

29 January 2015

Very Urgent

Mr Dimitris Avramopoulos
European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship

Dear Commissioner Mr. Avramopoulos,

KISA (Action for Equality Support and Anti-Racism) is an NGO established in Cyprus in 1998, active and focused on the fields of Migration, Asylum, Racism, Discrimination and Trafficking as well as awareness-raising of the Cypriot society and advocating in order to influence the legal and structural framework, the policies and practices in these fields.

We write to inform you of the gravity of the problem of the rescued Syrian and Palestinian refugees who since September 2014 were living in the refugee camp of Kokkinotrimithia, some kilometers away from Nicosia.

On 17January, the Government of Cyprus in the process of forcibly closing down the camp, interrupted the operation of all public services, while the refugees remained at the camp with no civil defense or police presence for providing administration and protection at the camp, and without basic services such as food and transportation. Even the water and electricity supply will be discontinued, according to a Government directive at the end of the month.

Thus, this coming Saturday the Government officially stated that the tents will be removed and the water and electricity supply will be suspended, completely closing the camp down.

Vulnerable groups such as children, including a child with special needs and people with chronic diseases who are in urgent need of medical care, are in critical condition. Due to the unavailability of transportation they have no access to health care centres and hospitals as a result of being exposed to various risks. Furthermore, for more than four months, the children have been deprived of their basic right to education.

KISA considers that the Government with its aforementioned decisions condemns the refugees to inhuman, humiliating and degrading treatment in violation of the international and community Law. We emphasize that even though they lack a legal residence status, because of not applying for asylum, the refugees have at least the right to live in decent conditions and access to health care and education.

KISA urgently asks for your help and action in preventing the government of Cyprus from closing down the camp on Saturday as it will be the only case in history that a refugee camp closes down while still having refugees in vulnerable and desperate conditions.

Furthermore, KISA calls for:

- Immediate reopening of the camp or moving the refugees to better living conditions until more satisfactory and permanent solutions are found. Also, reestablishment of the dialogue between authorities and refugees.
- The immediate examination and granting of recognized refugee status to those refugees who have already applied for asylum, in order to give a positive message to the rest of the refugees that up to day are refusing to apply for asylum.
- Immediate provision of humanitarian aid from the Red Cross to the refugees, regardless of the decisions of the Government, in compliance with the rules of the International Red Cross.

KISA also attaches with this email an open-letter submitted on 15 January 2015 to the Cypriot Minister of Interior by the refugees from Syria, stating the reasons for not filing applications for international protection in Cyprus.

We kindly thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely



Doros Polykarpou
Executive Director

