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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 13929
08 December 2015

"Pushbacks" at Bulgaria's border

Reply to Written question[1]: Written question No. 692 (Doc. 13860)
Committee of Ministers

1. During the examination of the question raised by the Honourable Parliamentarian, the delegation of Bulgaria informed the Committee of Ministers that as a result of the investigation by the Bulgarian Border Police of this tragic incident, no facts or evidence were found that would substantiate the media publications neither with regard to the group's alleged entry into Bulgarian territory, nor of any violence being used against them. It further informed the Committee that according to information received, the two Iraqi citizens had been found dead of hypothermia.

2. The delegation of Bulgaria reaffirmed its strong commitment to respect all international standards for the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers and to strictly adhere to its international obligations, with particular attention being given to the fundamental principles of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, namely non-discrimination, no punishment on account of illegal entry or stay, prohibition of expulsion or return ("non-refoulement"). It indicated that concrete measures had been undertaken which lead to a significant improvement of the asylum granting capacity of the country. It pointed out that for the first eight months of 2015 Bulgaria has granted refugee status to 12,800 migrants and that the expectations were for this figure to exceed 17,000 by the end of the year, compared to 12,700 for the twelve months of 2014.

3. Finally, the Committee of Ministers would inform the Honourable Parliamentarian that, following its thematic debate on "Migration challenges for Europe: need for collective action" it took in September a series of decisions, reiterating, *inter alia*, the obligations falling upon member States under international law, in particular, the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

1. Adopted at the 1242nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (1-2 December 2015).