



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés



UNHCR Representation in Cyprus
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30 April 2015

Notre/Our Code: CYP/098/2015

Re: **Your letter dated 21 April 2015**

Dear Mr Abdel Alsattar and Mr Mahmoud Hasan,

Thank you for your letter of 21 April 2015 addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. As the High Commissioner's Representative in Cyprus, I would like to respond to your letter.

I understand and appreciate the challenges you and other stateless Kurds from Syria have had to contend to over the years in enjoying international protection in the Republic of Cyprus. My Office has made several representations to the relevant authorities to ensure that your asylum applications were examined swiftly and fairly, in full compliance with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

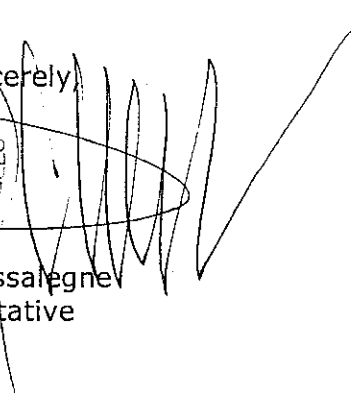
Following the start of your protest outside the Ministry of Interior in late October 2014 complaining about the long delays in adjudicating the asylum applications of a number of Syrian Kurds, we have made the necessary demarches to the responsible Cypriot authorities. All pending cases have consequently been resolved, albeit only by the grant of subsidiary protection. You obviously were not satisfied by that outcome.

You are concerned that the grant of subsidiary protection would not provide you with all the rights and entitlements enjoyed by persons recognised as refugees. Whilst the recently reformed EU legislation efforts have made to ensure the convergence of refugee status and subsidiary protection, this is not the case in Cyprus with respect to family reunification. The provision in the Cyprus Refugee Law regarding the issuance of travel documents to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection is not yet implemented in practice.

UNHCR will continue to work with the Cypriot asylum authorities to ensure that the existing gaps in the treatment of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are properly addressed in line with EU legislation and general international human rights law. At the same time, we will continue to impress upon the authorities to reconsider your asylum applications taking cognisance of UNHCR's October 2014 paper on the situation in Syria which specifically listed Kurds as a minority group likely to fulfill the requirements of the refugee definition contained in Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

1/2

I have no doubt that the Republic of Cyprus is committed to ensuring full compliance with its international obligations towards refugees, even as it is still undergoing serious difficulties with its economy. In the spirit of its long-established co-operation with the government, UNHCR will continue to address with the appropriate officials refugee protection and integration issues. At the same time, I would like to urge you to try to find redress to your grievances through means other than hunger strike.

 Yours sincerely,

Dante Dessalegné
Representative