Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Flights of shame in Europe

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Tineke STRIK and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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More than 182 228 irregular migrants and failed asylum seekers were forcibly returned by flights from European airports in 2009. These returns are necessary as part of migration management. However, the treatment of returnees should be in accordance with human rights.

At the beginning of April 2012 pictures circulated on the internet showing a deportee on a commercial airline, his mouth taped shut with a surgical mask and duct tape. According to NGOs and National Prevention Mechanisms monitoring the issue, this is not an isolated incident of inhuman and degrading treatment on these flights. Other forced returnees have died including from positional asphyxia, suffocation, brain damage caused by lack of oxygen, and also combined heart failure, panic and stress.

There have been a number of warnings about the use of illegal restraint techniques, including "Carpet Karaoke" in which the detainee is forced to bend over in the seat with their head between their legs. This is prohibited because of the danger of positional asphyxia.

Until now, standardised guidelines on acceptable restraint techniques are lacking and those that exist are either insufficient or inadequately implemented. Further training is needed for those involved in the return process, whether they be guards, medical or even airline staff (in particular the captain, who has the last say if a passenger is to fly).

The Parliamentary Assembly should investigate these "flights of shame" to ensure that return flights are carried out humanely and that staff are trained, monitored and brought to account where necessary, all on the basis of standardised guidelines.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group