

Anafé - Association nationale d'assistance aux frontières pour les étrangers

An inhumane reflex: France returns Ivorians to their torturers

1 February 2011

Anafé demands that the French authorities comply with the recommendations issued by UNHCR and suspend any returns of Ivory Coast nationals to their country.

On Friday 28 January, the *police aux frontières* (PAF, border police) in Orly [airport] refouled an Ivorian who had arrived six days earlier in France, after he only spent the time required to have his asylum application rejected in the waiting zone.

On Saturday 29 January, an asylum seeker who was stripped of his Ivory Coast nationality after having fled his country of origin finding refuge in Burkina Faso, was refouled to Abidjan after spending eleven days in the waiting zone in Roissy [airport].

Today, on 1 February, the Paris administrative court will examine the appeal by an Ivorian who risks the same fate, and is currently in the waiting zone in Orly.

This all happens at a time when

- UNHCR has called on governments to «suspend all forced returns towards the Ivory Coast while they await an improvement in the fields of security and respect for human rights»ⁱ,
- countries such as Guinea and Liberia have officially announced that they will automatically grant Ivorians refugee status,
- several European countries have stopped carrying out expulsions, including in cases involving rejected asylum seekers,
- the French minister for foreign affairs invites French nationals to postpone their trips to the Ivory Coast and calls upon those who are there to temporarily leave the country and wait for a normalisation of the situation,

The interior minister appears to be the only person who is not aware that the situation in the Ivory Coast is very tense as, since the 28 November elections, numerous acts of violence, kidnappings, disappearances and extra-judicial executions have been reported, giving rise to an atmosphere of insecurity that has already led to tens of thousands people escaping.

Is it in the name of the principle of non-interference or as a result of an inhumane reflex that France returns some victims to their torturers?

Unofficial translation by Statewatch, Anafé's original statement "Réflexe d'inhumanité : la France renvoie des Ivoiriens vers leurs tortionnaires" [in French], is available at:

<http://www.anafe.org/download/communiqués/CP%20Anaf%20-%20renvoi%20ivoiriens%20-%20fev%2011%20doc.pdf>

ⁱ «UNHCR urges suspension of all returns to Côte d'Ivoire», Briefing Notes, 21 January 2011, <http://www.unhcr.org/4d396b8e9.html>