

Minister of Interior
Mr Süleyman Soylu
Ministry of the Interior
Devlet Mahallesi, T.C. İçişleri
Bakanlığı,
06580 Çankaya/Ankara, Turkey

Dear Minister,

I am writing to express serious concern about the recent treatment of Syrian refugees in Turkey. I understand that your country is the world's largest host of refugees, at around 4 million people. But this admirable generosity does not absolve your government of its obligation to respect international law.

There have been disturbing reports that in recent months, the Turkish authorities have been apprehending and deporting large numbers of Syrian refugees. People currently trapped in Idlib Province in Syria, claim they were apprehended in Turkey in July 2019, detained for several days, then deported through the Bab Al Hawa crossing between Turkey and Syria. The people who were deported were sometimes unregistered or outside their province of registration, although others were in their designated province. In any case, international law and Turkey's own laws prohibit sending people to danger in Syria, regardless of their legal status.

For refugees whose Turkish identification documents have expired or been cancelled, it appears virtually impossible to renew them. The reasons for this are unclear, as Turkish law permits people to do so. People without ID cards are terrified of being apprehended and deported, and are trapped at home, too afraid to work, attend medical appointments, or buy food.

Reports of increased deportations occurred around the same time as the authorities instructed all unregistered Syrians to leave Istanbul, initially by 20 August but extended until 30 October. Beyond spreading more panic among Syrian refugees, it is feared that this upcoming deadline will be used as a pretext to accelerate deportations.

I urge you to immediately stop unlawful deportations of Syrian refugees, ensure that those who whose identification documents have expired or been cancelled are able to renew them, and investigate all allegations of forced deportations to grave danger in Syria.

Yours sincerely,