

**Press Release:**  
**About Racist Attack To The Somali Community Center**

16<sup>th</sup> of April, 2011

We are requesting the Greek Government to show their intention in helping and solving the issues concerning the Refugees in Greece.

On Saturday evening, 9th of April, the building of Somali Community in Greece was attacked by Racists who were protesting against the presence of asylum seekers and refugees in the neighborhood. Ten Somalis were injured; three were taken to the hospital; one was hospitalized. That morning the Somali Community called the police and asked for their protection. While the presence of the police was very heavy during the Racist attack, they didn't protect the building nor the people from the attackers who later on entered by force into the Somali community center. Not one arrest was made by the police.

There were about 200 to 300 people involved in this racist attack, spraying gas, beating up people and using noise grenades. They destroyed the furniture, the electrical circuit board, the TV set (which provides entertainment for the refugees) as well as kitchen appliances in the cafeteria. They also broke windows at the entrance, wrote bad words on walls and looted Greek and Somali flags in our office. Unfortunately, all of this occurred in the presence of the police. This is the third time such an attack has taken place against the Somali refugees.

Our building on Fylis 10 Street is an important place for Somali refugees. Here we offer facilities for people to wash their clothes, a place to cook, and we provide food when possible. Some people – such as refugee families with children, sick people, and the very vulnerable – live in, there is a place for cultural events and prayer meetings, also for holding meetings where people could come to exchange views, be informed of community activities on Greek organizations where they may receive advice and support. It also houses the office of the community and the Greek Forum for Refugees.

There are complaints about people always standing on the street outside the building but this is because they have no place to live, so some of them sleep into two shifts, sharing the sleeping space with others. They have no work nor do they have any documents. All they can do is meeting with each other at the Centre to feel some sense of community. We don't want to be outside the law or upset our neighborhood. As the Somali community leadership, we are doing the best we can, but we are not a state or an international organization. Our people are not getting any assistance from the state. If the government doesn't help us or defend our people there is nothing we can do. If we are forced to close, the problem will get even worse and our people would have nowhere to go at all.

However, Greece is one of the European countries where refugees have sought protection. The Somali refugees living in Greece now live under the worst living conditions. As it can be seen, they need to receive recognition, social and legal help from the Greek Government and from local and international NGOs who always fought for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

The Somalis in Greece are refugees. Most of them are uneducated and come

from a country which has been in a state of civil war for 22 years. Somalia is a lawless state, unsafe to live in. The only hope for survival is to leave their country and seek a safe place elsewhere but, here in Greece, they live in bad conditions.

We urge the government to come to the aid of the refugees by providing protection for them against these vicious racist attacks. We demand that the Greek state acknowledge the right of our people to a decent existence and to be able to live and work peaceably in Greece without harassment; the first step towards this is recognition of their refugee status.

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