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İHD CONDEMNS THE HATE CRIME AGAINST SYRIAN ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN ANKARA, ALTINDAĞ!

On 10 August 2021, two individuals were injured during a physical altercation at a park in Ankara's Altındağ district. While the injured were hospitalized, Mr. Emirhan Yalçın, a Turkish citizen who was involved in the altercation, lost his life at the hospital. İHD offers its condolences to the Yalçın family. Two foreign nationals, Y.A. and A.M.A., who were involved in the altercation, were detained by a criminal peace judgeship having been charged with murder in the first degree.

Due to the fact that the assailant was Syrian, attacks against Syrians were committed while these became mass attacks on the night of 11 August by masses that were found to arrive at the scene from different parts of the capital in an organized manner. The assailants stoned houses, burnt down cars, broke shop windows, carried goods out to the streets and burnt them down in neighborhoods with a dense Syrian population and some asylum-seekers were injured during these attacks while virtually being subjected to a horror of pogrom. On the night of the attacks, the security forces failed to take the necessary measures and did not disperse the crowd. All kinds of frenzy were allowed virtually escorted by the police.

The following day, human rights defenders visited the Önder neighborhood in Altındağ district, where the attacks took place, for observation and it was seen that some asylum-seekers were evicted while some others awaited in their houses in fear particularly in streets where the attacks happened and a restless silence pervaded the streets. It was observed that shops and houses were damaged, some damaged shops were covered with canvases and some sustained heavy damage. It was also seen that flags were put up by asylum-seekers in some houses in an attempt to get protected from possible attacks in some living spaces, while individuals were hanging up flags in some shops. Further, it was observed that police barricades closed transit to streets from the main street although the main streets in Battalgazi and Önder neighborhoods were partially opened up for traffic with a heavy police presence at street entrances.

It is also known that racist and discriminatory speech against refugees/asylum-seekers/immigrants have been kept on the agenda round the clock, while no effective investigations have been initiated into such speech.

The political power's rhetoric and policies that instrumentalize refugees/asylum-seekers/immigrants along with the opposition's political rhetoric that refers to them as a burden on the nation reveal that both are responsible. The fact that refugees/asylum-seekers/immigrants are singled out as those responsible for poverty and unemployment in Turkey renders them vulnerable to attacks by subjecting them to hate speech. İHD is concerned about the continuance of such mass attacks like the one in Altındağ as a result of this gradual prevalence of hatred against the refugees.

Refugees/asylum-seekers and immigrants are individuals who had to leave the places they used to live in order to flee from wars, poverty, life-threatening dangers only to cling on to life. Being a refugee is not a reason but a dire consequence. In addition to the traumas they faced in places that they were forced to leave, all kinds of

persecution they experience in places they arrive at become an ever-repeating trauma, their labor is exploited, they are forced to live in places with poor living conditions, their rights are violated, they are subjected to violence, and they lose their lives.

Politicians, first and foremost, are obliged to abandon instrumentalizing, racist and discriminatory speech and to guarantee refugees' security of life, then regulate humane living conditions, and to develop a humane immigration and refugee policy. Politicians should immediately drop provocative rhetoric that single out refugees/asylum-seekers/immigrants as the source of problems and make them vulnerable to lynching while addressing the public.

We, as human rights defenders, urge the authorities to initiate effective criminal and administrative investigations into those responsible for the mass attack in Altındağ through their hate speech along with those who attacked asylum-seekers' homes, shops and vehicles, those who injured the refugees. In addition to investigations, we demand that all necessary security measures be taken, their needs immediately provided, their damages be compensated, and a safe life be provided for them.

Human Rights Association