

Report on visit to Bulgaria

9 to 11 February 2015

Human rights of persons living in institutions



Positives

- » Ongoing deinstitutionalisation of children & persons with disabilities
- » Growing number of community-based services
- » Authorities' commitment to move towards a supported decision-making system



Concerns

- » Risk of re-institutionalisation of children & continuing placement
- » Children placed in juvenile delinquency institutions for their "anti-social behaviour"
- » Frequent physical & psychological violence occurring in all institutions
- » Insufficient number of family & community-based services

Recommendations

- » Accelerate deinstitutionalisation process
- » Enhance efforts towards supporting families & preventing separation of children
- » Place emphasis on family-type settings such as foster care, instead of institutions
- » Develop system of community-based services & alternative care for all children in need
- » Stop placing children in correctional boarding schools
- » Reform the juvenile justice system
- » Ensure full & effective investigations into allegations of ill-treatment of children
- » Establish a supported decision-making system for adults with intellectual and psycho-social disabilities

Human rights of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees



Positives

- » Improved living conditions of asylum seekers in some reception centres

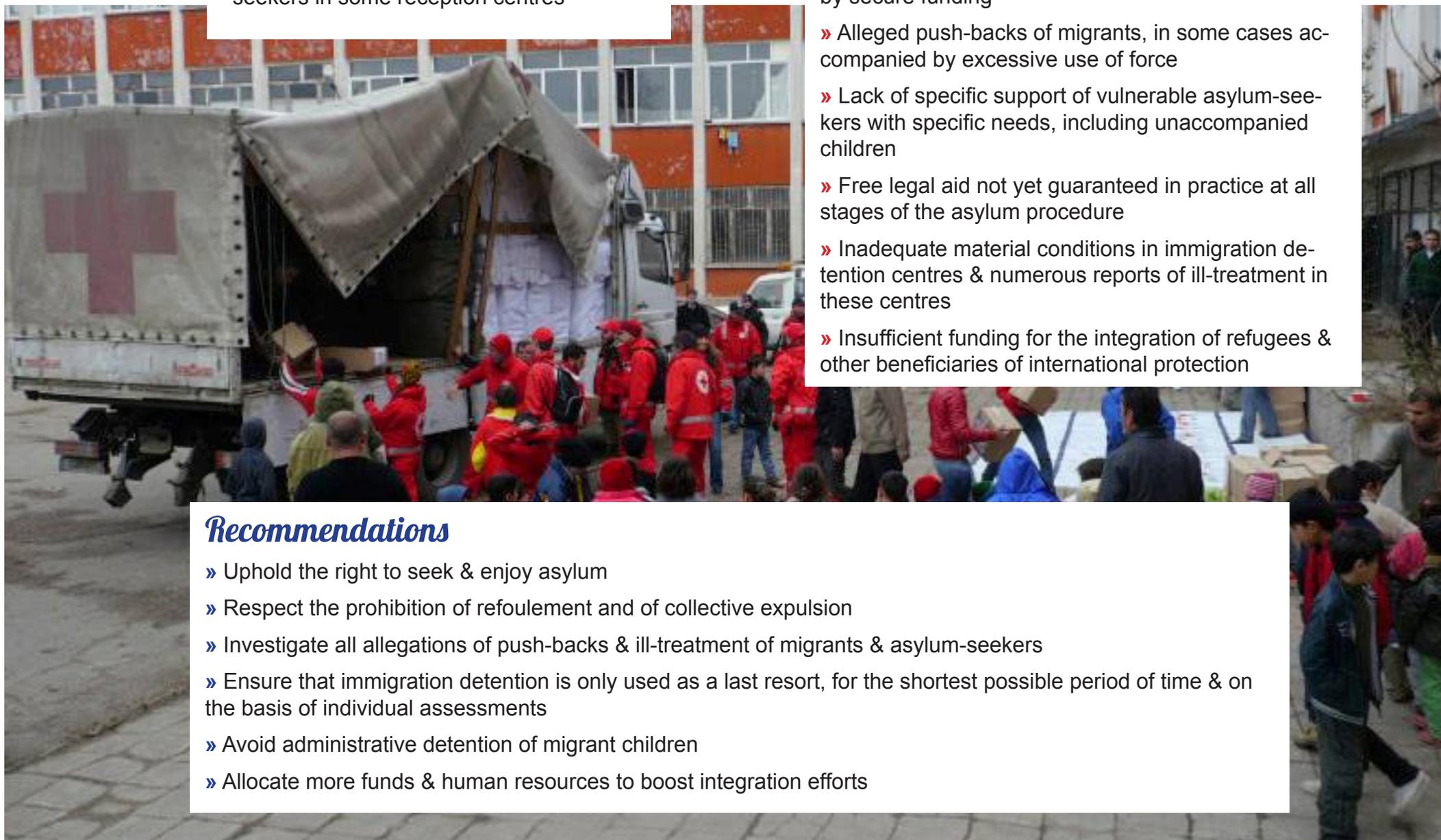


Concerns

- » Basic assistance for asylum seekers not backed up by secure funding
- » Alleged push-backs of migrants, in some cases accompanied by excessive use of force
- » Lack of specific support of vulnerable asylum-seekers with specific needs, including unaccompanied children
- » Free legal aid not yet guaranteed in practice at all stages of the asylum procedure
- » Inadequate material conditions in immigration detention centres & numerous reports of ill-treatment in these centres
- » Insufficient funding for the integration of refugees & other beneficiaries of international protection

Recommendations

- » Uphold the right to seek & enjoy asylum
- » Respect the prohibition of refoulement and of collective expulsion
- » Investigate all allegations of push-backs & ill-treatment of migrants & asylum-seekers
- » Ensure that immigration detention is only used as a last resort, for the shortest possible period of time & on the basis of individual assessments
- » Avoid administrative detention of migrant children
- » Allocate more funds & human resources to boost integration efforts



Media freedom



Positives

- » Some measures taken to reinforce transparency of media ownership



Concerns

- » Environment conducive to widespread self-censorship & undue external pressure
- » Lack of transparency on media ownership & financing & excessive media concentration
- » Editorial interference by some public authorities

Recommendations

- » Establish independent monitoring of media ownership and financing
- » Address the lack of independence of media outlets
- » Distribute revenues from public advertisement & information contracts to private media outlets in a transparent and non-discriminatory way
- » Review current legislation & practice so as to reinforce the protection of journalistic sources
- » Fully decriminalise defamation
- » Reduce censorship by ensuring that no fines are imposed by the Financial Supervision Commission for journalistic work
- » Guarantee efficiency of media regulatory & ethical bodies

