

There is nothing democratic about shaking hands with Erdogan and deporting political refugees

by Gokcan Aydogan - 06/11/2018 18:23



Today, the Region has obtained images of a Kurdish asylum seeker from Turkey in Zurich airport as the police were brutally dragging him onto a plane for deportation.

Ramazan Turan, a literature teacher, was put in prison for seven months when he was a university student, and he has more cases awaiting him.

Turan eventually left Turkey for Switzerland, hoping to apply for asylum there. He and several other asylum seekers, including journalist Mustafa Mamay and other Kurds from Turkey, have been stranded in the Zurich Airport for nearly two months. Authorities in Switzerland have detained 28 persons, including 14 Kurds.

Turan's asylum application was rejected because he came to Switzerland through Brazil. Swiss authorities accept Brazil as a "safe country", so they want to send him back to Brazil.

Turan told The Region that the police told him that they would deport him to Turkey or Brazil. They asked him to leave the country by request, while adding that Brazil 'might' send him back to Turkey.

What will happen to the other 28 individuals is still unclear.

A growing number of immigrants fearing for their safety have come to Europe, only to be sent back to their home countries—with the help of border agents, immigration judges, and politicians—to face torture or imprisonment.

European leaders and institutions continue to criticize Turkey's justice system and political environment, in which democracy is strangled. During the imprisonment of German-Turkish journalist Deniz Yucel, Mesale Tolu, German human rights consultant Peter Steudtner, Swedish activist Ali Gharavi and many other Europeans and German politicians went as far as to call them “hostages.” On the other hand, the number of asylum seekers, including a considerable number of political asylum seekers running away from unfair trials and imprisonment, being deported from European countries to Turkey is increasing daily.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been accused of crippling democracy by many European leaders, with hundreds of individuals from the Turkish judiciary, media and civil service still detained after the coup attempt.

European authorities must think twice before deporting asylum seekers back to Turkey and remember Erdogan's broad and systematic attempt at intimidating and reshaping Turkey's judicial branch to further consolidate power in his hands.

Since the coup attempt in 2016, tens of thousands of people have been arrested or dismissed from their jobs in the civil service, military, judiciary, academia and media.

It is also important to remember that 21 of the people stranded in Zurich airport and many others at asylum centres all around Europe are Kurds. Thousands of Kurds have been put in prison on fabricated terror charges while hundreds of thousands were left homeless when the Turkish Army destroyed mainly-Kurdish Sur, Cizre, Nusaybin, Silvan, Idil and many other places, in the name of their so-called "war on terror."

When you shake hands with Erdogan and deport journalists and political activists who face charges, imprisonment or even death in Turkey, talking about democracy, the rule of law, and spending millions of euros to improve the democratic culture in Europe is nothing but lip service.