@unhcr.org
7. UNHCR Representation in Poland – polwa@unhcr.org
8. UNHCR Regional Representation for Central Europe - hunbu@unhcr.org
9. European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) – ecre@ecre.org
10. Human Rights Watch (HRW) – hrwpress@hrw.org
11. HRW Executive Director for Europe and Central Asia – hugh.williamson@hrw.org
12. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) – media@fra.europa.eu
13. FRA Head of Sector Asylum, Migration and Borders - Adriano.SILVESTRI@fra.europa.eu
14. FRONTEX Fundamental Rights Officer - FRO@frontex.europa.eu
15. Council of Europe Office in Brussels - coeinbrussels@coe.int
16. COE Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees – tomas.bocek@coe.int
17. COE Senior Advisor on Migration – lilja.gretarsdottir@coe.int
18. European Asylum Support Office - info@easo.europa.eu
19. Amnesty International Office in London – contactus@amnesty.org
20. Amnesty International Poland – amnesty@amnesty.org.pl
21. Advice on Individual Rights in Europe (AIRE) Centre - info@airecentre.org