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Afghan refugees in Turkey sew lips to protest against UNHCR

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It is almost two months, no answer from UNHCR or from other human rights supporting agency to help the Afghan refugees in Turkey.

Dozens of children, men and women are waiting to get a positive answer from United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Ankara city to grant them asylum as they fled their homeland due to war and risks which threatens their lives.

“We want our cases to be reviewed or die,” read the handwritten note with an afghan girl Wazhma, in an immigration detention centre in Ankara where three children were found yesterday to have joined about 30 adults who have sewed their lips together in a hunger strike by Afghan asylum-seekers.

Nearly 100 people half of them women and children – have been refusing food and water for the seventh week in protest.

According to reports, the afghans are camping day and night in front of the headquarters of the U.N.’s refugee agency (UNHCR) in Ankara, braving threats from the police, including six refugees who have been engaged in a hunger strike for one week, sewing their mouths and refusing water as well as food.

One of the Afghan protesters, Mohmad Ali, said UNHCR officials have suspended all their asylum applications on the grounds that third-countries did not want to accept refugees from Afghanistan.

“The asylum-seekers are treated like criminals, incarcerated in an isolated, inhospitable environment, we are the victims of persecution and injustice,” Ali added.

Around 30,000 Afghan asylum-seekers are granted a temporary protection status in Turkey during the review of their asylum applications to the UNHCR, a situation that condemns them to precarity, as they are not allowed to work according to Turkish legislation. Most of them are sent to “satellite towns” far from the big cities and are required to sign a paper at the police post three times a week.

Due to geographic restrictions in its legislation, Turkey does not give asylum to refugees entering from its eastern borders. The confusion regarding the share of competence between a recently established immigration administrations, connected to the Interior Ministry, and the UNHCR adds more uncertainty to the future of Afghan refugees.

Local news agencies in Ankara city reported that police had already stormed the camp nearby the UNHCR headquarters at the end of April, beating Afghan women and children alike, as they were forming human chains.

“Some had broken noses, one person had a dislocated shoulder,” said Ankara News senior reporter with condition of now make his name public.

For the reaction of the Afghan government and UN officials regarding that issue we tried to have a interview with them but even we call them several times but still no answer from them.