

PRESS RELEASE OF 1st September 2005

NGO coalition expresses deep concern on proposed EU return standards *Human rights of returnees might be seriously endangered say human rights activists*

A coalition of 13 NGOs assisting migrants and refugees today expressed serious concerns regarding current EU policies on the detention and removal of irregular migrants and rejected asylum seekers. In the context of the draft of a directive on common standards on return, which the EU Commission adopted this morning, the NGO coalition suggests a set of nine principles to ensure respect for human rights.

The coalition of church-related and human right organisations urged the European Parliament and the Member States to take into account some common principles necessary to ensure that return procedures fully respect the needs and the dignity of individuals. In any case both detention and removal should only be the last resort in dealing with irregular migrants and rejected asylum seekers. The nine common principles underline that those facing removal and detention must enjoy the right of an effective remedy and legal review of the decisions affecting them. Particular importance is also attached to the protection of vulnerable persons such as children, the seriously ill or trafficked persons against removal. The text, which the NGO coalition presented in Brussels today suggests the establishment of independent institutions to monitor detention and removal and deal with complaints of ill-treatment in detention or removal operations.

Representatives of the NGO coalition expressed concern that the proposed directive on return mainly follows a repressive logic rather than elaborating principles focussed around the human rights of those facing detention or removal. Caroline Intrand who represented the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe and the French CIMADE on the NGO Coalition explained, "Detention and removal pose serious challenges to the human rights of those affected. After important work on the human rights aspects of this had already been done by the Council of Europe, we had hoped that the EU Commission would further elaborate a human-rights centred approach. However it appears that the proposal launched this morning gives priority to a supposed "efficiency" regarding the technical aspects of removal. This might have a seriously negative effect on the rights of those facing removal"

For the full text of the declaration, please go to:

English: <http://www.cec-kek.org/English/CommonprinciplesonremovalE.pdf>

Deutsch: <http://www.cec-kek.org/English/CommonprinciplesonremovalD.pdf>

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Background info: the declaration on “Common principles on removal of irregular migrants and rejected asylum seekers” is supported by: Amnesty International Europe, Caritas Europa, Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), Cimade (France), European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Federazione delle Chiese evangeliche in Italia (FCEI), Iglesia Evangelica Espanola, Jesuit Refugee Service-Europe (JRS-Europe), Human Rights Watch, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), Quaker Council for European Affairs, Save the Children, Sensoa