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Lebanon: Deportation Threat for Sudan Refugees

Held in Prolonged Arbitrary Detention



People wave a Lebanese national flag during a protest in Central Beirut December 11, 2006.

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(Beirut) – The Lebanese government should revoke the deportation orders of three United Nations-recognized Sudanese refugees and release them from detention, Legal Agenda, the Anti-Racism Movement (ARM), Human Rights Watch, Insan, and the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH) said today. During 2018, Lebanon’s General Security Directorate, the agency that oversees

entry and exit of foreigners, has deported at least seven non-Syrian recognized refugees. In 2017, it deported eight non-Syrian recognized refugees.

Two of the refugees facing deportation told the organizations that they have been detained in General Security facilities with about 30 other Sudanese men, most of whom have been recognized as refugees by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Some have been detained for as long as eight months.

“General Security is putting lives at risk by deporting refugees back to the countries they fled,” said Lama Fakhri, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “The deportations of these three Sudanese refugees would put them in danger in Sudan and would violate Lebanon’s obligations under international law.”

Deporting registered refugees to their country of origin violates Lebanon’s obligations under international law not to return anyone to a place where they would face a real risk of persecution, torture, or other ill-treatment, or a threat to life.

General Security has pending deportation orders out for the three men, even though UNHCR recognized their refugee status. General Security did not specify the dates for their deportations, but the men were told that they would be deported imminently. One has received official General Security confirmation that his deportation order has been issued, indicating that he may be deported in the next few days.

The two men told the groups that they were arrested several months ago for not having valid residency documents, and that they have been detained in General Security facilities without access to a lawyer, documentation regarding their arrests and upcoming deportations, or a chance to appeal these decisions.

Legal Agenda has documented General Security’s practice of arbitrary, prolonged detentions to coerce refugees to “voluntarily” leave Lebanon. General Security has refused to release refugees being held for not having residency documents and who have not been approved for resettlement abroad.

General Security’s prolonged detention of recognized refugees because of expired residency documents violates Lebanon’s obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights (ICCPR), to which it is a party. According to the UN Human Rights Committee, the independent expert body responsible for monitoring implementation of the ICCPR, immigration detention “must be justified as reasonable, necessary and proportionate in the light of the circumstances and reassessed as it extends in time.”

While asylum seekers who are not in a country lawfully may be temporarily detained to document their entry, record their claims, and determine their identity, detaining them further is arbitrary in the absence of particularized risk, such as a likelihood of absconding or risk to others or national security. Decisions to detain migrants must also consider the impact of the detention on their physical and mental health.

“There is no legal basis for the prolonged detention and deportation of registered refugees,” Fakhri said. “General Security should release arbitrarily held refugees immediately.”

Correction

November 26, 2018: A previous version of this joint release incorrectly stated that the number of non-Syrian refugees deported by General Security during 2018 was eight. The actual number of non-Syrian refugees deported by General Security during 2018 is seven.

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